

The Challenging Future of Strategic Planning in Foreign Policy

“Avoid trivia.”

—Secretary of State George Marshall’s advice to
George Kennan, the first director of policy planning

Strategic planning for American foreign policy is dead, dying, or moribund. This, at least, has been the assessment of several commentators and policy-makers in recent years.¹ Michèle Flournoy and Shawn Brimley observed in 2006, “For a country that continues to enjoy an unrivaled global position, it is both remarkable and disturbing that the United States has no truly effective strategic planning process for national security.”² At an academic conference in 2007, a former director of the State Department’s policy planning staff complained that, “six years after 9/11, we still don’t have a grand strategy.” Aaron Friedberg, who was director of policy planning for Vice President Richard Cheney, writes in this volume, “The U.S. government has lost the capacity to conduct serious, sustained national strategic planning.” Admiral William Fallon, the CENTCOM commander until the spring of 2008, told the *New York Times* that the United States would need to focus more on policy planning: “We need to have a well-thought-out game plan for engagement in the world that we adjust regularly and that has some system of checks and balances built into it.”³ In this volume, Council on Foreign Relations president Richard Haass argues that the United States has “squandered” its post-cold war opportunity, concluding, “Historians will not judge the United States well for how it has used these twenty years.”

These sorts of laments have become common in the past decade, in no small part because of the foreign policy planning of the administrations of Bill

Clinton and George W. Bush. Members of the Clinton administration's foreign policy team prided themselves on their ad hoc approach to foreign policy problems.⁴ The Bush administration had ambitious policy goals, but failed to develop the plans and policies necessary to achieve them.⁵ The challenges facing President Barack Obama in 2009 are stark: a malaise in strategic planning has fed a nostalgia for the days of George Kennan and his founding of the State Department's policy planning staff.⁶

What, exactly, is strategic planning? In his memoirs, Secretary of State Dean Acheson provided one useful definition: "to look ahead, not into the distant future, but beyond the vision of the operating officers caught in the smoke and crises of current battle; far enough ahead to see the emerging form of things to come and outline what should be done to meet or anticipate them." Acheson thought that policy planners should also "constantly reappraise" existing policies.⁷ That view matches how the contributors to this volume use the term. Strategic planning is not limited to grand strategy; it can apply to regional and crisis situations as well. It should also be noted that strategic or policy planning is not just about top-down implementation.⁸ It can also be about reinterpreting past and current actions through a new analytic lens, one that carries "heuristic punch," as Stephen Krasner phrases it in his chapter.

As the contributors to this volume suggest, there are three ways in which strategic planning affects foreign policy: through the plans, the planning, and the planners. If the policy plans are actually implemented, their effect on foreign affairs is self-evident. Even if they are not implemented, however, the process matters as well. Planning is not limited to plans; it is also about the patterns of thinking that best match resources and capabilities to achieving the desired policy ends. Similarly, if the planners are thought to be capable and strategically minded, then they will be more likely to influence responses to new and unanticipated events. Even when plans are OBE—overtaken by events—the process and the individuals are still important.

In foreign policy, the concept of strategic planning is synonymous with the State Department's policy planning staff—or "S/P" as it is called within the confines of Foggy Bottom. During its sixty-year history, the actual functions of the staff have varied widely, ranging from speech-writing duties to operational functions to acting as a liaison to the foreign policy community outside of the government. Its mission is highly unusual in twenty-first-century American government. According to its own website, the goal of S/P is "to take a longer term, strategic view of global trends and frame recommendations for the Secretary of State to advance U.S. interests and American values."⁹ This goes against the grain of a 24/7, real-time, rapid-reaction era in which

policymakers define the long term as anything longer than a week. Part of the challenge of twenty-first-century foreign policy is to think about how this concept should be applied to all foreign policy agencies.

Demand for cogent strategic planning has not been matched by scholarly interest in the subject. In one respect, this is not surprising. The glamour of grand strategy will always trump debates about the processes that enable or retard policy planning. Certainly in the academic study of international relations, grand theory is accorded greater respect than foreign policy analysis. Simply put, everyone likes debating the content of the plans themselves more than the bureaucratic plumbing behind the plans. In another respect, however, previous decades saw at least *some* scholarly interest in this topic.¹⁰ In recent years, however, there has been very little research on this subject.¹¹ This volume hopes to address this gap.

With a new presidential administration comes a hope that strategic planning—within and outside the State Department—will play an elevated role. At a time when the United States faces a rising number of foreign policy challenges, the need for planning would appear to be greater than ever. Are strategic planners housed in the Pentagon, State Department, Treasury Department, National Security Council, and National Intelligence Council capable of rising to the challenge? Indeed, is strategic planning a viable concept in the twenty-first century?

These are the questions that animate this volume. Future policymakers need to comprehend the utility and the limits of policy planning. This introduction sets the stage by discussing the external, internal, and historical challenges that policy principals face in adapting the strategic planning process to meet the challenges of the here and now. Externally, the United States faces a plethora of complex and overlapping challenges that would seem to require an even greater emphasis on strategic planning. Internally, the wars of this century have contributed to an unbalanced mix of foreign policy resources—a material fact that hampers coordination of the policy planning process. Historically, the imposing—and inflated—legacy of George Kennan has cast a formidable shadow over his successors. This complicates an already challenging task: balancing the inherent tension between strategic planning and operational authority in the crafting of foreign policy.

External Challenges

With the passing of the George W. Bush presidency, there is a demand for new concepts and plans to organize American foreign policy. Containment

is dead and gone. The Bush doctrine was unpopular at home and abroad.¹² Isolationism is simply not a viable option. Both policymakers and scholars need a better grasp of how to craft viable, long-term strategies for the twenty-first century.

To describe the current international environment as complex would be an understatement. To appreciate the depth of the external challenges, consider the Princeton Project on National Security, a multiyear, multipronged effort to develop a twenty-first-century doctrine that could achieve what containment accomplished during the cold war. The effort to create a “Kennan by committee” involved hundreds of foreign policy analysts. But after dozens of meetings, the final report concluded, “It became clear that such an organizing principle—such as containment, enlargement, balancing or democracy promotion—would not be forthcoming. Indeed, no overarching concept fit because no one danger facing the United States is the overarching threat.”¹³ If today’s leading foreign policy analysts cannot agree on a single heuristic to anchor U.S. foreign policy, policy planning becomes that much more difficult (though not impossible, as Tom Wright discusses in his chapter).

It is easy to list the external challenges facing the United States. From a conventional, state-centric perspective, the greatest one is coping with the rise of developing country great powers. In 2006 the *National Journal* ran a cover story resuscitating Paul Kennedy’s thesis of America’s “imperial overstretch,” articulated most prominently in *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. Kennedy’s assessment of the current situation was stark: “There are now more players on the globe who can screw us rather more effectively than we can screw them.”¹⁴ Today the trend lines only reinforce that assessment, even among America’s allies. In 2007 the French foreign minister declared that “the magic is over” for America’s image, and the German finance minister declared that the United States would soon lose its status as a financial superpower.¹⁵ The global financial crisis has, if anything, brought these subterranean pressures into the foreground.

Power is a relative measure, and the United States is in relative decline because of the astonishing growth rates and capital surpluses of the developing world. Among the rising powers, China and India stand out. China possesses two trillion dollars in hard-currency reserves, and is starting to use its financial muscle to achieve foreign policy objectives.¹⁶ India’s high-tech sector is growing by leaps and bounds. Both countries are nuclear powers that aspire to have blue-water navies. To date their ascent has been impressive, but the future is what grabs everyone’s attention. By 2020 the National Intelligence Council projects that China and India will have the world’s second and fourth

largest economies.¹⁷ Simple extrapolations from the recent past can be misleading. Nevertheless, economic and demographic trends suggest that the growth of India and China will push world politics into a new multipolar era.

The growth of these states is a challenge unto itself, but it also highlights a related problem. The tectonic shift in world politics further weakens the international institutions that were previously thought to “matter.” The United States helped establish a bevy of global governance structures between 1945 and 1955: the United Nations, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and others. As long as the United States and its allies were the most important actors in the world, these institutions served the twin purpose of coordinating and legitimizing the global rules of the game. As the distribution of power in the world shifts, however, the United States needs to think about how to revamp these institutions in order to maintain their relevance. To its credit, the Bush administration recognized this problem, but its efforts at addressing it were fitful.¹⁸ A decade of global governance reform efforts has yielded little in the way of concrete results.¹⁹ Key institutions—like the G-8 and the World Trade Organization (WTO)—are in danger of becoming overwhelmed by a spaghetti bowl of newer arrangements.²⁰ A 2008 *Foreign Affairs* essay recommended that the United States and its Western allies simply get out of the way and let the developing world have its turn at global governance.²¹

Handling a power transition is tricky, but handling it while simultaneously coping with a rise in systemic threats is even trickier. Concerns about terrorism and weapons of mass destruction will, for obvious reasons, remain near the top of the list. Of related concern is the growth of nonstate actors, like Hamas and Hezbollah, that appear to be more powerful than the territorial governments in which they are based. Just as the balance of power is shifting away from the United States, power is also shifting from states to nonstate actors. Richard Haass warns about the rise in “nonpolarity”—the ebbing of power from governments to more amorphous, networked actors; Niall Ferguson makes a similar claim when he talks about “apolarity.”²² Others have observed the rise of superempowered individuals who have amassed influence in world politics.²³ The U.S. government will need to figure out how best to interface with these new kinds of foreign policy actors.

The most novel threats, however, are even more nontraditional in nature. In the 2008 calendar year, global markets in financial assets, food, and energy were buffeted by a series of shocks, and none of them functioned terribly well in response. In all three sectors, national governments responded with greater

intervention. It is far from clear, however, whether these interventions will be welfare-enhancing on any level. Beyond the failures of global markets, there are additional concerns. Global warming will increasingly insert itself into the international policy agenda. The specter of a global disease pandemic remains ever-present.

It would be dangerous to exaggerate the challenges posed to the United States. As David Gordon and Daniel Twining observe in their contribution to this volume, American primacy has yet to disappear. By many metrics, American power remains unparalleled.²⁴ Despite claims of global anti-Americanism, surveys demonstrate that the United States possesses large reservoirs of soft power in the Pacific Rim.²⁵ The relative decline of the United States is not likely to be as dramatic as, say, the decline and fall of the British empire.²⁶

America's external adversaries have their own problems and policy reversals. As of this writing, it is abundantly clear that Al Qaeda is facing even greater challenges. It is suffering from strong ideological rejection and push-back in the Middle East—even among those sympathetic to the idea of jihad.²⁷ Intelligence analysis reveals that the terrorist group, like the sovereign governments it battles, suffers from bureaucratic sclerosis and petty infighting.²⁸ Following a raft of books hailing China as *the* challenger to American hegemony, Beijing in 2008 suffered an *annus horribilis* of health and safety scares, foreign policy blowback in Africa, erratic and unstable allies on its border, ecological catastrophe, natural disasters, and a dramatic economic downturn.

Despite these caveats, the trend line is disturbing. The distribution of power is shifting away from the United States, as is the distribution of preferences. The Washington Consensus is now a dead letter, and American values seem less enticing than they did a decade ago. Simply put, at the end of 2008 the United States generated less respect, less influence, less goodwill, less standing, and less relative power in world politics than it did at any time during the post-cold war era.²⁹

Internal Challenges

Dissatisfaction with the status quo does not guarantee that there will be a change of tack. There are several internal constraints that make it difficult to improve strategic planning. Part of the problem rests with the incomplete search for new strategic ideas. As Jeffrey Legro points out in his chapter, a lot is required to revamp American foreign policy.³⁰ There needs to be a viable alternative around which others can rally—one that can generate immediately attractive solutions to current problems. During George W. Bush's second

term, a number of scholars and ex-policymakers tried to devise new and attractive grand strategies.³¹ The result was a pulling and hauling in different directions. These ideas have different labels—progressive realism, realistic Wilsonianism, ethical realism, liberal realism—and their creators hoped to earn fame, fortune, or perhaps a spot on the Obama administration's foreign policy team. Until the foreign policy machinery of an administration develops a consensus choice for a new alternative, existing policy will remain in effect.

There are other internal reasons for the malaise in policy planning, however. Persistent pathologies in American foreign policy make strategic planning difficult. As Richard Haass recounts in his chapter, bureaucratic politics can make rational planning a difficult process. Haass's policy planning staff developed the original draft of the 2002 National Security Strategy, but then lost control over the drafting process to the National Security Council (NSC). In their chapter, Peter Feaver and William Inboden hint that rising levels of partisan rancor have made it more difficult to engage in dispassionate strategic planning.

A significant factor is the growing imbalance of foreign policy resources among the relevant bureaucracies. Consider the previous two administrations. During the Clinton years, both the State and Defense Department budgets were cut significantly in real dollar terms, as was foreign aid. By the end of the Clinton years, the Treasury Department was widely viewed as the most important agency in American foreign policy.³² There were myriad reasons for this. Foreign economic policy became increasingly important as barriers to goods and capital fell and global economic interdependence increased. Treasury's access to resources, however, played a significant part as well.

This lopsidedness increased in the Bush years, although in a radically different direction. The global war on terror and the war in Iraq led to vast increases in the Defense Department budget.³³ To comprehend the extent of this mismatch, consider that the musicians in U.S. military marching bands outnumber the entire Foreign Service.³⁴ Indeed, the mismatch got so bad that in 2007, Defense Secretary Robert Gates publicly pleaded for more resources—for the civilian foreign policy agencies: "There is a need for a dramatic increase in spending on the civilian instruments of national security—diplomacy, strategic communications, foreign assistance, civic action, and economic reconstruction and development. . . . We must focus our energies beyond the guns and steel of the military, beyond just our brave soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen. We must also focus our energies on the other elements of national power that will be so crucial in the coming years."³⁵ When one agency head lobbies hard for another agency's budget, it signals that resource allocation in foreign policy is seriously askew.

How do operational budgets affect policy planning? In theory, operational control over resources should not matter. In practice, a cardinal rule of bureaucratic politics is that organizations that command greater staff and resources are more likely to get their way in policy implementation. As Stephen Krasner, Andrew Erdmann, and Amy Zegart observe in their chapters, emergent strategies and plans emanate from actions already taken. The agencies that have the greatest resources will be able to act first, creating path dependencies and lock-ins from which planning units might never escape. No wonder Gates warned in 2008 about the “creeping militarization” of American foreign policy.³⁶

The agencies that command significant resources will inevitably dictate the policy planning process. During the Asian financial crisis, Treasury had the lead in formulating a policy response, despite the obvious security externalities of the meltdown.³⁷ This was due in part to Treasury’s growing expertise, while State faced increasing difficulty holding on to its top personnel.³⁸

Similarly, during the last years of the Bush administration, the military began flexing more muscle in the allocation of foreign aid and the coordination of regional policies. The U.S. Southern Command, for example, issued a “Command Strategy 2016” document, in which it conceived itself as the lead agency coordinating civilian and military resources in the region—despite the fact that the Command did not envision any armed combat scenarios in the region.³⁹ As one assessment of this report concluded, “The sheer number of U.S. military personnel engaged in Latin America, and the resources that the Southern Command has available, makes them the elephant in the room. *They dominate what they coordinate*” (emphasis added).⁴⁰ A former Bush administration official acknowledged that, “while serving the State Department . . . over the past four years, I witnessed firsthand the quiet, de facto military takeover of much of the U.S. government.”⁴¹

The challenge for policy planning is the ability of these units to balance planning and operational roles. Kennan himself concluded that the fundamental constraint on policy planning was “the impossibility of having the planning function performed outside of the line of command. . . . The operating units—the geographical and functional units—will not take interference from any unit outside the line of command.”⁴² Policy planning directors have handled this challenge in different ways. Some have insisted on maximizing “face time” with policy principals to ensure continued access—traveling with the secretary of state on overseas trips, for example. Others have acquired operational as well as planning functions. Richard Haass, for example, was given ambassadorial rank and put in charge of the Northern Ireland peace

process. It remains unclear, however, whether these tactics have an appreciable effect on policy.

The resource asymmetry, and the persistent tension between planning and operations, suggests a disturbing paradox about the future of policy planning. Ideally, the policy planning process should be able to determine the proper sequencing and allocation of foreign policy resources. The imbalance in existing resources, however, empowers some agencies at the expense of others. This imbalance threatens to warp the existing process in a way that guarantees a suboptimal outcome.

One possible way to correct this problem is to create a smooth interagency process that handles policy planning. In its waning months, the Bush administration issued a National Security Presidential Directive to formalize the interagency strategic planning process into a National Security Policy Planning Committee. This committee includes the policy planning heads of the National Security Council, National Intelligence Council, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Departments of State, Defense, Treasury, Justice, and Homeland Security.

The problem is that the planning units outside the State Department have had a more precarious existence. Offices of strategic planning have a more intermittent history in the Pentagon, the National Security Council, and the Treasury Department.⁴³ Without greater stability of the planning bureaucracy, better interagency coordination will be difficult, at best, to achieve. Bruce Jentleson suggests, in his chapter, a more integrated executive branch-wide effort to engage in better strategic planning.

A related question is which planning agency should have the “lead” in such a coordination process. Historically, S/P has the greatest institutional memory and legacy in these matters. However, Aaron Friedberg, Bruce Jentleson, and Peter Feaver and William Inboden argue that the center of gravity in foreign policymaking has shifted over the past sixty years. Over the decades the president has supplanted the secretary of state as the principal foreign policy official. By that logic, Friedberg posits that the central organizer for strategic planning should be housed within the White House. Feaver and Inboden make the case for embedding a strategic planning unit within the National Security Council. Jentleson argues in favor of a Strategic Planning Inter-Agency Group, coordinated by the NSC. As Amy Zegart observes, however, the iron laws of bureaucratic politics suggest that such reform efforts will come to naught.

One timeless suggestion is to reform government institutions to make them more like the private sector. Some reformers suggest that if government policy planning copied techniques from private firms, the U.S. government would improve its grand strategy. Andrew Erdmann, however, dissents from

this view. Having worked at both S/P and the private sector, he points out that corporations can neglect their strategic planning units just as much as the federal government.

Historical Challenges

James Steinberg was the director of policy planning from March 1994 to December 1996. He tells the following story about his first day as the policy planning director. He went to his new office and found the portraits of all the former directors hanging on the walls. As Steinberg looked at them, he came to a stunning realization. Even though the office had been in existence for close to half a century, every single former director was still alive. For a moment, Steinberg was convinced that he had discovered the secret to immortality!

Steinberg's anecdote is amusing but also revealing. The mythology that surrounds strategic planning stretches back to Kennan and his formidable intellectual shadow. Under the first heads of S/P—Kennan, Paul Nitze, and Robert Bowie—the policy planning staff played a pivotal role in developing the Marshall Plan, NATO, the Korean War strategy, nuclear policy, the response to the Suez crisis, and plans for the European economic recovery.⁴⁴ The success of these policies has encouraged Kennan's successors to aim just as high.

The problem is that it is far from clear whether policy planners can still possess Kennan's influence. Many contributors to this volume observe that the first few directors had the greatest influence over American foreign policy. This view matches the historical consensus. Twenty years ago, Lucian Pugliesi and Diane Berliner noted, "S/P no longer commands a dominant position in the development of U.S. foreign policy."⁴⁵ Recent initiatives have yielded mixed results. Morton Halperin, for example, used the office to initiate efforts at democracy promotion. Halperin's Community of Democracies project is essentially moribund. Time will tell whether Stephen Krasner's Partnership for Democratic Governance faces a similar fate.

Does this mean that current staffers at policy planning agencies cannot match the accomplishments of their predecessors? Hardly. The conditions for policy planning to play a significant role go far beyond individual ability. The success of policy planning units depends crucially on the interpersonal relationships of policy principals. The historical consensus is that George Kennan, Paul Nitze, Robert Bowie, Winston Lord, and Dennis Ross stand out as "making a difference" at S/P. While these individuals were and are able statesmen, it is far from clear that their talents outshine those of other former

directors, such as W. W. Rostow, Anthony Lake, Paul Wolfowitz, Morton Halperin, or Richard Haass.

A key difference between these two groups was in the relationship between themselves and the secretary of state, and the relationship between the secretary and the president. The first four directors had the confidence of their bosses (George Marshall, Dean Acheson, John Foster Dulles, Henry Kissinger, James Baker). Kennan, for example, was the only State Department official to have unfettered access to George Marshall's office. These secretaries of state, in turn, earned the trust of presidents that were engaged in foreign policy (Truman, Eisenhower, Nixon, and George H. W. Bush). The same cannot be said of the latter group of policy planning directors, who had to negotiate more troublesome relationships between their policy principals (Rusk/Kennedy, Vance/Carter, Haig/Reagan, Albright/Clinton, and Powell/Bush). The best policy planning staff in the world will have little influence unless it lucks its way into a favorable bureaucratic and political environment.⁴⁶

It is worth remembering that although current analysts look back on the late 1940s as the halcyon era of policy planning, Kennan himself took a much dimmer view. When he decided to resign in November 1949, he wrote in his diary, "It is time I recognized that my Policy Planning Staff, started nearly three years ago, has simply been a failure, like all previous attempts to bring order and foresight into the designing of foreign policy by special institutional arrangements."⁴⁷ Indeed, as several of the contributors to this volume observe, the doctrine of containment as implemented by Nitze and his successors looked very different from Kennan's original conception. Thomas Wright points out that Kennan opposed the creation of NATO, the most successful alliance in world history. Indeed, for all of his analytical brilliance, Kennan erred in many of his predictions and evinced little understanding of the country he served. It would serve those involved in policy planning to respect Kennan's intellect, without lapsing into hagiography.

Even when the institutional and interpersonal conditions do not exist for policy planning to excel, they can exist in the future. As Stephen Krasner observes, crisis, change, and uncertainty can provide an agenda-setting moment when none previously existed.⁴⁸ Consider, for example, the "responsible stakeholder" language currently used toward China. According to Krasner, an S/P staff member originally conceived this idea and put it into a policy planning paper in early 2003. It was submitted and subsequently ignored by higher-ups. With a change in personnel after January 2005, the same staff member resubmitted the same paper. The second time around,

Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick embraced the concept and adopted it as his own.

If luck is the residue of design, then perhaps the best advice for policy planners is to be fully prepared for the moment when the right policy principles and the right circumstances fuse individual thought with American action. This goes back to the distinction between plans and planning. While the plans themselves might not always matter, the planning process is indispensable.

The Rest of This Volume

The contributors to this volume represent the proud tradition of scholar-practitioners who have animated American foreign policy since the end of the Second World War. They do not agree on everything, however. Richard Haass argues that the focus should be on policy design rather than divining the future. Others devote considerable space to anticipating the future. Expectations about the possibility of reform also vary. Bruce Jentleson and Aaron Friedberg advocate reforms that they believe are feasible. Amy Zegart and Stephen Krasner are more skeptical about the prospects for changing the current system. Rather than trying to reconcile these contrasting views, readers are invited to reach their own conclusions.

Strategic planning requires a familiarity with the environment in which one is planning. The first group of chapters peers into the strategic and political environment for the United States in order to characterize the challenges for policy planners. Richard Haass, director of the State Department Policy Planning Staff from 2001 to 2003 and now president of the Council on Foreign Relations, considers whether policy planning is possible in today's strategic environment. He discusses both bureaucratic and organizational challenges as well as conditions peculiar to the international environment. He argues that a number of policy areas are ripe for attention and offers both substantive and operational guidance to the next administration's policy planners. Noting strains on U.S. military and financial resources, he argues that the tools most readily available to the next administration will be diplomatic. Haass concludes that today's domestic and international conditions make policy planning not only possible, but necessary.

David Gordon and Daniel Twining (Bush's last director of policy planning and an S/P staff member, respectively) examine the key long-term threats to American power and presence in the international system. They argue that the challenges facing the United States today are more diffuse and, in a very real sense, will require the effective use of all elements of national power,

including skillful diplomacy. Nevertheless, they argue that the United States is well placed to meet these challenges and to thrive in the twenty-first-century international system. Over the next few decades, they say, “American power and influence will be buffeted by three key long-term challenges: violent extremism, the rise of Asia, and the economic and information revolutions of globalization.” However, they maintain that “the United States will remain indispensable to the world economy, international security, and the management of relations among the great powers. There will be challengers. But there is no peer competitor that can replicate this nation’s global position, its strengths as a society, or its leadership. The greatest risks arise not from the emergence of new powers but from their propensity to free-ride: their inability or unwillingness to carry their weight in global governance and the provision of international public goods, on which the international system remains disproportionately dependent on the United States.”

Jeffrey Legro considers whether there will be major change in U.S. foreign policy once the campaign rhetoric has died down. He believes it to be unlikely. The United States, after the brief experimentation with the Bush doctrine, has returned to the basic “American Internationalism” foreign policy agenda that guided the United States between 1946 and 2001. There remains widespread support for continuing that agenda, featuring U.S. international leadership, military superiority, support for democracies abroad, free trade, and multilateralism. To be sure, Legro argues, there will ABB (anything but Bush) adaptations in policy, especially in the Middle East, but even the Bush administration itself had already returned to the U.S. postwar tradition by about 2005. Legro identifies a deeper problem: the growing friction between the American Supremacy view and emerging international conditions. This friction will lead to mounting pressure for change. Yet what is still absent in the United States is a worldview that has enough social support to replace the current one. Policy planning in the years ahead therefore will involve (1) implementing the neo-American Internationalism, (2) attending to failed expectations, and (3) planning for an alternative set of strategic principles.

The next group of chapters addresses how strategic planning can best be implemented and reformed within the executive branch. Bruce Jentleson argues for a better executive branch-wide process, systematically integrating policy planning across State, Defense, the intelligence community, Treasury, and other key departments and agencies and structurally linking them to the National Security Council. The challenges—analytic, organizational, political—of designing such an integrative executive branch strategy are not to be underestimated. Nor, though, is the need. Jentleson makes the substantive

policy case, given the complexity of the foreign policy agenda and the corresponding need to integrate the perspectives and capacities of the full range of key executive branch entities. He then proposes a strategy for a new administration, both structurally and substantively.

Aaron Friedberg argues that the absence of a coherent policy planning process within the executive branch raises the risk of “catastrophic failure.” Although the problem is structural, and no perfect solution exists, he believes that significant improvements are possible. He proposes three possible reforms: reviving the Eisenhower-era Planning Board, creating a National Security Council strategic planning directorate, or inserting a permanent strategic planning cell within the NSC.

In President Bush’s second term, National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley implemented aspects of Friedberg’s latter two options. He increased the capacity for strategic planning at the NSC with a new office: the office of the Special Adviser for Strategic Planning and Institutional Reform (SPIR). Peter Feaver and William Inboden were the first SPIR staffers. Feaver and Inboden observe that while the White House is a focal point for strategic planning in national security, it is also a very difficult environment in which to do the kind of step-back analysis required. They argue that SPIR was able to increase substantially the attention the NSC and the White House paid to strategic planning, along the way confirming much of the conventional wisdom about the challenges and opportunities for this function at the top-most level of government. They argue that the record of that office is a useful point of departure for the next administration.

The final group of chapters explores the limitations and opportunities for strategic planning. Amy Zegart casts a skeptical eye on institutional efforts to improve the strategic planning process. She says that all strategic planners face four types of constraints: time pressures to address current issues at the expense of longer-term planning; bureaucratic competition for influence; cognitive barriers to anticipating the future; and cultural tensions between policy planning “thinkers” and policymaking “doers” within the U.S. government. As these constraints continue to grow, she believes that policy planning will be more difficult in this century than in the last one.

Thomas Wright discusses how the United States should draw on the lessons of the past to think about strategic planning for the future. He observes that much of what we think we know about U.S. grand strategy in the 1940s is mistaken. Initially, there was no viable blueprint for postwar order, and what plans there were collapsed in failure. The order that subsequently emerged was ad hoc, and many of the attributes that we value today (such as strategic

restraint and self-constraint) were unintended by the founders. Drawing from both early and recent history, Wright outlines key principles for institutional reform as a guide for current strategic planners.

Andrew Erdmann looks at the lessons that can be drawn from private sector examples of strategic planning. The private sector experience with strategic planning is mixed, and there is dissatisfaction with “traditional” models that envision a group of specialized planners devising a strategy that is then implemented. Strategy instead is both deliberate and emergent; it manifests itself in decisions made and actions taken. Erdmann argues that the process should aim to create “prepared minds,” not stale prepared plans. Companies have experimented with different approaches to strategy development to inject greater creativity and relevance into the process. Success also requires integration with execution. Thus, Erdmann argues, successful planning is one part of the broader challenge of “strategic management.” Private sector experience underscores that the CEO must own and drive strategy, line executives need to be involved in the strategy’s development, and last, that strategy staffs should focus on helping others make the strategy, not on devising the strategy themselves. While process matters, business history also reminds us that there is only so much that process can accomplish over the long haul: developing, implementing, and then reinventing successful strategies is a task that few ever achieve.

Finally, Stephen Krasner uses the “garbage can” model of organizational behavior to explain both the limitations and opportunities for policy planners. The best strategies in the world are unimportant if there is no interest among policy principals, or if politics prevents the plan from ever being implemented. Discussing his own experiences as director of policy planning from 2005 to 2007, Krasner recounts the role that opportunity and luck play in implementing policy initiatives. There are moments when policy planning staffs can make critical contributions. The mixture of skills possessed by staff members endows them with a privileged role within the policy alternatives stream. When policy windows do open up, planning staffs are at least one promising source from which new solutions might flow.

Notes

1. In addition to the people quoted below, see Dennis Ross, *Statecraft* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007); CSIS Commission on Smart Power, *A Smarter, More Secure America* (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2007).

2. Michèle Flournoy and Shawn Brimley, “Strategic Planning for National Security,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 41 (2nd quarter 2006): 80.

3. Quoted in Elaine Sciolino, "Push for New Direction Leads to Sudden End for a 40-Year Naval Career," *New York Times*, May 31, 2008.

4. David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace* (New York: Scribner's, 2001), p. 409; see also Derek Chollet and James Goldgeier, *America between the Wars* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008).

5. See, for example, Nora Bensahel, "Mission Not Accomplished: What Went Wrong with Iraqi Reconstruction," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29 (June 2006): 453–73.

6. See, for example, Ian Bremmer, "George Kennan's Lessons for the War on Terror," *International Herald Tribune*, March 24, 2005; Ian Lustick, *Trapped in the War on Terror* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); James Goldgeier and Derek Chollet, "The Truman Standard," *American Interest* 1 (Summer 2006): 107–11; Ian Shapiro, *Containment: Rebuilding a Strategy against Global Terror* (Princeton University Press, 2007); Aziz Huq, "The Ghost of George Kennan," *American Prospect*, May 15, 2007; James Goldgeier and Derek Chollet, "Good Riddance to the Bush Doctrine," *Washington Post*, July 13, 2008.

7. Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), p. 214.

8. See the chapters by Wright, Erdmann, and Krasner in this volume, as well as Philip Zelikow, "Foreign Policy Engineering: From Theory to Practice and Back Again," *International Security* 18 (Spring 1994): 143–71.

9. See www.state.gov/s/p/ (June 2008).

10. There was a small boomlet of research during the 1970s, for example. See Robert Rothstein, *Planning, Prediction, and Policy-Making in Foreign Affairs* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972); Lincoln Bloomfield, "Policy Planning Redefined: What the Planners Really Think," *International Journal* 32 (Autumn/1977): 813–28; Jan Kalicki, "The State Department Policy Planning Process," *International Journal* 32 (Autumn 1977): 850–58; Linda Brady, "Planning for Foreign Policy: A Framework for Analysis," *International Journal* 32 (Autumn 1977): 829–48; Lincoln Bloomfield, "Planning Foreign Policy: Can It Be Done?" *Political Science Quarterly* 93 (Autumn 1978): 369–91.

11. For an exception, see *Comprehensive Strategic Reform* (Washington: Center for the Study of the Presidency, 2001).

12. On home attitudes, see Benjamin I. Page and Marshall Bouton, *The Foreign Policy Disconnect: What Americans Want from Our Leaders but Don't Get* (University of Chicago Press, 2006); and Daniel W. Drezner, "The Realist Tradition in American Public Opinion," *Perspectives on Politics* 6 (March 2008): 51–70. On foreign attitudes, see Andrew Kohut and Bruce Stokes, *America against the World: How We Are Different and Why We Are Disliked* (New York: Times Books, 2006).

13. G. John Ikenberry and Anne-Marie Slaughter, *Forging a World of Liberty under Law: U.S. National Security in the 21st Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Project for National Security, 2006), p. 58.

14. Quoted in Paul Starobin, "Beyond Hegemony," *National Journal*, December 1, 2006.

15. Alison Smale, "'Magic Is Over' for U.S., Says French Foreign Minister," *International Herald Tribune*, March 12, 2008; Bertrand Benoit, "U.S. 'Will Lose Financial Superpower Status,'" *Financial Times*, September 25, 2008.

16. Jamil Anderlini, "Beijing Uses Forex Reserves to Target Taiwan," *Financial Times*, September 11, 2008. See more generally Brad Setser, *Sovereign Wealth and Sovereign Power* (Washington: Council on Foreign Relations Special Report no. 37, September 2008).

17. National Intelligence Council, *Mapping the Global Future* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2004).

18. Daniel W. Drezner, "The New New World Order," *Foreign Affairs* 86 (March/April 2007): 34–46.

19. Colin Bradford and Johannes Linn, eds., *Global Governance Reform: Breaking the Stalemate* (Washington: Brookings, 2007).

20. Jagdish Bhagwati, *Termites in the Trading System* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

21. Kishore Mahbubani, "The Case against the West," *Foreign Affairs* 87 (May/June 2008): 111–25.

22. Richard Haass, "The Age of Nonpolarity," *Foreign Affairs* 87 (May/June 2008): 44–56; Niall Ferguson, "A World without Power," *Foreign Policy* (July/August 2004): 32–39.

23. David Rothkopf, *Superclass* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2008); Daniel W. Drezner, "Foreign Policy Goes Glam," *National Interest* 92 (November/December 2007): 22–29.

24. Robert Lieber, "Falling Upwards: Declinism, the Box Set," *World Affairs* 1 (Summer 2008): 48–56.

25. Christopher Whitney and David Shambaugh, *Soft Power in Asia: Results of a Multinational Survey of Public Opinion* (Chicago: Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2008).

26. Fareed Zakaria, "The Future of American Power," *Foreign Affairs* 87 (May/June 2008): 18–43.

27. For quantitative evidence, see Human Security Brief 2007, May 21, 2008 (www.humansecuritybrief.info/ [December 7, 2008]). For qualitative evidence, see Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank, "The Unraveling," *New Republic*, June 11, 2008; Lawrence Wright, "The Rebellion Within," *New Yorker*, June 2, 2008; George Friedman, *Oil and the Saudi Peace Offensive* (Austin, Tex.: Stratfor, June 2, 2008).

28. Joseph Feltzer and Brian Fishman, *Al Qai'da's Foreign Fighters in Iraq: A First Look at the Sinjar Records* (West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, 2008) (www.ctc.usma.edu/harmony/pdf/CTCForeignFighter.19.Dec07.pdf [May 2008]); Sebastian Rotella, "Penalty for Crossing Al Qaeda? A Nasty Memo," *Los Angeles Times*, April 16, 2008.

29. David E. Sanger, *The Inheritance: The World Obama Confronts and the Challenges to American Power* (New York: Harmony Books, 2009).

30. See also Jeffrey Legro, *Rethinking the World: Great Power Strategies and International Order* (Princeton University Press, 2005).

31. For a cursory review, see Daniel W. Drezner, "The Grandest Strategy of Them All," *Washington Post*, December 17, 2006.

32. See David E. Sanger, "Economic Engine for Foreign Policy," *New York Times*, December 28, 2000, p. A1.

33. While the State Department budget also increased during the Bush years, a significant fraction of this increase was dedicated to diplomatic security. See CSIS Commission on Smart Power, *A Smarter, More Secure America*, pp. 63–64.

34. David J. Kilcullen, “New Paradigms for 21st Century Conflict,” May 2007 (<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/0507/ijpe/kilcullen.htm> [December 8, 2008]).

35. Robert Gates, “Landon Lecture,” November 26, 2007 (www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1199 [June 2008]).

36. Robert Gates, remarks to the U.S. Global Leadership Campaign, July 15, 2008 (www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1262 [July 2008]).

37. See Paul Blustein, *The Chastening* (Washington: Public Affairs, 2001); Robert Rubin and Jacob Weisberg, *In an Uncertain World* (New York: Random House, 2003); Benn Steil and Robert Litan, *Financial Statecraft* (Yale University Press, 2006), chap. 5.

38. Jane Perlez, “As Diplomacy Loses Luster, Stars Flee State Department,” *New York Times*, September 5, 2000; Sanger, “Economic Engine for Foreign Policy.”

39. U.S. Southern Command, “Command Strategy 2016,” August 2007 (www.southcom.mil/AppsSC/files/OUIO/1177092386.pdf [June 2008]).

40. George Withers and others, “Ready, Aim, Foreign Policy,” Latin America Working Group Education Fund, March 2008 (www.lawg.org/docs/readyaimfp.pdf [June 2008]).

41. Thomas A. Schweich, “The Pentagon Is Muscling in Everywhere,” *Washington Post*, December 18, 2008.

42. George F. Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925–1950* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), p. 467.

43. Bruce Jentleson and Andrew Bennett, “Policy Planning: Oxymoron or *Sine Qua Non* for U.S. Foreign Policy?” in *Good Judgment on Foreign Policy*, edited by Deborah Larson and Stanley Renshon (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

44. Lucian Pugliese and Diane T. Berliner, “Policy Analysis at the Department of State: The Policy Planning Staff,” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 8 (Summer 1989): 379–94.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 391.

46. Even when the institutional and interpersonal conditions for success are not present, policy planning can still play a useful function. Several staffers on George W. Bush’s policy planning staff suggested that their most significant accomplishments were in vetoing counterproductive policies that, thankfully, never saw the light of day.

47. Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925–1950*, pp. 467–68. While Kennan was famous for loathing his days as director of policy planning, he was the exception, not the rule. Walt Rostow—S/P director under John F. Kennedy—described his experience as “the nicest job a man ever had.” See David Aikman, “Those Who Thought Ahead,” *Time*, May 25, 1987.

48. See also John W. Kingdon: *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Addison-Wesley, 1995).