The concept of a Capstone project is older than, and certainly not unique to, the College of General Studies at Boston University. A final research project has historically been considered the culmination of a liberal arts education. In addition to the historical and academic meanings of the term, there is an architectural sense to the word “capstone.” A capstone is the final block that is placed on top of a construction project to tie the whole structure together. Further, in the language of the building industry, each layer of brick is called a “course.” Therefore, it is appropriate to use the word “capstone” for our final project at the College since it will be the final stage of your education here, the last course that caps two years of study.

As you begin this project, keep three thoughts in mind. First, just as the construction of a building is not an individual effort, but rather a process requiring the labors of an organized group, so too is the Capstone project a group effort. You will be expected to work together for the success of your group. The more each individual gives to the group, the more each person will gain from the month’s work. When there is a genuine group effort, the final product will be better and the experience will be more rewarding. Second, the Capstone project is a kind of drama, requiring an act of imagination as you assume the roles of experts or advocates and present your findings in a real-world format. Third, the Capstone paper is not to be merely a fifty-page research term paper. Instead it should be a synthesis – a combining of separate elements to form a coherent whole. Research is, to be sure, an indispensable part of the project; but you will be expected in addition to construct arguments and to analyze and synthesize your research in order to make a proposal or reach a verdict and justify your conclusions. In other words, research is more than gathering raw data as an end in itself. What is most important is the synthesis of these data into a meaningful whole which, if done properly, will be greater than the sum of its parts.

INTRODUCTION

A century ago the United States had only recently begun to take its place as one of the world’s great powers, joining Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and newly emerging Japan. The multipolar world of 1907 survived the mass carnage of World War I, in the aftermath of which the United States was by far the world’s foremost economic power but chose to avoid international responsibility. World War II constituted an attempt by Nazi Germany and imperial
Japan to destroy a multipolar world structure and to impose their brutal (and, in the German case, genocidal) domination across the globe. A bipolar world order was indeed the outcome of World War II, but it was two of the victors, the United States and the Soviet Union – not the defeated Germany and Japan – that now stood as the world’s two centers of power. During the long Cold War, a weakened but still formidable Britain, a difficult though sometimes helpful France, and the rebuilt democratic states of West Germany and Japan aided the United States, while ultimately depending on the U.S. for their security. The People’s Republic of China was allied with the Soviet Union during the 1950s but thereafter was the Soviet Union’s rival, often cooperating with the United States during the 1970s and 1980s. The bipolar nuclear world of the Cold War endured (albeit precariously at times) until the unraveling of the Soviet Union at the beginning of the 1990s.

The demise of the Soviet Union resulted in a unipolar world, with the United States as the world’s preeminent power. During the 1990s – while seeking to continue its Cold War-era alliances and to build a friendship with Russia – the United States maintained a military capability far more extensive and more potent than that of any other country, employing its power to drive Iraq out of Kuwait and twice to halt large-scale ethnic violence in the Balkans. During this same decade, the rising threat of radical Islamic terrorism became increasingly manifest but, in retrospect, was not confronted with the focus and the resources required to deal with the problem.

The shocking and deadly al-Qaeda attack of September 11, 2001, marked a turning point in the history of American foreign policy, as the United States was thrust into a war with a new type of enemy. The Soviet Union of the post-Stalin decades had had the means to annihilate the United States but no intention to do so, because an ultimately rational Soviet leadership understood the implications and did not wish to suffer the consequences of “mutual assured destruction.” In contrast, America’s new terrorist enemies aim to destroy the United States (and in the meantime to murder as many Americans as they possibly can) and, adhering to a cult of martyrdom, are not deterred by the prospect of their own destruction. But while they have the intention to annihilate the U.S., they presently lack the means to do so. Obviously, then, the United States is now engaged in a conflict that is fundamentally different from the Cold War, and that therefore requires very different strategies.

In September 2002, the Bush administration’s National Security Council, headed by National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, issued a controversial 31-page document titled “The National Security Strategy of the United States of America.” This document proclaims at its outset that the United States’ national security strategy will be based on a distinctly American internationalism that reflects the union of our values and our national interests. The aim of this strategy is to help make the world not just safer but better. Our goals on the path to progress are clear: political and economic freedom, peaceful relations with other states, and respect for human dignity. This strategy paper goes on to explain and defend a doctrine of “measured preemption” against terrorists and against rogue states that support terrorists and that possess or seek to possess
weapons of mass destruction. The concluding portion “reaffirm[s] the essential role of American military strength,” asserting that “we must build and maintain our defenses beyond challenge.”

The most ambitious attempt to date to implement the preemption doctrine, however, has proven far more complicated and painful than the Bush administration anticipated. The Second Iraq War, which began with the rapid overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s regime in March and April 2003, has been marked by ongoing violence and thousands of U.S. casualties (alongside limited advances in the American-led effort to establish democracy in Iraq), with no clear end in sight.

While the war against terrorist organizations and rogue states – a war being waged both by military and by non-military means – clearly occupies center stage in contemporary U.S. foreign policy, U.S. diplomacy in 2007 and beyond faces multiple challenges, many but not nearly all of which are directly connected to the ongoing war. The assigned task of each 2007 Capstone group is to investigate an important problem in present-day U.S. foreign policy and to devise a recommendation for addressing that problem. This syllabus provides a list of available topics, each of which identifies a significant issue that calls for the attention of U.S. foreign policy makers.

MECHANICS OF THE CAPSTONE PROJECT

1. Groups: The Capstone project is a group project. The groups, each made up of six or seven students, will be constructed according to criteria established by your team’s faculty. You will be a member of your group during the entire project. Each group will need to work out for itself some form of division of labor and responsibility. Each member of the group will be responsible not only to herself or himself, but to the other members as well.

2. Project Grades: You will receive one grade for the Project as a whole. This grade will make up 25% of your semester grade in Social Science 202, Natural Science 202, and Humanities 202. There will be three components of your grade: the written report, the oral defense, and your individual participation in the project. You will be evaluated as a group on the written report (in other words each member of the group will receive the same paper grade), but as individuals on the oral defense and participation. Thus, each individual will be evaluated on the paper, his or her performance during the oral defense, and participation in the total project. Your overall Capstone grade will be a combination of these three components. (Note: While Capstone groups will not receive written comments on their papers, the faculty team will provide each group with substantial verbal feedback during the oral defense.)

3. Reporting of Capstone Grades: Team faculty do not assign individual Capstone grades until all oral defenses have been completed. In order that reporting may be uniform among teams, all individual Capstone grades will be posted electronically on Monday, May 14. You will receive only your overall Capstone grade as this is what constitutes 25% of your grade in
each course.

4. The Written Report: The length of the Capstone paper should be no more than 50 pages (typed, double-spaced, 12-point font). The 50-page limit does not include preliminary pages (table of contents, etc.) or endnotes, bibliography, or appendices. Bound copies of the report must be provided for each faculty member. Also, each member of the group needs a copy in order to prepare for, and participate in, the oral defense.

5. The Oral Defense: After the final report has been submitted to the faculty, your group will meet at an appointed time to defend its work before your team faculty. The oral defense usually lasts about two hours. Each group member should be prepared to answer questions on all aspects of the paper.

6. The Project Schedule: The project will begin with each team’s Capstone Kickoff on Friday, March 30 and continue until Friday, May 11. This period of time will be subdivided as follows:

   a. The weeks of April 2 and April 9 are for scheduled meetings with faculty, Capstone group meetings, and intensive research.

   b. The week of April 16 should be used for additional conferences with faculty as needed, completing the research, and beginning to write the paper.

   c. The week of April 23 should be devoted entirely to writing, typing, proofreading, editing, reproducing, and binding the written report.

   d. The written report is DUE at 11:30 A.M. on FRIDAY, APRIL 27. THERE WILL BE NO EXTENSIONS. Members of all Capstone groups are required to be present in Jacob Sleeper Auditorium at 11:30 A.M. on Friday, April 27, at which time all Capstone papers will be collected by faculty teams.

   e. There will then follow two weeks, those of April 30 and May 7, during which oral defenses for all groups will be scheduled. Scheduling of orals is handled by faculty teams.

7. Sources: Be certain that the Internet and printed sources you utilize are legitimate and credible. (One highly regarded publication that is likely to be useful for research pertaining to all of the topics presented in this syllabus is the bi-monthly journal Foreign Affairs.) You are expected to identify sources using endnotes structured in accordance with The Chicago Manual of Style.

8. Statement on Plagiarism: To plagiarize is “to take (ideas, writings, etc.) from another
and pass them off as one’s own.” Since students are often confused about the use of quotation marks, the faculty has established the general rule that whenever five consecutive words are copied from another author, the words must be presented within quotation marks; failure to do so is plagiarism. Students should note that the sources of ideas and thoughts, even when paraphrased in one’s own words and expressed in what is commonly called an indirect quotation, must be credited.

THE GROUP’S IDENTITY

Each Capstone group is charged with the task of formulating a policy recommendation on an issue pertaining to contemporary U.S. foreign policy that is drawn from one of the topics presented in this syllabus. For that purpose, the group should assume an appropriate identity, such as an independent panel of experts or a subcommittee of Congress or a segment of the nonpartisan Executive Branch bureaucracy or the staff of a high-ranking government official. Operating under this identity, the group should survey the history and the scope of the issue it is studying, should consider the various serious policy options, and should recommend what it determines to be the best alternative. The recommendation should be addressed to a particular department of the U.S. government or individual leader. The group will consider the ethical, philosophical, social, domestic political, international security, scientific, and technological implications of the chosen problem and of the proposed policy. Policy proposals should reflect careful research and clear thinking.

FORMAT OPTIONS FOR THE WRITTEN REPORT

Your group may choose to act as an informed panel investigating one of the problems outlined later in this syllabus and developing a recommendation that is presented by the whole group. This is the “Policy Recommendation Format.” Or your group may choose to act as an arbitrator in a dispute, deciding between two conflicting advocates; two opposing positions are argued (by two sides with separate identities), and then the group (under its own separate identity) makes the final decision. This is the “Adversary Format.” Once you choose your topic you should discuss the format of your presentation with your team faculty.

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I. POLICY RECOMMENDATION FORMAT

If your group chooses this format you will set yourselves up as an entity that is charged with investigating a specific problem (e.g., whether and to what degree the United States should remain committed to building democracy in Iraq) and will through your investigation develop a realistic recommendation as a solution to the problem. Your recommendation will be presented to the appropriate government department or leading individual (your team faculty’s “identity”). Your paper should follow these general guidelines:

A. Introduction: Clearly state the problem you are investigating, why it is important to investigate this problem, and to whom you will be presenting your policy recommendation. Your introduction should make the readers realize the nature of the problem and why a solution is needed.

B. Discussion and Development of the Problem: This section of the paper should provide background information on the problem and present data on all its important aspects. Do not merely outline the research you have done on the issue, but present data that draw together all elements of your research and help to explain the controversy that makes your topic a problem. This section organizes and presents data that:

(1) outline and develop the problem;
(2) develop the various competing aspects of and approaches to the problem; and
(3) help direct you toward, and are necessary to support, your policy recommendation.

C. The Recommendation: Your recommendation should be a logical outcome of the background and data you presented in Section B. It may be a recommendation that has already been proposed (which you discovered during your research), it may combine various aspects of different published proposals, or it may be an entirely original solution. This section should reiterate what data support your recommendation and explain why your recommendation is superior to others. You should also be careful to indicate what values (ethical, social, scientific) you used to develop your recommendation. Is your recommendation a realistic, workable solution that you can expect to be taken seriously, or is it a utopian, pie-in-the-sky proposal? You should discuss how your recommendation will be implemented. You must consider the cost (how much and to whom) of the implementation of your proposal. Finally, you should argue the functional effects of your recommendation. Who will benefit from your proposal: particular individuals and groups? the people of the United States? people in other countries? people throughout the world? Is your recommendation a long-term solution or a short-term fix? A major objective is not to sit on the fence with your proposal, but to declare a coherent position and be able to defend it.
II. ADVERSARY FORMAT

In this format your group presents alternative solutions and acts as the arbitrator of a dispute (e.g., whether the United States should take military action to destroy Iran’s nuclear weapons program). Two petitioners argue their respective positions on the controversy, and then the arbitrator issues a final decision in favor of one of the petitioners. Your paper will develop competing arguments for each side of the controversy in an orderly, logical manner, render a judgment, and explain the reasons for favoring one position over the other. Your paper should be organized as follows:

A. Introduction: Clearly identify the controversy, and why it is a controversy. It may help to provide a brief history of the controversy in this section. Indicate who the two petitioners are and what positions they will be representing. Identify the arbitrator.

B. Petitioner I - Arguments: Note the existing controversy and the judgment that is sought. Provide useful and relevant historical background. Present, in a logical, clear manner, the research that supports this petitioner’s position and that challenges the position of Petitioner II. For example, if you were arguing for a greater U.S. commitment to the security and well-being of Afghanistan, you might cite data that indicate a large gulf between the amount of U.S. assistance that is needed and the amount that is currently being provided. You might argue as well that President Bush’s domestic economic policies and the extensive U.S. commitment in Iraq have resulted in the shortchanging of Afghanistan. Any evidence that will support the petitioner’s position and sway the judgment in the desired direction should be put forward.

C. Petitioner II - Arguments: Follow the same approach in order to make the strongest sustainable case in favor of your position. For example, if you were arguing that the current extent of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan is adequate, you might cite data about concrete economic, social, and political achievements in post-Taliban Afghanistan. You might argue as well that it was appropriate for the United States to make a much greater commitment to Iraq than it has made to Afghanistan. As with Petitioner I, any evidence that will support Petitioner II’s position and sway the judgment in the desired direction should be presented.

D. Judgment by the arbitrator: State what the decision of the arbitrator is, and then logically develop the rationale for the decision. Evidence presented by both petitioners should be cited in explaining the decision. You should strive for a realistic decision that reflects the comparative strengths of the competing petitioners’ arguments. Be careful not to rule against a strong argument, or, if you do (for you may, after all, be presented with two strong arguments), be able to justify your ruling. Try to issue a realistic decision that weighs such factors as the costs, the risks, and the likely benefits (both practical and ethical) of the petitioners’ competing proposals.

Important Note: Be careful to present opposing positions objectively. Do not intentionally weaken one petitioner’s arguments just to arrive more easily at a particular decision. It strengthens an adversary-format paper to present two plausible and well-argued
positions.

FOCUSING YOUR RESEARCH

After your group selects a major topic area and has decided which type of format to use, you should consider some of the following questions and advice to help focus your research:

1. What specific problem do you want to examine? A word of caution: Do not be too inclusive (e.g., “We are going to study in depth every aspect of the U.S.-China relationship.”). You must define a problem that is manageable in scope within the framework of the Capstone project.

2. Investigate your problem from a historical perspective. Include any pertinent background information you come across.

3. What is the current range of thinking about your issue? What are the various serious alternative solutions to the problem you are investigating? Whether or not you choose to use the adversary format, you should identify opposing views about the issue and become familiar with the debate surrounding it. This approach lends more credibility to your eventual policy proposals.

4. Your group may select one of the alternative solutions you encounter in your research, or you may create an alternative you believe is superior to any suggested by your study of the literature. In determining your solution, you should draw upon your knowledge of ethics to help justify the ends you seek to attain and the means you propose to employ.

5. How would your policy be implemented?

6. What are the implications of your recommendations? What are the domestic political, international security, economic, social, cultural, philosophical, and scientific ramifications of your proposals?

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TOPICS
1. THE UNITED STATES AND IRAQ: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

Between Saddam Hussein’s seizure of power in 1979 and his removal from power in 2003, U.S.-Iraq relations were predominantly hostile. Still, the United States did provide limited political and economic support to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988. President George H. W. Bush even sought to forge and maintain amicable U.S.-Iraq relations after the Iran-Iraq War – despite Iraq’s large-scale use of chemical weapons against Iran during the war and against its own Kurdish population in 1988. This unlikely (and, in retrospect, clearly ill-advised) courtship ended abruptly when Iraq invaded and occupied Kuwait in August 1990. Prodded by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, President Bush then organized a broad coalition that imposed economic sanctions and demanded Iraq’s withdrawal while threatening military action. When Iraq refused to withdraw, a war was launched in mid-January 1991, and U.S.-led forces drove Iraq out of Kuwait by the end of February.

Having made the grave mistake of encouraging an internal uprising against Hussein and then declining to support the ensuing Kurdish and Shiite revolts (which Hussein violently suppressed), Bush imposed “no-fly zones” over large areas of Iraq, a policy enforced for the next decade by British and American airpower. Meanwhile, weapons inspectors representing the United Nations searched for Iraq’s chemical and biological weapons and destroyed what they were able to find. Hussein continually harassed and sought to expel these inspectors, whose departure under duress engendered a substantial Anglo-American bombing campaign against Iraq in December 1998.

Soon after radical Islamic terrorists attacked the United States in September 2001, Iraq became a focus of attention of President George W. Bush. The unusual brutality of Saddam Hussein’s regime, its long-standing ties to terrorists, and its record of international aggression and of hostility toward the United States and its friends – combined with serious concerns about chemical and biological weapons and the possibility of their transfer to terrorists – brought about a stern Congressional resolution in October 2002, a pointed U.N. Security Council resolution soon thereafter, and, amid intense international controversy, an Anglo-American war against Hussein’s regime in March and April 2003. (To strengthen the case for going to war, the Bush administration appears to have manipulated intelligence, particularly with regard to allegations of an active Iraqi nuclear program.) Hussein’s government was swiftly toppled; Hussein himself was captured by American forces in December 2003 and executed by Iraqi authorities in December 2006.

Nevertheless, partly due to unwarranted assumptions made during the prewar planning phase, the Bush administration’s goal of building a stable, democratic Iraq has proven elusive. Until early 2006, a Sunni insurgency, featuring both foreign terrorists with al-Qaeda connections and internal Saddam Hussein loyalists, was the central challenge. For the past year or so, the primary problem has been civil strife (termed by some a civil war) between the majority Iraqi Shiites and the minority Iraqi Sunnis. (The Kurds, the third major Iraqi ethnic group, inhabit a virtually autonomous region in northern Iraq.)

There has been no shortage of recommendations for the Bush administration – from active and retired politicians and military officers, from journalists, from scholars, and from many others. (For example, a recent special issue of The New Republic presented seventeen greatly varying essays on the subject.) After considering a number of these recommendations, President Bush announced a decision on January 10, 2007: The United States, which already has
suffered thousands of casualties in the war, will not give up hope for a stable, democratic Iraq and will increase its troop levels temporarily in pursuit of this objective.

What successes and setbacks have marked U.S. involvement in Iraq since 2003? Has the Second Iraq War enhanced or undermined the U.S. position in the larger war against Islamic extremism and in the world more broadly? Is a stable, democratic Iraq an attainable goal, or should the United States redefine its objective? Can the U.S. prevent an all-out civil war between Sunnis and Shiites? Are more U.S. troops the right policy? Should the United States try to work with Syria and Iran, despite their extreme hostility toward the U.S., to establish a peaceful and stable Iraq? Ultimately, what should the United States now aim to achieve in Iraq, and what means should the U.S. employ for this purpose?

2. THE UNITED STATES AND AFGHANISTAN: IS AMERICA DOING ENOUGH?

Through both involvement and neglect, the United States has played a major role in Afghanistan’s recent history. U.S. military assistance, especially the provision of Stinger anti-aircraft missiles to the anti-Soviet Mujahedin, helped to drive the Soviet Union out of Afghanistan during the 1980s. Following the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, U.S. neglect was one of numerous factors contributing to the violence and chaos that engulfed Afghanistan and that ultimately resulted in the takeover of the country by the radical Islamic group known as the Taliban in the mid-1990s. The Taliban brutally imposed a rigid Islamic system that had a particularly debilitating impact on the lives of Afghan women, who in effect became non-persons. More important from an international standpoint, Afghanistan under the Taliban became the primary global base of al-Qaeda, which accumulated weapons, openly operated training bases, and planned and ordered terrorist attacks in other countries, and in reality shared in the governing of Afghanistan itself. Shortly after the dramatic al-Qaeda assault on the United States of September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush – in conjunction with anti-Taliban Afghan forces, most prominently the Northern Alliance – initiated large-scale military action that rapidly overthrew the Taliban and scattered al-Qaeda.

In the wake of the Taliban’s defeat, Hamid Karzai assumed the presidency of Afghanistan and, aided by soldiers and funds from the United States and many other nations, began the extremely difficult task of rebuilding and securing a shattered country. U.S. and other NATO forces remain in Afghanistan today for the purposes of overseeing the creation of a viable social and economic and political infrastructure, protecting the Karzai government, and hunting down the remnants of the Taliban and al-Qaeda. One encouraging development was the drafting and approval of a new democratic constitution by loya jirga delegates in January 2004.

But has the United States been doing enough? Both the numbers of U.S. troops and the extent of American economic assistance have been criticized as inadequate by many members of Congress and other knowledgeable Americans. Finding sanctuary in neighboring Pakistan, and aided by a surge in Afghan poppy cultivation (which supplies, at big profit, much of the world’s demand for heroin), the Taliban has been reemerging; and large areas of Afghanistan are not under the control of the Karzai government. Some have contended that the U.S. emphasis on Iraq in the larger war against radical Islamic terrorism has resulted in a diversion of resources vitally needed in Afghanistan.

What are the United States’ responsibilities to the people and government of
Afghanistan? Does the U.S. have an obligation to ensure the well-being of the Afghan people? Has the United States made a sufficient commitment to Afghanistan? Or, on the contrary, is insufficient U.S. attention once again endangering Afghanistan? Is America’s ally Pakistan actively undermining both the construction of a democratic Afghanistan and the capture of high-ranking al-Qaeda operatives in the region – and if so, how should the United States deal with this problem? How important is Afghanistan in the bigger picture of U.S. global security? What changes, if any, should be made in the area of U.S. policy toward Afghanistan?

3. THE UNITED STATES AND IRAN: NUCLEAR WORRIES

Throughout most of the Cold War, Iran was a major ally of the United States in a vital area of the world. But the overthrow of Iran’s pro-American regime by a virulently anti-American revolutionary movement early in 1979 generated the intensely hostile relationship between the two countries that persists to this day.

In recent years, Iran has been at or very near the top of the list of U.S. security concerns. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad leads a radical Shiite Muslim regime which actively supports terrorist organizations, particularly Hezbollah in Lebanon. Iran’s professed international objectives are sharply in conflict with those of the United States. When these objectives, which include the annihilation of Israel (and in the long run the United States as well) are considered in the context of Iran’s nuclear weapons program and Ahmadinejad’s demonstrable and longstanding attachment to a cult of martyrdom, the danger appears to be ominous. Meanwhile, Iran’s regional influence has been growing as a result of U.S. difficulties in Iraq and Shiite predominance in the Iraqi government.

There are many questions related to U.S.-Iranian relations, but the fundamental question for the United States centers on Iran’s nuclear weapons program. (Iran’s denials of this program generally are not taken seriously by knowledgeable people.) President George W. Bush included Iran within the “Axis of Evil” back in 2002 and has since declared on multiple occasions that Iran cannot be permitted to develop a nuclear weapon. Yet over the years all statements and resolutions of condemnation and punishment issued by the United Nations Security Council have been defiantly disregarded by Iran. The response of most of America’s friends and allies has been to call either for negotiations with Iran or for more Security Council resolutions, but to reject the possibility of the use of force against Iran.

Should the United States resign itself to a nuclear Iran? Is it conceivable that Iran’s nuclear program will be stopped by diplomatic means alone? Is internal regime change a real possibility, and if so, how, if at all, should this possibility affect U.S. policy? Should the United States prepare to employ military force against Iran as a last resort? If your answer is yes, considering the military resources currently available, what type of military strategy would you recommend to the Bush administration? Would the United States have any important allies to assist it in military operations against Iran? If so, who would they be, and if not, would this be a sufficient reason not to take military action?


Beginning with Israel’s victory in the Six-Day War in 1967, and for many years
thereafter, U.S. policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict had three major objectives. One American objective was to sustain Israel’s position as the strongest regional military power in order to gain advantages over the Soviet Union in the Cold War. A second, related objective was to provide the economic, political, and military support that Israel needed to defend itself against enemies seeking to destroy it. And a third objective was to use U.S. influence to promote negotiations and peace agreements between Israel and neighboring Arab states and between Israel and the Palestinians. While the first of these objectives lost its relevance after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the second and third have continued to drive U.S. policy.

From the American standpoint, some of the most desirable results of U.S. diplomacy have been acquiring Egypt as a Cold War ally in the 1970s, the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty of 1979, the Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty of 1994, and the ongoing survival of an embattled but militarily formidable Israel. For its part, Israel defended and preserved an endangered pro-American government in Jordan in 1970, and acted boldly to destroy Iraq’s first nuclear weapons program in 1981.

Over the years – particularly during the presidencies of Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush – the U.S. friendship with the democratic State of Israel has grown extremely close. In July 2000, the Israeli government, backed by the United States, made a far-reaching offer in an attempt to secure a permanent peace with the Palestinians. But Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader, responded by launching a terrorist war against Israel that September. When the United States was attacked a year later by radical Islamic terrorists, President Bush emphasized the linkage between the terrorist enemies of the United States and the terrorist enemies of Israel. When Israel began a large-scale counteroffensive in 2002, Bush repeatedly reaffirmed his view that “Israel has the right to defend itself.” Bush again stood firmly beside Israel during the Israel-Hezbollah war of July-August 2006. Meanwhile, Hamas, a radical Islamic organization sworn to the destruction of Israel (despite Israel’s unilateral withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert’s plans, presently shelved, for a major Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank), has emerged as a leading force in Palestinian politics and society. Both the situation on the ground and the challenges for U.S. diplomacy are complicated by civil strife in Gaza and the West Bank between Hamas and the more moderate Fatah, the party of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

The United States today faces some difficult questions. Can the U.S. simultaneously conduct a long-term global war against radical Islamic terrorists (which include Hezbollah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad, Israel’s foremost terrorist enemies), assure the survival of a strong and secure Israel, and promote peace between Israel and the Palestinians? Is it even possible to attain all these objectives? If so, what set of U.S. policies would be most likely to achieve success? (How promising, for example, is the “road map” that has been on the table for several years?) If not, how should the United States prioritize its objectives, and what policies would be advisable in pursuit of U.S. priorities?

5. THE NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR MENACE

North Korea’s nuclear weapons program is widely perceived as a serious threat to international security. In 2003 the North Korean government – toward which the United States has been consistently hostile since the establishment of the Democratic People’s Republic of
Korea in 1948, and which President George W. Bush included among the “Axis of Evil” in 2002 – renewed full-scale operations at the Yongbyon nuclear plant, kicked out international inspectors, and withdrew from the global treaty to stop the spread of nuclear weapons. Later, in 2005, negotiations involving North Korea, South Korea, the United States, Japan, Russia, and China briefly appeared to have succeeded: North Korea promised to halt its nuclear weapons program in return for aid, security assurances, and diplomatic relations. But the agreement was not implemented, and North Korea has refused to talk since November 2005, when the U.S. government imposed sanctions. The United States cut off North Korea’s access to financial institutions that the Americans claimed facilitated illicit North Korean activities, including counterfeiting U.S. dollars, money laundering, and missile transfer. A North Korean long-range missile test in July 2006 resulted in a U.N. Security Council resolution mandating the prevention of the transfer of technology or funds that could be utilized for North Korea’s nuclear weapons program. But in October 2006, North Korea defiantly conducted its first nuclear weapons test. (North Korea claims it needs such weapons for self-defense.) There is little doubt that North Korea now possesses at least a small number of nuclear bombs. Based on the past behavior of the North Korean regime, the United States government is particularly worried that nuclear material might be transferred by North Korea to a terrorist group or to another rogue state.

What should U.S. policy be toward North Korea? Can multilateral talks be an effective method for dealing with North Korea? Would bilateral U.S.-North Korean talks, which are desired by North Korea, be more promising? What non-military incentives can be used to influence North Korean policy? Is there a viable U.S. military option? If so, what is it, and would it be wise for the United States to employ it? What policies should the Bush administration advocate for North Korea’s key neighbors – South Korea, China, Japan, and Russia? Does the regime of Kim Jong Il pose a menace that can be contained, or must it be removed, by force if necessary, for the sake of international security and stability?

6. THE UNITED STATES AND INDIA: A NEW STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP?

During the Cold War, the United States and India could be characterized as “estranged democracies.” That is, India actually had friendlier relations with the Soviet Union than it did with the United States, while the U.S. generally took sides against India and for India’s non-democratic archrival Pakistan, most notably in the Bangladesh War of 1971. A long-standing source of U.S.-India tension that outlived the Cold War was India’s nuclear weapons program, a program that reached a climax in 1998 when India conducted a series of underground nuclear tests and openly declared itself a nuclear nation. As Pakistan had similarly been successful in developing nuclear weapons – also despite U.S. opposition – the Clinton administration worried about the possibility of an India-Pakistan nuclear war, and U.S. relations with both countries were strained.

The terrorist attack on the United States on September 11, 2001, brought change to U.S. relations with both India and Pakistan. The Pakistani military regime under Pervez Musharraf became a U.S. ally in the war against Islamic extremism (although many Americans have doubts about the genuineness of Pakistan’s commitment to the struggle), while the Bush administration worked to build a new understanding with India, viewed as a potentially dependable and formidable ally. A defining act of the change in the American perspective on India was a U.S.-
India agreement of 2005 that granted U.S. acceptance of India’s status as a nuclear power. Polls reveal that a large majority of India’s population holds a favorable outlook on the United States. Meanwhile, in recent years India has been experiencing rapid economic growth. A forum on India’s foreign policy in the July-August 2006 edition of *Foreign Affairs* is indicative of the increasing interest in and importance of India in today’s world.

Did the United States make the correct decision by validating India’s position as a nuclear power? Is there a downside to the new U.S.-India understanding? Might the 2005 agreement undermine America’s general opposition to nuclear proliferation? Will America alienate Pakistan by moving closer to India? What will be the impact of U.S.-India cooperation on U.S.-China relations? On balance, will the economic effects of India-U.S. friendship be positive for the United States? From a broad perspective, is the Bush administration on the right track in its pursuit of a strategic partnership with the world’s most populous democracy? Will the benefits outweigh the costs? What short-term and long-range initiatives should the United States take in the area of U.S.-India relations, and why?

7. THE CHALLENGE OF CHINA’S AND INDIA’S RISING ECONOMIC POWER

The rapidly growing economies of China and India are fundamentally transforming trade relations and international business today. *Business Week* magazine recently coined the term “Chindia” to describe the awesome power wielded by these two “elephant economies” and characterized the significance of their twin rising in the following way: “Never has the world seen the simultaneous, sustained takeoff of two nations that together account for one-third of the planet’s population.” *U.S. News and World Report* commented on the future energy needs of China and India with these alarming words: “Over the next 25 years, if China and India grow as much as South Korea has since 1980, those two countries alone will consume three times as much energy as the United States does today.” China’s economic expansion also has direct security implications. For example, China’s strong trading relationships with Iran and North Korea recently led China to water down the sanctions imposed by the U.N. Security Council in efforts to limit the nuclear ambitions of these two pariah states.

Meanwhile, many international business trends are negative for the long-term health of the American economy. The past decade has seen a dramatic loss of U.S. manufacturing jobs. And the next round of global business will likely send large numbers of knowledge and service sector jobs overseas (a trend that already is well underway).

How will security relationships in East Asia be affected by this seismic shift in economic power? Will the rise of China and India imperil the international system of open trade and collective security established by the United States and its allies after World War II? What changes in U.S. foreign policy will be necessary to manage the simultaneous rise of India and China in ways that serve America’s economic and security interests and preserve American values? Should the United States’ relations with India, a democracy, be handled differently from relations with China, still nominally Communist and governed by an authoritarian one-party regime? What specific measures can the U.S. take to guide China, in particular, away from economic nationalism and toward perceiving itself and acting as a stakeholder in the international system from which it is benefiting? How can the United States maximize its influence in the international arena in the coming decades despite the likelihood of a substantial
8. EAST ASIA: THE UNITED STATES VERSUS CHINA

The presence of the U.S. military in East Asia since World War II has served the twin purposes of defending U.S. interests and protecting American allies in the region (Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, and others). During the 1970s and 1980s the People’s Republic of China itself benefited from and valued U.S. military power as a deterrent to Soviet aggression. But in recent years, China has become increasingly sensitive about and critical of the alleged hegemonic intentions exhibited by the United States in East Asia, an area the Beijing government considers its own sphere of influence. In recent years, China’s military budget has been growing rapidly. As China’s military strength has increased, so have confrontations between it and the United States. In April 2001, a U.S. Air Force plane carrying out a surveillance mission over the South China Sea was challenged by the Chinese Air Force, which claimed to be protecting Chinese air space. After a mid-air collision left a Chinese pilot dead and caused the American aircraft to crash-land on Hainan Island, a diplomatic crisis lasting eleven days taxed the patience of the Bush administration and the American people. Relations have been strained as well by China’s hesitation about restraining North Korea’s nuclear program, one of America’s foremost international concerns. An extensive but uneven economic relationship, heavily favoring China, and China’s abysmal human rights record also have caused tension between the two countries. Ultimately, at the root of the conflict is America’s opposition to China’s desire to be the dominant power in East Asia.

What issues most concern the U.S. government with respect to its relations with China? How are political and military questions connected to the U.S.-China economic relationship? How important is the matter of China’s record on human rights? How, if at all, has the U.S. war against Islamic terrorism affected U.S.-China relations? How should China’s attitude toward North Korea affect American policy regarding China? What role, if any, might countries like Japan, Australia, and South Korea play in the U.S. effort to counteract China’s growing power? Overall, what should be the nature and the central thrust of U.S. policy toward the People’s Republic of China?

9. THE UNITED STATES AND THE ISSUE OF TAIWAN

Since 1950, the United States has protected Taiwan militarily against the threat of takeover by Communist China – most dramatically during the Taiwan crises of 1955, 1958, and 1996. Bolstered by U.S. protection and economic assistance, Taiwan has experienced impressive economic growth and also has developed into one of East Asia’s most robust democracies.

President Richard Nixon’s trip to the People’s Republic of China in 1972 and President Jimmy Carter’s normalization of relations with China in 1979 ended a long period of hostile relations between the United States and China. However, America’s support for Taiwan was then and has remained a serious complicating factor in U.S.-China relations. Ever since the
1970s, an evolving set of arrangements known as the “One China” policy has helped China and America manage this dispute.

Under the terms of the One China policy, Taiwan is prohibited from declaring formal independence from China but China is obliged to seek a peaceful solution to its claim on the island. As a condition of normalizing U.S.-PRC relations, the United States was required to downgrade its relationship with Taiwan. Official state-to-state relations ceased, although unofficial diplomatic relations replaced them and have persisted. The United States military withdrew from bases on Taiwan, but the U.S. government has continued to sell Taiwan defensive weapons to deter an invasion, blockade, or missile attack from the mainland. More important, under the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, the United States remains committed to defending Taiwan against Chinese military aggression.

The rationale for retaining the current One China policy is that it has been effective thus far in steering the two sides away from confrontation. The United States enforces a stalemate and adopts a hands-off approach so that China and Taiwan can have the breathing space to negotiate peacefully over time a mutually acceptable solution. Nevertheless, tensions remain high because the polite fiction of One China is not easy to maintain. When China menaced Taiwan in 1996, President Bill Clinton sent U.S. warships to the Taiwan Straits. Taiwan’s current president, Chen Shuibian, came to power in 2000 with a record of championing an independent destiny for Taiwan, and, indeed, he has provoked China many times by threatening to change Taiwan’s constitution and declare independence.

To defuse tensions and avoid another international incident, President George W. Bush has admonished President Chen publicly and reaffirmed America’s allegiance to the status quo. But cross-strait negotiations thus far have not achieved much progress. And under current circumstances, the balance of power appears to be shifting rapidly in China’s favor as its economy expands rapidly and so does its military spending.

Whether the island of Taiwan should claim formal independence from China remains a highly divisive issue. The current Chinese government headed by President Hu Jintao attaches extreme importance to the goal of reuniting Taiwan with the mainland. On the Taiwan issue, China will not yield. Resolving the issue of Taiwan is closely identified with China’s twentieth-century quest to reacquire territories annexed by foreign powers when China was poor and weak. Most people on Taiwan favor keeping the status quo. The alternatives of outright conflict or complete subordination to the mainland are even more distasteful than the present policy of ambiguity. Security specialists agree that Taiwan remains one of the world’s most dangerous flashpoints.

What should American policy toward the Taiwan issue be? Should the United States become more involved in the cross-straits peace negotiations? Should the U.S. do more to guarantee the security of Taiwan? Or, conversely, should the U.S. acquiesce in an eventual Chinese military takeover of Taiwan? Do increasing China-Taiwan and China-U.S. economic ties provide America with any leverage in its quest for a peaceful outcome to the conflict? Ultimately, how far should the United States be willing to go to protect Taiwan from a Chinese military assault?

10. AMERICA AND JAPAN: A LONG-STANDING ALLIANCE IN A NEW CENTURY
Since the U.S.-engineered reconstruction of Japan that followed the American victory in World War II, Japan has been – despite tensions from time to time – a dependable and important ally of the United States. More than sixty years after the war, approximately 50,000 U.S. military personnel continue to be based on Japanese territory.

The U.S.-Japan alliance has been strengthened during the presidency of George W. Bush, who has replaced President Bill Clinton’s emphasis on China as the key to the United States’ East Asian security policy with an emphasis on Japan. The Japanese government under Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi contributed money and troops to the effort to rebuild Iraq following the downfall of Saddam Hussein. Concerns about China’s rapidly expanding military expenditures are shared by leaders in Washington and Tokyo. Most of all, the North Korean nuclear program, particularly alarming to Japan, has served to invigorate U.S.-Japanese security cooperation (as evidenced in June 2006, when Japan and the United States conducted a joint missile defense exercise near Hawaii).

In September 2006, in his first news conference, Japan’s new prime minister, Shinzo Abe, declared: “Japan must be a country that shows leadership and that is respected and loved by the countries of the world.” One part of Abe’s plan to gain for Japan a greater role in world affairs is a push for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. Abe additionally has made clear his desire to revise Japan’s post-World War II constitution, written by American occupiers, that prohibits Japan from using military force as an instrument of foreign policy, and that also blocks Japanese involvement in collective self-defense. The possibility of a future preemptive Japanese attack on North Korea is now actively being debated in Japan. More generally, Abe wants to forge closer military ties between Japan and the United States; the U.S., for its part, is eager to advance such cooperation.

Should the United States continue to encourage a Japanese military buildup? Should the United States make a major diplomatic effort to secure for Japan a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council? Would the strengthening of U.S.-Japan ties undermine U.S.-China relations, and if so, how important a consideration should this factor be as America develops its policy toward Japan? Should Japan’s record of brutal imperial expansion in the 1930s and 1940s be of any concern to the United States today? How much can and should the United States expect from Japan as America seeks to promote international security in East Asia and worldwide?

11. THE UNITED STATES AND RUSSIA: DEALING WITH AN UNFRIENDLY REGIME

Hopes that a post-Soviet Russia would develop into a democratic society now look increasingly misplaced. While it is difficult to define the current Russian political system, it seems to be an autocratic regime that draws on Russia’s long tradition of a strong centralized state. Whether one looks at President Vladimir Putin (whose worldview apparently reflects his years working for the Soviet KGB), at most Russian political parties, or at Russian public opinion, there does not seem to be a significant democratic constituency. Indeed, a poll conducted in August 2006 found that 86 percent of Russians approved of Putin’s performance as president.

Russia’s foreign policy appears to be running parallel with its internal political evolution. The era of a pro-Western foreign policy, which began under Mikhail Gorbachev during the last
years of the Soviet Union and continued into the post-Soviet 1990s under Boris Yeltsin, is now over. That conclusion appears to stand despite the period of Russian-American cooperation after September 11, 2001, that facilitated the destruction of Afghanistan’s Taliban regime. It also stands despite some extremely important shared interests such as concerns about the spread of Islamic radicalism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Russia has lately defined its national interests in such a way that its foreign policy often conflicts with America’s. Russia bitterly resents NATO expansion, which since 1999 has brought a number of former Soviet bloc countries and former Soviet republics into the alliance. Russia opposed the Anglo-American removal from power of Iraq’s Saddam Hussein. Currently Russia is completing Iran’s Busheer nuclear reactor, and Russia has generally obstructed U.S. efforts to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. Russia has made massive conventional arms sales to Iran and Syria, two countries that actively support international terrorist organizations. These sales enabled Iran and Syria to supply Hezbollah in Lebanon with the advanced weapons it used in the Israel-Hezbollah War of 2006. Russia also has sold arms to Sudan, which is carrying out mass murder in Darfur, and to Venezuela, a country that is increasingly hostile to the United States. It is China’s largest arms supplier as well, selling that country, another increasingly powerful rival of the United States, some of the most technologically advanced Russian weapons systems. In addition, Russia is actively trying to assert its control over several former Soviet republics, especially in Central Asia, where there are enormous oil and natural gas deposits, and the Caucasus region, where the future of Georgia is of particular concern to the United States.

Russia’s growing international power depends heavily on its role as an exporter of oil and natural gas, which has propelled its economic growth and given it influence over industrialized countries, including European countries, that depend on those exports. Even the United States imports energy supplies from Russia. (Take note of this point the next time you drive down the New Jersey Turnpike and have to buy some gas at the Lukoil station.)

Is Russian foreign policy rational? Are genuinely friendly U.S.-Russian relations possible? If not, is U.S.-Russian cooperation possible? What, if anything, can and should the United States do to reverse its deteriorating relations with Russia? Which Russian policies are unacceptable from the standpoint of U.S. national interests? On the other hand, which Russian ambitions must the United States accept in order to secure Russia’s compliance with U.S. actions deemed vital to American national interests? Finally, what role do U.S.-Russian relations play in the broader context of American foreign policy?

12. THE FUTURE OF THE TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP: AT A CROSSROADS

The aftermath of World War II, marked by the advent of the Cold War, fostered a strong relationship between Western Europe and the United States, of which NATO was the clearest expression. Although differences arose between the U.S. and its allies, the common threat posed by the Soviet Union, as well as substantial bonds of shared culture, sustained a solid partnership throughout the Cold War. Once the Cold War ended and the Soviet Union imploded, however, a certain drift occurred in the transatlantic relationship, as the Europeans focused on expanding the European Union eastward, while the Americans dealt with the complications of being the world’s only superpower. NATO, nevertheless, continued to link the old allies, and its success
in ending the Balkan wars of the mid and late 1990s demonstrated in a time of crisis the ongoing strength of the Atlantic partnership.

But despite the apparent good feeling between the transatlantic allies, problems loomed on the horizon as the twentieth century came to an end. Disagreements arose about the economic sanctions and “no-fly zones” imposed on Iraq after the First Iraq War, with the United States and Great Britain strongly supporting their continuation, while France and Germany sought to bring them to an end. Also, French and German leaders, joined by much of Western European public opinion, worried about America’s alleged penchant for choosing military action rather than diplomacy as the best means for resolving conflicts. American leaders countered that an unwillingness to use force made diplomacy nothing more than bribery and self-delusion. These transatlantic tensions were then greatly exacerbated by the Bush administration’s aversion to international treaties and organizations and its obvious preference for unilateral U.S. action. European leaders watched in amazement and then anger as the U.S. government rejected American involvement in the International Criminal Court, refused to submit for Senate ratification the Kyoto Protocol on global warming, and withdrew the United States from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. Although relations briefly improved after September 11, 2001, the run-up to the Second Iraq War in 2002-2003 destroyed much of Western Europe’s goodwill toward the U.S. In spite of close cooperation between the governments of President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, a large majority of the public in the European Union opposed the war. While efforts have been made since 2005 to repair the damage, the Western European public remains disturbingly anti-American, calling into question the future of the relationship between these two centers of Western civilization.

How can the U.S.-Western European rift be mended? Can the European desire to resolve crises through diplomacy be meshed with the American belief that, at times, military action must be threatened or used before diplomacy can work? Could NATO play a role in reestablishing a closer Western European-American bond? Should the U.S. encourage the building of a European army? Would seeking common ground in areas outside of security issues be a more fruitful American strategy? Would it be more promising and useful for the United States to focus on its “special relationship” with Great Britain and/or on the newer Central and Eastern European members of NATO, and to worry less about France and Germany and the other continental Western European nations?

13. THE UNITED STATES AND THE PROBLEMS OF AFRICA

When the average person thinks about Africa, negative images – poverty, AIDS, famine, terrorism, corrupt governance, civil war, genocide – tend to come to mind. While developed countries frequently offer African nations development aid, debt forgiveness, and expressions of concern, these positive impulses have sometimes been undermined by a failure to deliver on promises, the desire for cheap access to Africa’s rich cache of natural resources, and an aversion to putting troops on the ground. For example, the demand for Nigeria’s abundant oil generally has outweighed concerns about oppressive government and religious discrimination. Similarly, little has been done to end the nearly decade-long civil war, the bloodiest war since World War II, in the resource-rich Democratic Republic of the Congo. Other countries – such as Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Zimbabwe – have suffered from horrible governments,
frequent violence among tribal, ethnic, and religious groups, and sporadic and ineffectual assistance from the developed world.

The United States has been reluctant to commit troops to Africa since a debacle in Somalia in 1993, when eighteen U.S. soldiers were killed. The administration of George W. Bush has, however, shown considerable interest in Africa, focusing in particular on the AIDS crisis engulfing much of the continent. In July 2003 the president toured five African countries to showcase his African policy. And U.S. military forces have recently taken part in a multilateral effort to destroy a radical Islamic stronghold in Somalia.

What are the United States’ moral responsibilities toward Africa, and how is the U.S. to fulfill these in practice? What policies should the United States pursue in order to avert large-scale humanitarian tragedies in Africa and to promote, in Bush’s words, “freedom and hope and healing and peace”? Is there a security dimension to U.S. interests in Africa, and if so, how should it factor into U.S. policy decisions? Do the relative success stories of Africa – for example, Botswana, Namibia, and Ghana – provide blueprints for American policy? Should the U.S. work bilaterally (one-on-one with particular African countries), should it look for multilateral solutions that draw in the European Union, China, Japan, and other countries that benefit from Africa’s natural resources, or should America work through established African economic organizations (like ECOWAS or SACU)? What part should the World Bank play in U.S. policy? Would focusing more on education, health, the empowerment of women, and grass-roots economic development (micro-loans) make sense for the United States, or are reform efforts in these areas pointless without first ensuring good governance and a modicum of peace among competing tribal, ethnic, and religious groups?

14. THE UNITED STATES AND THE PROBLEM OF VENEZUELA

According to Dr. Luis Fleischman, a professor at Florida Atlantic University, Venezuela under President Hugo Chavez “has become a strategic threat to the United States.” Since coming to power in a democratic election in 1998, Chavez has maneuvered to silence his internal opponents and has styled himself a regional leader and an adversary of the U.S.

Within Venezuela, where Chavez and his socialist program appear to be supported by a majority but detested by a substantial minority, he has implemented a new constitution and new laws that have greatly strengthened presidential power. He has employed threats and violence against opposition journalists. His anti-business policies have undermined internal economic growth, although Venezuela’s vast oil reserves have prevented economic disaster from befalling the country.

Venezuela’s foreign policy under Chavez has been hostile and confrontational toward the United States. Chavez has cultivated a special relationship with the Castro regime in Cuba. In Colombia, Chavez provides support to FARC, a violent anti-government guerrilla organization that protects drug cartels. He has forged close ties with the Islamic extremist government of Iran. Moreover, Chavez allegedly is providing a safe haven for growing numbers of radical Islamic terrorists and has issued false identification papers and Venezuelan passports to terrorist operatives. During a recent speech at the United Nations, Chavez repeatedly referred to President George W. Bush as “el diablo.” Venezuela today can be classified as a “revolutionary state” with a significant and rising capacity to harm the United States.
How seriously should the United States take the threat posed by the Chavez regime in Venezuela? Would the best policy be to ignore Chavez and hope that somehow he will be overthrown or self-destruct? Or should the United States be more proactive about confronting Chavez? Is there a diplomatic approach that might prove fruitful? Is the U.S. in a position to undermine Chavez through economic pressure, or do Venezuela’s oil reserves render Chavez immune from such pressure? Is there a viable U.S. military option for dealing with this problem? Ultimately, can the United States afford to overlook the provocative and dangerous behavior of a belligerent Venezuelan government?


The United Nations was America’s idea. The organization was conceived by President Franklin Roosevelt as insurance against another world war, was established by President Harry Truman and other leaders in 1945, and built its headquarters on U.S. soil in New York City. Even today the United States contributes a larger share of the U.N. budget (22%) than any other nation.

President Roosevelt envisioned a muscular peacekeeping organization, based on the world’s leading powers acting in concert, that would be capable of defending the international community against emerging security threats. More than sixty years later, the U.N.’s mission to act collectively against aggressor nations remains vitally important. However, the institution itself has not lived up to its founders’ hopes. As the meeting house for 192 member states, the United Nations is prone to divisive debates and bureaucratic snarls. It often seems to be primarily a forum for a majority of the world’s governments, many of them dictatorships, to vote for resolutions condemning democratic Israel. Even the U.N.’s most avid champions recognize that sweeping reforms are necessary to improve the organization’s fairness, efficiency, and financial management. Anxious to preserve the prerogative of the U.S. president to respond to security threats with speed and flexibility, the Bush administration has distanced itself from the United Nations, especially since the Security Council refused to authorize the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.

When America withholds its leadership, the United Nations suffers. In his farewell speech of December 2006, outgoing Secretary General Kofi Annan admonished the Bush administration for half-heartedly participating in the very multilateral system America had built. In an age of terrorism, environmental degradation, and nuclear proliferation, the United Nations could potentially function as an asset for the United States. These complex problems require transnational solutions. From a military and economic standpoint, this is true as well. When America acts independently of the United Nations, as in the Second Iraq War, the United States bears most of the financial burden and supplies nearly all of the troops. In contrast, when the Security Council authorizes U.S. military action, as in the First Iraq War, other nations tend to contribute their fair share.

Some American critics of the United Nations argue that a renewed spirit of collaboration could be fostered by reforming the rules governing the Security Council, the cornerstone of the U.N. collective security system. For example, if the criteria used to consider the use of force legitimate were broadened, America might not have had to confront Saddam Hussein without strong U.N. backing. Other proposals focus on re-engineering the membership structure of the
Security Council to make it more representative of twenty-first century realities. Although the Security Council was enlarged in 1965 to include more rotating (non-permanent) members, the composition of the five permanent, veto-wielding seats (held today by the United States, Russia, the People’s Republic of China, the United Kingdom, and France) has not changed since 1945.

Where should the United States stand with regard to the Security Council? Should Japan, America’s strategic partner in East Asia and one of the largest financial donors to the United Nations (second only to the United States), be awarded permanent membership on the Security Council? Should Germany too gain a permanent seat? Should China and Russia be required to donate more money to the U.N. so that their financial contributions are consistent with the other member states who hold the privilege of a permanent seat and the power of the veto? More broadly, should the United States reconsider its policy of acting autonomously – without U.N. support – when the U.S. government sees its vital interests threatened? Or should the United States continue its long-standing approach: to act in conjunction with the United Nations when possible, but without it when necessary?

16. THE UNITED STATES AND THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

The concepts of war crimes and crimes against humanity are not new. The Book of Deuteronomy, the 7th century B.C.E. Chinese thinker Lao Tzu, the Hindu Book of Manu, and Western philosophers including Plato, Cicero, and Aquinas all address the concept that even in war certain acts are criminal. Hugo Grotius, the 17th-century Dutch founder of modern international law, even wrote of the right of states to intervene against governments of other states that abuse their own citizens. In 1899 twenty-four nations, including the United States, signed the Convention with Respect to the Laws and Customs of War on Land. The U.S., however, did not support the proposal for a war crimes tribunal after the First World War. The first international war crimes tribunals were convened in Nuremberg and Tokyo following World War II. It appeared for a time that the world would ascend to a higher level of civilization through the rule of international law. But superpower rivalry prevented the establishment of any more such courts for the duration of the Cold War.

After the Cold War ended, international conditions permitted a reconsideration of the precedents set half a century earlier. In May 1993, with strong support from the United States, the United Nations Security Council established the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and shortly thereafter a similar court to judge the genocidal crimes committed in Rwanda.

Despite the agreement on establishing these ad hoc tribunals, a U.N. debate about establishing a permanent international tribunal was prolonged by the worries of powerful states who feared that a permanent court with global jurisdiction would interfere with their sovereignty. Throughout the twentieth century the United States, while promoting human rights abroad, had been consistently opposed to any limitation on its own sovereignty. At last, in Rome in 1998, a breakthrough was achieved and 120 nations voted to institute the International Criminal Court (ICC) through a treaty called the Statute of Rome. The United States voted no.

Upon its ratification by sixty governments, the ICC began its existence on July 1, 2002. (The ICC is not formally affiliated with the United Nations, but the U.N. Security Council can refer cases to the ICC.) The treaty asserts the global authority of the court, even over countries
not ratifying it. The Bush administration immediately made clear its vehement opposition. While this position is controversial, it does reflect a widespread concern that such a court, staffed by judges who may or may not be sympathetic to the United States, would be abused by ill-disposed states to attack American foreign policy by prosecuting U.S. political leaders, soldiers, and airmen.

(Note: The ICC should not be confused with the International Court of Justice, also known as the World Court, which is affiliated with the U.N. and is hardly controversial at all. The ICC prosecutes criminal cases against individuals, whereas the World Court provides a forum for settling disputes between countries.)

Is the United States’ concern well-founded? Or can the ICC be counted on to act judiciously in all instances? Does the ICC endanger U.S. citizens carrying out national policy, or might it actually be of practical use to the United States in providing a credible public forum for the prosecution of agents of international terrorism and the leaders of states that support them? Do the special responsibilities of the world’s sole superpower require it to resist any limitation on its sovereignty not only for its own good, but for the good of the world? Does the advocacy of multilateralism by many European and other countries reflect a higher level of civilization or military impotence? Ultimately, should the United States sign and ratify the Statute of Rome in its present form, seek to amend the Statute of Rome before accepting the jurisdiction of the ICC, or steadfastly refuse to accept it as a matter of principle and national security?

17. THE UNITED STATES, THE WORLD, AND THE GENOCIDE IN DARFUR

Darfur, a region of Sudan roughly the size of Texas, has been part of a broad conflict in Sudan that has raged for virtually all fifty years of the nation’s independent history. But recent events, especially the creation of militias called the “janjaweed,” have made the violence in Darfur far more extensive and troubling. With the Sudanese government’s sponsorship and assistance, these “Arab” militias have led a concerted effort to murder “Africans” or to remove them from the region.

Since 2003, around 400,000 people have been killed in Darfur. President George W. Bush and other U.S. officials have labeled these killings “genocide.” Close to three million people have been displaced and have become refugees in other parts of Sudan and in other countries in the area. Yet there has been a rather limited international effort to bring an end to the crisis. Most Americans know little about this issue, due in part to the paucity of coverage given to Darfur in nightly news broadcasts. (According to the Tyndall Report, the three major U.S. network news outlets spent a combined total of twenty-six minutes covering Darfur in 2004 – whereas they spent 130 minutes covering Martha Stewart’s arrest.)

The genocide in Darfur is all the more troubling given that the world has seen this pattern before. In 1994, a savage ethnic conflict erupted in Rwanda, leading to a genocide in which more than 800,000 Tutsi were slaughtered by the predominant Hutu and, in the aftermath, a massive humanitarian crisis (a horror covered in great detail in Samantha Power’s important book The Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide). At that time, President Bill Clinton was fearful that labeling the events in Rwanda a “genocide” would require international, including U.S., intervention – which he opposed in the wake of a failed U.S. intervention in
Somalia – and he steered clear of the conflict. “Never again,” many government officials and policy analysts proclaimed in the mid and late 1990s; yet genocide is occurring again today – with little international protection for the victim population – in Darfur.

In early January 2007 the Save Darfur Coalition sponsored a trip to the region led by New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson. It was an unusual diplomatic initiative in that a private citizens group was trying to stop the violence. Richardson negotiated a sixty-day cease-fire, signed on January 10, with Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir and a number of rebel groups in Sudan (an agreement broken almost immediately according to various reports). Many have asked why this initiative was not sponsored by the U.S. government or the United Nations. Surely, the power of the strongest countries in the world should be used to try to end the horrible violence in Darfur.

Why have the principles of the Genocide Convention, signed over fifty-five years ago in the aftermath of the Holocaust, not evoked an aggressive response by the American government or the international community? Does labeling any particular mass-slaughter “genocide” mean anything when little action is taken to halt the surging violence? Does the United States, as the world’s preeminent power, bear the primary responsibility for supplying forces to end the genocide in Darfur? Or, considering America’s military commitments to Iraq, Afghanistan, South Korea, and other nations around the globe, should the U.S. insist that other countries – acting through the U.N. or otherwise – provide the necessary troops in this instance? Or, taking a totally different perspective, should the U.S. tolerate this genocide and future genocides elsewhere that do not threaten the vital security interests of the United States?

18. GLOBAL WARMING AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

An urgent problem confronting humanity is the greenhouse effect: the warming of the earth’s atmosphere by an increase in the levels of carbon dioxide and other gases. *An Inconvenient Truth*, a recent film featuring former Vice President Al Gore, was produced in an effort to raise the public’s awareness of the need for action on global warming. One of the major sources of carbon dioxide emissions is the generation of energy by the burning of fossil fuels – oil, coal, and natural gas. Another contributing factor is the destruction of forests, which serve as a major reservoir of carbon; the cutting and burning of forests, a common activity in the tropics, releases great quantities of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Other greenhouse gases, including chlorofluorocarbons, methane, and nitrous oxide, also are accumulating in the air as a result of human activities. The increase in atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide and other gases over the last half-century has been well-documented, and its impact on climate has been substantial. A number of international meetings, including the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and the 1997 Climate Summit in Kyoto, Japan, have addressed this issue. Under the auspices of the United Nations, an international treaty setting rules for the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol has been negotiated. Although many nations have ratified this treaty, the U.S. government has criticized several aspects of the treaty and has refused to ratify it.

For what percentage of global emissions is the United States responsible? Should the U.S. play a leading role in proposing and implementing solutions to the global warming crisis? Should the United States ratify in its present form the treaty on the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol? Alternatively, should the U.S. attempt to amend the treaty, and if so, how? Should the
United States encourage internationally the more extensive use of nuclear energy, which produces electricity without releasing carbon dioxide? What sorts of domestic policies (setting higher fuel efficiency standards, promoting conservation and non-polluting energy sources, etc.) would effectively complement a U.S. government effort to contribute significantly to the fight against global warming?

19. MANAGING OCEAN RESOURCES: U.S. POLICY IN A GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

Restoring and maintaining sustainable oceanic resources is a major challenge that the United States and other nations face today. As the world’s population continues to grow, human dependence on ocean resources also continues to increase. Around 60% of the world’s population lives in coastal areas, with a projected increase to about 75% in a few decades. Concurrent increases in population and in ocean resource utilization have been causing widespread pollution, the mismanagement and even the destruction of fisheries, and a loss of biodiversity. Additional problems result from the unintentional release into oceans of harmful exotic species and genetically engineered species.

The contemporary world confronts difficult challenges related to the sustainability of ocean resources. The United States government recognizes that these highly complex problems require solutions forged by partnerships among international organizations and national and local governments. According to the United States Oceanic Service:

(1) Environmental forces transcend borders and oceans to threaten directly the health, prosperity, and jobs of American citizens; and (2) addressing natural resource issues is frequently critical to achieving political and economic stability, and to pursuing our strategic interests around the world.

Which U.S. domestic policies have had a direct impact on marine resources? Which U.S. policies have created international discord? What international treaties exist to protect ocean resources? Are these treaties effective? Does the United States participate in these treaties? What role is the United States playing in sustaining oceanic resources? Should the U.S. take the lead in devising and implementing solutions that will enhance the sustainability of ocean resources? If so, which potential solutions are the most feasible and the most promising?

20. A NATIONAL MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEM FOR THE UNITED STATES?

The question of a national missile defense system has been debated in the United States for many years. In signing the 1972 ABM Treaty, the United States in effect accepted the dual premise that attempting to build a missile defense against a Soviet nuclear attack both undermined efforts at nuclear arms control and was not technologically feasible. Even as President Ronald Reagan challenged those premises by launching and vigorously pursuing his Strategic Defense Initiative, neither he nor his two immediate successors withdrew from the ABM Treaty.

Over time, however, thinking changed. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union changed the nature of the missile threat confronting the United States. Instead of thousands of Soviet missiles, America now was facing threats, still potential rather than imminent, from countries like North Korea and Iran, whose capabilities were far more limited.
That suggested the possibility that an effective missile defense system could be built. At the same time, the fear arose that, unlike with the Soviet Union, the threat of massive retaliation and assured destruction might not deter the unpredictable and fanatical North Korean and Iranian regimes. That suggested the imperative that an effective missile defense system should be built.

The result was the National Missile Defense Act of 1999, which committed the government “to deploy as far as is technologically possible an effective National Missile Defense system capable of defending the territory of the United States against limited missile attack.” In December 2001, the United States announced its withdrawal from the ABM Treaty in order to construct a national missile defense system. Since then there has been considerable progress with several different systems respectively designed to defend against theater (short-range) missiles, medium-range missiles, and intercontinental missiles. There have been numerous successful tests of different systems (and also several failures), although some experts argue that even the successful tests were stacked in favor of the defenders and do not accurately reflect how well these systems actually will work. Still – in addition to Israel, which has been collaborating with the United States for years on the Arrow system—countries including Japan, Britain, Italy, Germany, Poland, and India are interested in cooperating with the United States in missile defense. And deployment of different systems has begun, in both Israel and America. According to Lieutenant General Henry A. Obering III, the head of the U.S. Missile Defense Agency, the United States is approaching the goal of a fully operational system of missile defense.

Is General Obering correct? Is an effective system—one that can cope with threats from countries like Iran and North Korea—technologically feasible? Is one affordable? Which available options offer the most promise? (For example, should there be a ship-based component to any U.S. missile defense system?) What problems is a missile defense system likely to solve? What new problems, if any, might it create?

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SUMMARY

We have presented you with a detailed syllabus designed to serve as a guideline for the Capstone project. Remember, these pages are only a syllabus, nothing more. You are not expected simply to read this document and be able to go off and produce a Capstone report. Your team faculty are to serve as your ultimate directors. Each faculty team may have slightly different expectations and may set slightly different guidelines for you to follow. In any case, your faculty are there to guide you through this venture in an attempt to make the Capstone a productive and profitable learning experience.

If you are feeling slightly overwhelmed at this point, relax. Legions of former Boston
University sophomores have successfully completed their Capstone projects. It may be helpful to take a moment to consider that the process of putting together a Capstone paper can be condensed into five tasks:

(1) Identify the problem that you will be investigating.
(2) Gather pertinent evidence and arguments pertaining to this problem, being careful to examine the various sides of the issue.
(3) Based on this research, formulate a recommendation or decision.
(4) Determine the implications of your recommendation.
(5) Bring this work together in your written report.