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Democratic Internationalism

An American Grand Strategy for a Post-exceptionalist Era

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Exceptionalism and Beyond

In the 250 years since its founding, the United States has been both exceptional and indispensable: exceptional because it was the most liberal and democratic state in world politics, and indispensable because it had sufficient size and power to protect and expand the community of free states during an era when they were rare, and when rival great powers animated by radical antiliberal ideologies made serious bids to extinguish liberal democracy and dominate the world. By the turn of the twenty-first century, the United States had played a major role in producing a world order that was more peaceful, prosperous, and free for more people than ever before in history.

Today, the United States is no longer as exceptional and indispensable precisely because of its success in creating a free world order in which so many states are liberal, capitalist, and democratic. This democratic world is America's greatest accomplishment, but it also provides a new set of opportunities and challenges that the United States has been slow to recognize and address. The failure to formulate a new foreign policy strategy will jeopardize this global accomplishment and also miss a historic opportunity to reestablish the domestic foundations of U.S. leadership.

Reframing American grand strategy begins with the recognition that the world has fundamentally changed. The world is now predominantly democratic, and includes both the old trilateral core of North America, Europe, and Japan and rising non-Western and postcolonial democracies. However, community among democracies is weak. With power shifting among the North, South, East, and West, there is a danger that new rivalries will arise, the world will fragment, and democratic states will not be up to the task of cooperating to meet common problems.

American grand strategy should be refocused on initiating a new phase of liberal internationalism that renews and deepens democracy globally, prevents democratic backsliding, and strengthens and consolidates bonds among democratic states. By pursuing this strategic focus, the United States would once again embrace democracy promotion, but based on a strategy of attraction—the pull of success rather than the push of power. In short, it must aim to ensure that the dominant reality in world politics in the coming decades is a community of democracies leading global efforts to solve problems, rather than a world of weak global institutions and rising great power rivalries.

This new grand strategy would carry forward the longstanding and largely successful American project of liberal internationalism—the effort to build an open and rule-based world order centered on institutionalized cooperation among democracies. This next phase of “democratic internationalism” would return liberal internationalism to its roots in social democratic ideals, seek to redress imbalances within the democratic world between fundamentalist capitalism and socioeconomic equity, and move toward a posthegemonic system of global governance in which the United States increasingly shares authority with other democracies.

Democratic internationalism is appealing as an American grand strategy not only because it is consistent with American values, but also because it acknowledges that the world includes a vast and diverse array of democracies and confronts a cascade of interdependencies—some quite novel—that must be managed to sustain economic well-being. At the same time, mindsets, legacies, and suspi-

cions inherited from the past undermine community and common problem-solving, and risk fueling new great power rivalries. By exploiting America's relative advantages and refurbishing the most successful elements of the twentieth-century liberal world order, a new grand strategy of democratic internationalism offers the most promising approach to addressing pressing domestic and global problems alike.

American Success and New Opportunities

THE AMERICAN ACCOMPLISHMENT AND LIBERAL INTERNATIONALISM

Over the past half-century—what is often called the “American century”—the United States enjoyed extraordinary success, growth, and influence. It was not only the pivotal “arsenal” in the defense of democracy but also the principal exemplar of democratic capitalism that held enormous appeal around the world. During this era, the United States was simultaneously locked in a geopolitical and ideological bipolar struggle with the Soviet Union and, within the free world community, acknowledged as the leader and defender of a broad community of democratic capitalist countries. Not surprisingly, therefore, the United States pursued a multifaceted grand strategy. It played the role of Cold War leader of a coalition in global great power rivalry. It was also the indispensable leader in building order and cooperation within the free world camp. At the same time, the United States often employed its immense influence to advance a universalistic program of human betterment centered on political democracy, market capitalism, free trade, human rights, national self-determination, and international law and organization.¹

Liberal internationalism heavily influenced U.S. officials who built world order. This program aimed to ensure a stable peace, widespread prosperity and economic development, and democracy and individual liberty. It also sought to moderate great power rivalry through accommodation, self-restraint, and diplomacy as well as to govern global public goods with international law, regimes, and organizations.² At the core of liberal internationalism is a commitment to liberal democracy—the conviction that government derives authority from the consent of the governed, that politics must advance the interests of the masses rather than just those of the elites, and that the basic rights of individuals should be protected. The United States did, at times, deviate from liberal internationalist ideals, sometimes quite dramatically in its military interventions and choice of allies. As a result, many Americans and many of the international beneficiaries of American liberal internationalism tend to underappreciate all that it accomplished.³

This free world project rested on distinct domestic foundations, reflecting the historical experiences of the United States during the early and mid-twentieth century. Specifically, American liberal internationalism was shaped and enabled by the domestic programs of the Progressives, the New Deal, and the Great Society. These initiatives aimed to address the U.S. economic, social, and racial inequalities, create a free but efficiently regulated capitalism, recast the American state for an industrializing and globalizing world, and adapt the U.S. constitutional order and the pursuit of freedom to modernity.⁴

The New Deal was more than a domestic economic recovery program; it also sought to reframe state-market relations, broaden domestic social opportunity and equity, expand health and social welfare, and encourage resource conservation. The United States was a successful model that other states sought to emulate because of its major strides toward realizing the goals of liberty and democracy. U.S. solutions to the great social and economic crises of capitalism and industrialism were supe-

rior and more appealing than its fascist, authoritarian, and communist rivals. Though the American model was different from the European model, the combination of the New Deal and Cold War national mobilization, manifested in programs like the GI Bill and the Defense Education Act, produced the most equitable period in the United States during the twentieth century. During the tumultuous years of the Cold War, the domestic progressive liberal democratic program further added to U.S. strength and appeal with its domestic victories in expanding civil rights. This cluster of liberal democratic programs provided the foundations of the American system in the mid-twentieth century when it was performing most effectively and when it was realizing its greatest international accomplishments.

The growth of U.S. global influence helped usher in a new period of modernization and progress for many parts of the world. The community of advanced democracies enjoyed great increases in prosperity, as well as unprecedented peace that muted historical rivalries. As the democratic world expanded—both in wealth and members—the resulting global democratic alliance had both sufficient aggregate resources and the ideological appeal to contain and ultimately convert adversaries. Simultaneously, the capitalist system defended by the United States contributed to the emergence of a sizable and prosperous middle class. Improvements in the living standard legitimized the wider American-led order and inspired imitation (at least among advanced industrial countries). The liberal order also championed institutions, regimes, and international law to manage transnational challenges. With the end of the Cold War and the general collapse of communism, the number of democracies grew rapidly and it seemed to mark the “end of history.”⁵ Many observers presumed that all other countries would eventually join the free world community.

THE HORIZON OF PROBLEMS

This triumphalist moment is over. Within the United States, the domestic foundations of liberal and democratic internationalism have eroded, casting doubt on the country’s continued ability to advance or lead the free world. Public support for an expansive U.S. international role has declined, and the United States has shifted from generally supporting international law and organization to adopting a much more ambivalent and selective posture. Public opinion on global issues is still broadly internationalist, but opponents of new international commitments in areas such as arms control, international law, and the environment have grown more vocal and influential.⁶ Liberal internationalism as an American grand strategy is increasingly under attack in the United States by neoconservatives and new sovereigntists who directly challenge its goals and policies. In addition, a virulent nativist, neo-nationalist rhetoric conjures the third world as a threat, and even tries to twist liberal internationalism into a threat to America, rather than an expression of American values and a source of its success.⁷

Democracies everywhere are facing internal difficulties. The older Western democracies are experiencing rising inequality, economic stagnation, fiscal crises, and political gridlock.⁸ Many newer and poorer democracies, meanwhile, are beset by corruption, backsliding, and rising inequality. The great “third wave” of democratization seems to have crested, and may be receding. As democracies fail to address problems, their domestic legitimacy is diminished and increasingly challenged by resurgent nationalist, populist, and xenophobic movements. These collective shortcomings cast a dark shadow over the democratic future.⁹

Moreover, the democratic world—precisely because it is so enlarged—has become increasingly diverse. As a result, the democratic community is less capable of shoring up the liberal international

order. Among democracies, the United States finds itself an outlier, as other democratic states surpass it on various measures of democratic performance like equity, opportunity, and institutional effectiveness. Beyond cultural and historical diversity, foreign policy mindsets mired in the past often impede cooperation among democracies. Enduring ideologies of anticolonialism and anti-Americanism can impede solidarity with the United States, while the latter continues to exhibit exceptionalist and triumphalist tendencies.¹⁰ If these divisions grow, they could ignite great power rivalry among democracies from different regions. This would not only jeopardize the democratic character of these states but also create opportunities for nondemocratic revisionist states—such as China—to build larger coalitions of their own.¹¹

Finally, even if the United States remains committed to liberal internationalism, the global distribution of power is shifting away from the United States and its strong democratic allies in Europe. Some observers suggest that the relative decline of the United States will undermine its historical leadership in promoting liberal internationalism and be accompanied by renewed great power rivalry, the rise of non-Western autocratic states, and perhaps even the emergence of a new systemic alternative to liberal democratic capitalism.¹² For other observers, China and Russia are revisionist challengers, offering alternative nondemocratic models of political and economic development.¹³

In sum, the United States is weakening, problems are proliferating, and foundations are eroding. Problems associated with complex interdependence are rising rapidly, while the impetus and momentum for multilateral problem solving and global governance lag far behind. International cooperation seems to have succumbed to gridlock in multiple areas, such as the environment, trade, United Nations (UN) reform, and the global nonproliferation regime.¹⁴ At the same time, anemic global institutions are incapable of addressing new security problems, from failed states and zones of anarchic warlordism to transnational terrorism and crime to resource rivalries and resilient petroauthoritarianism. Critics and pessimists suggest that these developments call into question the future of liberal internationalism and the free world project. Given this context, prospects appear bleak for the future of the democratic community, liberal internationalism, and U.S. leadership.

However, there are strong grounds for optimism. The United States is still the wealthiest, most powerful, and most ideologically influential country in the world, and its potential to shape the world in positive ways remains greater than that of any other nation. Furthermore, the world of democracies is threatened less by lethal external adversaries and ideological challengers than by the problems of modern democracy itself. In short, the fate of democracies rests largely in their own hands.

THE DEMOCRATIC WORLD AND ITS OPPORTUNITIES

A grand strategy of democratic internationalism holds promise because it builds on and exploits the opportunities of a heavily democratic world. Given its own history of liberal democratic reforms, the United States remains uniquely positioned to pursue a strategy of global democratic renewal. U.S. grand strategy has failed to adapt to the end of the Cold War, the decline of the unipolar moment, and the end of American exceptionalism. After three waves of democratization over the past two centuries, today democracies make up over half of the nearly two hundred countries in the world—including many of the most powerful nations. The result is a world in which the most powerful, the richest, and the most populous states are largely democratic.¹⁵ Wealth, population, and power among democracies are also widely distributed, making the democratic world itself more multipolar. This

new democratic world presents an unprecedented opportunity for the United States to cultivate a democratic community reflecting U.S. interests and those of its democratic partners.

The recent democratic expansion has greatly increased diversity among the democracies. The democratic world is no longer primarily Anglo-American or even Western. It now includes countries in every region of the world, spanning civilizational lines (Japan, South Korea, India, and Turkey), former rivals (Germany and Japan), historical allies (Canada, Britain, and France), former colonial states (India, Indonesia, Ghana, and South Africa), and hemispheric neighbors (Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina). Democracies are old and new, Western and non-Western, colonial and postcolonial, and highly developed, rapidly developing, and underdeveloped. These diverse members of the democratic world also have divergent views about themselves, their place in the world, and their futures that are heavily burdened by historical legacies.¹⁶

Notwithstanding their number and diversity, democracies are increasingly interdependent. They have forged new connections through rising trade, fresh international development initiatives, migration across borders, international media connections, and environmental interdependence. It is these increasingly complex interdependencies and links that have generated many of their common problems.

The advanced Western democracies and many of the rising non-Western democracies face many parallel domestic problems associated with their increasingly convergent complex industrial economies. Many are grappling with rising income inequality, fiscal imbalances, chronic unemployment, and the provision of health, education, and welfare. Democracies are also struggling to sustain their earlier democratic accomplishments, most notably the New Deal welfare state, social democracy, and postcolonial development. And they are struggling to do this in the face of neoliberal globalization and the escape of capital from appropriate regulation.

Given these common and parallel problems, the opportunities and benefits of intensified democratic cooperation would be enormous. There are several types of opportunities: burden sharing, problem solving, and mutual learning.

First, the growth of the number of democracies creates possibilities for the United States to share burdens and responsibilities of maintaining the liberal international order and solving common global problems. With the shift in power and resources among the democracies, the United States no longer has sufficient preponderance to act as the sole provider of global public goods. Conversely, rising democracies now have resources and capacities that are undercommitted to providing such goods.

Second, given the uneven track record of liberal democracies in dealing with their problems, these nations, including the United States, could benefit enormously from studying policy tools used in other democracies and importing innovative and successful policies from one another. This potential for democratic world learning is particularly great precisely because the democracies are so diverse. Somewhere in the enlarged democratic world, solutions have been developed to virtually every problem that the democracies now face. Americans often speak of the fifty U.S. states as the “laboratories of democracy” where different approaches can be tried, and, if successful, copied at the national level. The enlarged international democratic world now offers even more models of success that can be copied.

Americans—both policymakers and the public—tend to be especially blind to many successful foreign models due to their exceptionalist assumptions about the special place of the United States in the world. For example, the United States might mitigate rising domestic inequality and chronic unemployment by learning from Germany’s experience with youth apprenticeship, labor management boards, and unemployment practices that have helped it weather the recent crises of capitalism far better than many other mature democracies. On health care—the single biggest contributor to the increas-

ing insolvency of the U.S. government—the United States can copy successful programs in other OECD countries that deliver better health care at a fraction of the per capita cost of recent U.S. approaches. And the United States could help reverse the decline in voting participation by copying the citizenship practices from Australia, which has near universal participation and low citizen alienation.

Third, as an immigrant nation drawing from every region of the globe, the United States is uniquely positioned to realize the opportunities of this enlarged democratic world. Alone among the larger democratic states, the United States has a society that is a microcosm of the world's diversity, which creates opportunity for positive linkages.¹⁷ In a world of cheap transportation and communication, many U.S. immigrant populations—whether from Latin America, Asia, Africa, Europe, or the Middle East—sustain dense networks of family ties, economic partnerships, and ethnic and religious associations. Its globally linked and networked population gives the United States untapped opportunities to build community across the diverse democratic world.

It is often forgotten that such linkages are a product of the long struggle within the United States to realize the liberal progressive vision. Over two centuries and against great resistance, progressive forces in the United States systematically assaulted and diminished the original sin of slavery and the legacies of racism. Since the civil rights revolution in the 1960s, the United States has taken enormous strides toward combining a multiracial population with full and equal civil rights and adopting immigration policies that do not discriminate against non-Europeans. In sum, progressive U.S. legacies in civil rights and immigration policies give the nation a unique perspective that is helpful in providing leadership. To the extent that contemporary backlash movements within the United States undo these progressive legacies and narrow the canopy of American identity, then these bridges and their opportunities will be lost.

Fourth, the size and success of the democratic world opens the opportunity to further democracy promotion with a strategy of “pulling” by attracting.¹⁸ If the democratic world becomes a community and successfully addresses internal, bilateral, and multilateral problems, then democracy becomes more attractive. In so doing, it strengthens the prodemocratic forces in countries that are nondemocratic or are only partially so. Conversely, a failure of existing democracies to democratically solve problems and cooperate among themselves will reduce the appeal of democracy. Furthermore, democratic cooperation diminishes the opportunities for revisionist challengers, systemic alternatives, and unfavorable realignments.

But before these opportunities can be realized, democracies must develop a stronger sense of community. Paradoxically, as the world has become more democratic and interdependent, solidarity among the democracies is now much less than it was during the period of American preeminence. This growing “democratic community gap” is a reflection of both a greater diversity and a lessened sense of mortal external threat. And that gap among the democracies is eroding at precisely the moment when community—and the cooperation it fosters—is most needed.

THE GRAND STRATEGY OF DEMOCRATIC INTERNATIONALISM

For this new world, the United States needs a new grand strategy: democratic internationalism. The overall aim of this strategy is order building, both domestic and international, to create a world in which peace, prosperity, and freedom are widely shared. A liberal world order is marked by openness, sovereign equality, respect for human rights, democratic accountability, widely shared economic opportunity, and the muting of great power rivalry, as well as collective efforts to keep the peace,

promote the rule of law, and sustain an array of international institutions tailored to solving and managing the problems of interdependence and common global problems.¹⁹

This vision has deep roots, but the conditions for its realization are more favorable today than at any point in history. In Woodrow Wilson's era, democracies were few, interdependence was relatively low, and much of the world was locked into European imperial bondage. In Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman's era, much of the world was still in empires, the few democracies that existed were precarious and under assault, and liberal order building largely proceeded within the beleaguered free world camp.²⁰ More recently, over the past three decades, U.S. foreign policy has been consumed with the collapse of communism, the global war on terrorism, and the disorders of the Middle East. These problems remain, but such a narrowly focused American grand strategy has overlooked the opportunities and problems presented by the enlarged democratic world. In the past, the obstacles to the universal realization of the liberal vision were almost insurmountable and located outside the democratic world. Today, the realization of the worldwide triumph of the liberal vision is within reach and the obstacles are located primarily within the democratic world.

Pivoting toward the democratic world entails a greater focus on stabilizing and deepening. Policymakers should direct more attention to consolidate fragile democracies and refurbish institutions in older democracies. At the same time, democratic internationalism involves less democratic expansion—and, in particular, less coercive democracy promotion. Specifically, an American grand strategy of democratic internationalism should pursue five goals: increasing equality of opportunity, assuming responsibility, smartly managing interdependence, leading coalitions and recasting global bargains, and building the democratic community. This is a grand strategy for the present and future that builds on deep historical foundations and more recent U.S. foreign policy initiatives. Developing and implementing programs to realize each of these five goals should be at the center of U.S. foreign policy.

First, *increasing equality of opportunity* means restoring and extending liberal and social democracy throughout the democratic world.²¹ Tackling the maldistribution of wealth, income, and opportunity that has increasingly marked contemporary democracies requires reversing many of the policies of Reagan-Thatcher fundamentalist capitalism. The first priority of democratic internationalism is to grapple with runaway globalization and the neoliberal turn to unregulated capitalism that has skewed liberal order building and spawned divisions among the liberal democracies. More specifically, the equity agenda requires the restoration of progressive income taxation and heavy taxation of large estates, and greater roles for workers and their unions in corporate governance.²² It requires effective regulation of financial institutions and offshore tax havens. The equity agenda also necessitates a redressing of the intergenerational contributions and benefits in spending on social security and health.

Second, *assuming responsibility* means that the first step in solving global problems is solving national ones. And the first step in solving national problems is for people to take responsibility as individuals and communities. American institutions—public and private—should undertake efforts to cultivate good citizenship. The aim should be citizenship in which the claims for rights and opportunities are balanced between a sense of individual responsibility and a willingness to contribute to public problem solving.²³ For instance, the first step in addressing global climate change is for individuals, corporations, and local governments to reduce their contribution to the problem. Another initiative would encourage individuals, families, and communities to take responsibility for maintaining their health in order to reduce the necessity of expensive health care.

Third, *smartly managing interdependence* involves building international institutions in new and experimental ways. Rather than automatically building larger transnational or supranational bodies and

organizations, the democratic community should explore networks, private-public partnerships, and informal groupings as frameworks for managing interdependence. The next generation of global governance will employ approaches that combine agendas of formal international institution building with complementary efforts and strategies from nongovernmental organizations, networks of research institutions, local governments, and corporations. The goal must be to leverage the energy of civil society actors and configure institutions that complement rather than supplant their activities.

Fourth, *bolstering coalitional leadership and recasting global bargains* means reconfiguring the rights and responsibilities in existing institutions to reflect the diffusion of power in an increasingly multipolar world. One example could include consolidating the British and French permanent veto-bearing seats on the UN Security Council into a single European Union (EU) seat and extending permanent seats to rising democracies.²⁴ Adjusting to multipolarity does not mean abandoning U.S. leadership. Coalitional leadership means that the United States will lead by collaboration and reciprocal agreement rather than rely on preponderance, threats, and coercion. Of course, the United States, like all other states, will need to be willing—in extreme cases—to employ armed force to protect core interests. Playing the role of coalitional leader will also require the United States to more readily support the proposals of others and abandon its Cold War and hegemonic tendency to assume that it has to be the prime source of initiatives and ideas.

Finally, *building community* requires developing more convergent self-understandings and mutual understandings among the democracies. To start with, democratic community cannot be assumed. The widespread use of the term exaggerates the extent of solidarity among the democracies.²⁵ Rather, democratic community should be seen as an aspiration that requires efforts and programs to achieve. Bridging the old established democracies with the new postcolonial democracies will require both sides to abandon perceptions and mindsets inherited from earlier eras. The United States will need to downplay the exceptionalist view of itself that blocks opportunities for copying successful innovations from other democracies and rankles the sensibilities of old allies and potential new friends. Closing the “democratic community gap” will require building links between the United States and numerous non-Western democracies, as well as with longstanding democracies strongly committed to robust government promotion of social and economic equity associated with social democracy. Bridging current divides will require overcoming anti-Europeanism in America and anti-Americanism in Europe, as well as anti-third worldism in America and anti-Americanism in the third world.

Democratic internationalism embodies a world view and offers proposals that are sharply different from competing schools of grand strategy. These major alternatives typically ignore the opportunities presented by the expanded democratic world, as well as the erosion of the domestic foundations of American preeminence. Two perspectives are particularly influential. The first, advanced by various realist and neoconservative thinkers, is a grand strategy of continued U.S. primacy, which presumes that the United States can still assert influence and control the international system, primarily through its unchallenged military might. This strategic vision combines a traditional view of the world in which military power matters most, and an exceptionalist self-image of the United States as the indispensable, even unique, champion of freedom.²⁶ The second alternative grand strategy is retrenchment, advanced as a response to relative U.S. decline. For some, retrenchment is prudent; for others, it is necessary. Underpinning this strategic orientation is the perception that the world is increasingly populated by states whose interests clash with those of the United States, who are unwilling to respond favorably to American pressure, and who are unlikely to accept American leadership.²⁷

THE ROOTS OF DEMOCRATIC INTERNATIONALISM

A grand strategy of democratic internationalism is not new, but rather an extension of the basic approach that made the United States successful across the upheavals of the twentieth century. Adapting to the enlarged democratic world does not require the United States to abandon prior approaches, but rather to update and refurbish the historical foundations of its success to new circumstances.

Historically, U.S. liberal democratic internationalism had three components. The first was a commitment to a wide spectrum of rights and freedoms. Roosevelt's four freedoms included freedom from want, and the Atlantic Charter offered a vision of postwar order in which economic security would prevail. However, over the course of the Cold War, conservative domestic opponents of economic equity increasingly worked to block or overturn parts of the New Deal international program. The second component was a robust commitment to rebuilding a peaceful, rule-bound order among states. This included the establishment of the United Nations, the pursuit of international arms control, international peacekeeping, and the building of regimes to govern international relations in the global commons. The third historical component of U.S. democratic internationalism was a deeper progressive-pragmatic mindset. This vision recognized the need to adapt policies, programs, and institutions to evolving realities of an industrializing and globalizing world propelled by technological change.

First, the United States triumphed in the great struggle of freedom against fascism and communism in the twentieth century, in part because of the near universal appeal of its animating principles of freedom and democracy. Within the United States, a bipartisan commitment to advance freedom globally benefited from important contributions by both parties. The United States that erected the architecture of the liberal world order was significantly shaped by the New Deal experience that began in the Roosevelt administration, carried into the Truman administrations through the Fair Deal, and then continued in Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society. This long effort was animated by a comprehensive vision—both domestic and international—for human freedom and welfare.

American success was built on a capitalism that was significantly democratic and a liberalism that was significantly social. The Progressive, New Deal, and Great Society projects sought to recast the government's role in the economy, expand domestic social opportunity and equity, enlarge health and social welfare, and promote resource conservation. The United States was attractive to other nations because of these advances in realizing the goals of liberty and democracy. The United States demonstrated that its responses to the great social and economic crises of capitalism and industrialism were better than its fascist, authoritarian, and communist rivals' solutions. The New Deal, in combination with Cold War national mobilization, produced a period of both rapid economic growth and expansion of opportunity, along with a broadening of equality. During the tumultuous years of the Cold War, the domestic progressive liberal democratic program further added to American strength and appeal with its domestic victories in expanding civil rights. Though the U.S. model was different from the European model, it achieved a version of democratic capitalism and social liberalism that was comparable to the European social and Christian democratic accomplishments. Together, this cluster of liberal democratic undertakings provided the foundations for the United States' international success and the U.S.-led liberal international order.

The second part of America's liberal democratic formula for success was a foreign policy of liberal internationalism. Most important, with the New Deal, the United States became the "arsenal of democracy" against its powerful and predatory antiliberal rivals.²⁸ During the Cold War, liberal cold warriors were part of the great domestic anticommunist foreign policy coalition, and a program of

liberal internationalism was woven into American Cold War grand strategy. Part of this grand strategy was the liberal internationalist program to accommodate the legitimate interests of other states, erect an architecture of security based on mutual restraint among all nations, and build universal institutions. The postwar U.S.-led order did not seek to punish or weaken its former adversaries, but rather to reconstruct them along New Deal lines and encourage and facilitate their integration into the wider liberal order—in part to make these countries Cold War bulwarks.²⁹ Similarly, the Cold War ended not just because of the power of the United States and its allies, but also because the Western system offered a benign face to the Soviet Union and its allies, providing opportunities for integration and common institution building.³⁰

This successful liberal internationalist grand strategy placed high priority not only on anticommunism and containment, but also more positively on the erection of universal global institutions (most notably the United Nations), free trade through the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) regime, international development and decolonization, and a new body of international law affirming universal human rights. Liberal internationalism also continued the historical U.S. opposition to empires, support for decolonization and national self-determination, and the dismantlement of the vast but moribund European empires in Asia and Africa (provided they were not replaced by—or in danger of being replaced by—communist regimes).³¹ Furthermore, the liberal internationalist program recognized that, given the destructive potential of nuclear weapons, security ultimately depended on the maintenance of peace. The United States was more than prepared to deter and counterbalance, but it also ultimately sought a world in which arms control, disarmament, and collective security would come to moderate and hopefully eventually replace warmaking as a feature of great power politics. From Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman through Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, American presidents not only led the great military-political alliance to contain Soviet and communist power, but also repeatedly and prominently articulated ambitious goals and advanced programs to build a world order that was broadly liberal and democratic in character.

The third component of the U.S. liberal democratic formula for success was a progressive and pragmatic mindset. The United States prevailed not just because of its power, ideology, and domestic model, but also because it was remarkably good at adapting its domestic institutions and foreign policies to advance free world values in the face of profoundly shifting circumstances and challenges of the industrial revolution and early globalization. This mindset emerged in the early decades of the twentieth century, articulated by public philosophers, most notably John Dewey. This new understanding of the world and approach to government and politics regarded liberal democracy not simply as a system of formal rights, representations, and institutions, but also as a continuous experimental project of incremental adaptation and innovation in the face of continuously changing internal and external circumstances.³² This progressive pragmatism developed a new approach to the state as an instrument that should be reconfigured to solve practical problems produced by rising interdependence and complexity. Many of the features of successful U.S. government and statecraft during the twentieth century did not aim directly to redistribute wealth or mobilize power, but rather to regulate industrial society to promote the public interest.

In short, during the twentieth century, Americans built a complex “smart state,” which simultaneously sought to regulate food and drugs for public health, reduce industrial environmental pollutants, and govern the sectors of transportation (railroads then airlines) and communications (radio, telephone, television, and Internet). Without these capacities to manage technology-based industrial capitalism, the United States would have had difficulty realizing democratic goals, producing power and

wealth, and serving as an international model. This progressive and pragmatist approach did not entail a commitment to any specific regulatory scheme, but instead provided a broad intellectual framework for governance in the late modern era. Unfortunately, this part of the original U.S. formula for success is one that is often overlooked, taken for granted, and/or subject to unwarranted abuse by domestic critics and anti-internationalists. Without this formula, it would not have been the American century.

Democratic Internationalism and the World

The appeal of democratic internationalism lies in its ability to solve problems and exploit opportunities that exist in the enlarged and diverse democratic world. At a basic level, the world can be divided into three parts: old democracies, new democracies, and countries that are largely outside the democratic world. For each of these groups, it is instructive to ask three questions. First, what role did the American-led international order play in shaping the historical experiences and trajectories of these states, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century? Second, what are the lines of conflict and dispute within and across these major groupings? And third, how can the democratic internationalist program exploit these opportunities to solve problems and advance the free world project today?

THE EURO-ATLANTIC WORLD

The liberal democratic capitalist states of Europe are in important respects the “greater America.”³³ Taken together, these states have the largest economy in the world and a population substantially larger than that of the United States. Also, Europe has made many important advances in problem solving and in realizing free world goals. This “new Europe” has arisen from the great wars of nation-states and the open class warfare that convulsed European politics across the first decades of the twentieth century and that climaxed in the Second World War. Significantly, new Europe is the realization of the visions that many liberal internationalists and social democrats articulated for Europe: a region of liberal democratic states, regulated capitalism, and regional political and economic integration. Whatever Europe’s contemporary problems, they pale in significance to the earlier problems that the new European order has successfully addressed.

The European order was, of course, built by Europeans, but the United States played a significant role in its transformation.³⁴ Throughout much of the twentieth century, European liberals and democrats looked at the United States as a model and a vital ally. The latter helped to vanquish fascism and communism, the two lethal adversaries that threatened to extinguish liberal capitalist democracy. In the wake of the Second World War, the Marshall Plan, the reconstruction of Germany, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance, the international free trade regime, and the American model of mass middle-class consumer society all played major roles in laying the foundations and shaping the prospects for free states in Europe. This is true both in terms of their internal political and economic evolution and their patterns of intraregional cooperation.³⁵

Though vastly more convergent than before the Second World War, the United States and the countries of Europe still have significant differences reflecting divergent historical experiences. The political economy of the postwar American and European order were both forms of what has been called “embedded liberalism.”³⁶ In the United States, this version of capitalist-state relations took the form of the New Deal. However, the United States moved, particularly since the 1980s, toward deregulation and diminished progressive taxation, creating a more neoliberal and laissez-faire system

that weakened fundamental parts of the New Deal state structure. In contrast, embedded liberalism in Europe took the form of social democracy and Christian democracy. Over the postwar era, the European version of capitalism in many ways became more embedded in the welfare state. Thus Europe and the United States continue to debate which model of capitalist-democratic state is preferable and more effective.³⁷

Another Cold War legacy that divides the United States and Europe is rooted in the different roles they played in the Atlantic alliance. The United States played the role of liberal hegemon and European states assumed roles as junior allies—divergent roles that continue to shape how Europeans and Americans regard each other.³⁸ Europeans often look at the United States and see a country that is overarmed, too prone to use force, and increasingly hostile to international law and global institutions. Americans often look at Europe and see an ungrateful beneficiary of U.S. power and protection and resent the unacknowledged burden this has placed on the United States. These differences contribute to anti-Americanism in Europe and anti-Europeanism in America, stoking transatlantic distrust.

At the same time, Europe and the United States face an array of similarly difficult problems: economic stagnation, rising economic inequality, fiscal imbalances, rising debt, chronic youth unemployment, spiraling health-care costs, underfunded pension obligations, declining industrial competitiveness, and political gridlock. Their ability to address these problems will be profoundly shaped by the viability, legitimacy, and attractiveness of liberal democracy. The United States and Europe also face an unsettled global geopolitical environment produced by the shifting global economic balance and the rise of possible rivals, most notably China and Russia.

How can democratic internationalism contribute to revitalizing this transatlantic relationship at the core of the old democratic world? First, democratic internationalism directs attention to social and economic equity, speaking directly to the growing gaps and declining equality of opportunity in the United States. Movement by the United States toward the European social model is one method to restore the frayed domestic foundations of American leadership in the enlarged democratic world. Second, democratic internationalism's responsibility agenda can contribute to domestic renewal both in the United States and in Europe. It provides the basis for a revitalized form of embedded liberalism in which responsible citizens, associations, and localities take steps to both cushion the raw edges of capitalism and replace top-heavy bureaucratic forms of state regulation and social welfare provision.

Third, democratic internationalism's emphasis on tackling complex interdependence is particularly well suited to a large and growing set of industrial and postindustrial problems. In recent decades, Euro-American cooperation and leadership has been the indispensable foundation for building international institutions and solving problems, such as containing communism, advancing free trade, protecting the environment, and promoting human rights and democracy. Their joint leadership will continue to be necessary. Within the democratic world, the United States and Europe stand out. U.S. and European governments are highly developed and relatively capable of designing sophisticated regulation of modern economic interdependences and externalities. Solving the cascade of emerging global problems, perhaps most notably climate change, will depend on the globalization of regulatory state capacities using incentives and codes that mesh with—rather than replace—market and civic society activities. Across the centuries of their interaction, particularly since the industrial revolution, Americans and Europeans have repeatedly and productively borrowed ideas and policies from each other. In the early decades of the twentieth century, a network of American and European liberal progressives promoted a myriad of similar programs that addressed similar problems, ranging from urban health, banking regulation, and promotion of technological innovation to regulation of child

labor, workplace safety, food and drug quality, and modern transportation systems.³⁹ Continuing this tradition of learning and borrowing is critical to solving this century's problems.

In the increasingly multipolar democratic world, the United States will need to share leadership, responsibilities, and privileges with other democracies. For their part, European countries are currently both overrepresented and underrepresented in global institutions. On the UN Security Council, for example, France and Great Britain hold two of five permanent seats, but Germany and other European countries lack a voice. The effort to establish an EU-wide foreign policy and accompanying institutions is vital if Europe is going to play a leading role in the enlarged democratic world commensurate with its power, resources, and potential for influence. The successful transitions of former communist eastern European countries have contributed mightily to the free world project. Further European initiatives and leadership in Africa and the greater Middle East also have great potential.

Despite their differences, there is much that unites the United States and Europe. The community-building agenda of democratic internationalism assigns considerable importance to strengthening these old ties and avoiding a drift into European-American animosity. Specifically, a U.S. grand strategy of democratic internationalism should elevate and refocus the conversation between the transatlantic democracies. The conversation tends to be dominated by short-term crises and the jockeying of interests, but it should also be about shared understandings, historical legacies, and identity differences. Such conversations about values and principles can seem empty and pointless, but they played vital roles in forging the democratic community in the tumultuous years of the twentieth century. Declarations of common values and goals, such as in Wilson's Fourteen Points, the Atlantic Charter, and the Helsinki Accords, contributed to the formation of a shared vision that gave purpose and direction to the great allied mobilization and struggle. Codifications of principles that emerge from highly visible and politically invested conversations between states help solidify interests and articulate practical programs for the realization of those interests. States are not going to agree to the public declaration of values that are contrary to their basic interests, but articulations of values and principles that at least partially mesh with interests help define and give content to those interests. In short, preambles matter; crisp statements of vision signal common objectives and even help create them.⁴⁰

Achieving a shared understanding of the relationship between capitalism and the democratic state should be the first priority for the community-building conversation of democratic internationalism. Though one model will never fit all, the aim should be to rebuild a domestic coalition and workable consensus around a balance between the market and the state that is mixed and toward greater equality of opportunity in social and economic life. American and European democracies should seek to create a modified and updated version of the middle-class democracy that was the aim and the product of the American New Deal and Great Society and European social democracy and much of European Christian democracy.

POSTCOLONIAL AND NON-WESTERN DEMOCRACIES

One of the most striking features of the contemporary global system is that large postcolonial and non-Western states—such as India, Indonesia, and South Africa—are not only democracies but also have rapidly growing capitalist economies. As noted earlier, the democratic world now encompasses democracies in every region, of every civilizational type, and of every level of socioeconomic development. Some, such as India, were democracies from their founding, but others, such as Brazil and South Korea, have emerged from authoritarian rule in the more recent democratic “third wave.” This

enlargement of the democratic world brought hundreds of millions of people closer to the realization of the liberal internationalist and democratic vision. The future of liberal democracy will be significantly affected by whether these states can sustain capitalist economic growth while maintaining liberal democratic governments. If a major nonliberal systemic alternative emerges, as some have projected in the Chinese autocratic-capitalist combination, then the political choices of non-Western democracies will play a pivotal role in determining the future of liberal democracy.

Despite their often vocal opposition to the United States and particular U.S. policies, these non-Western and postcolonial democracies have been significant beneficiaries of American grand strategy and liberal order building in three ways. First, U.S. opposition to European colonialism and imperialism significantly contributed to the colonial peoples' struggle to achieve political independence. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the United States, although weak, was an open sympathizer and supporter of anti-European colonial movements throughout the New World. And the Monroe Doctrine, although later providing the aegis for U.S. regional hegemony, originally attempted to prevent European recolonization in the Americas. In the twentieth century, in the wake of both the First World War and the Second World War, the United States vigorously promoted national self-determination as a foundational principle for world order. Despite its alliances with the European colonial states against fascism and communism, the United States strongly opposed European imperial rule in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. During the great wave of successful Asian and African independence movements in the years between 1945 and 1965, pointed U.S. insistence that Great Britain, France, and the Netherlands dismantle their empires greatly assisted anticolonial struggles.

In addition, the U.S.-led effort to defeat the international communist movement and the Soviet Union eliminated a major new form of imperialism that threatened national self-determination.⁴¹ Communism was inimical to economic development as well as political liberty and democracy. The effort of state socialist and communist-leaning regimes to pursue autarchic and comprehensively statist development retarded the rate of economic growth among poor countries virtually wherever it was attempted. In contrast, poor countries, such as Taiwan and South Korea, that moved steadily toward economic openness and then political liberalization leapt in a generation into the group of middle-income countries.

Third, and most recently, the liberal trading system established and advanced by the United States has provided an opportunity for postcolonial countries to pursue export-led development strategies and rapidly increase their economic output. The rule-based trade regime of GATT and later the World Trade Organization (WTO) enabled developing countries to greatly increase their exports and provided access to the large U.S. market. This system produced the great postwar boom in trade and economic growth and the rapid rise of these countries. It was only after autarchic state-socialist models were discredited and discarded that these countries sought to grow by bringing their abundant factors of production—most notably labor—into the liberalized world trading system.⁴²

Despite this heritage and these links, there are three notable differences between the United States and the postcolonial and non-Western democracies. First, because so many of the new democracies are non-Western, there are often stark differences in ethnic, religious, and cultural values and outlooks. In some renderings of contemporary politics, it is these civilizational differences that will overshadow all other forms of similarity and difference.⁴³ In this view, human rights and political democracy are not just Western in origin but Western in character, and their realization is incompatible with the core values of non-Western civilizations. And some observers claim these differences constitute a wide gulf that is not likely to be easily bridged.

A second set of differences between the democracies of the North and South stems from their different historical experiences. Some contemporary democratic countries were mainly beneficiaries of European imperialism, colonialism, and racism, but others were mainly victims. The United States occupied a particularly favorable geopolitical position that helped enable its free political system and rapid economic growth. Even though the United States was the first state to break free of European imperial rule, the European-American settler colony imperialistically expanded across the North American continent and it experimented with imperialism in the Caribbean and the Philippines. Similarly, Canada, Australia, Brazil, and Argentina were European settler colonies whose expansions were also imperial and colonial. And they too enjoyed sizable benefits during the period of European global hegemony. In contrast, countries such as India, Indonesia, South Africa, and Nigeria were mainly the victims of European conquest, predation, and colonial rule. This historical experience gives these democracies a postcolonialist orientation that is far removed from the outlook and political identity of the Europeans and their successful settler offshoots. These postcolonial democracies are particularly sensitive to infringements on their sovereignty. They are vocal defenders of a world order in which colonialism has been abolished and great power intervention has been severely circumscribed, even when it occurs under the auspices of international organizations.

Since the collapse of their colonial empires, the Europeans, whether by virtue, necessity, or interest, have embraced much of this postcolonialist opposition to empire, hegemony, and intervention. In contrast, during the Cold War, the United States did intervene in the postcolonial world, most notably in Vietnam, in order to contain communism and maintain the global balance of power. But in the eyes of many underdeveloped countries, the United States seemed to be picking up the mantle of Western imperialism and pursuing a global empire. Most recently, the American interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan and the expansive U.S. global antiterrorism campaign have extended and reinforced these third-world suspicions about American imperial aspirations. These historical experiences have created legacies of hostility and mistrust that divide the enlarged democratic world. Postcolonial democracies are also ambivalent (at best) about the trend toward armed intervention for human protection purposes, under the doctrine of the “responsibility to protect.”

A third divide between the democracies of the South and the North, particularly the United States, pertains to the fields of economics and political economy. The U.S. historical experience is unique, as Louis Hartz famously argued, because the United States was “born liberal” due to its broadly egalitarian original distribution of property and opportunity.⁴⁴ Unlike other advanced democracies, or indeed most later democracies, the United States—aside from the convulsions of the Civil War—experienced little of the revolutionary and class violence so common elsewhere. The fortunate position of the United States in the world system helped reinforce this domestic political stability. In contrast, European social democracy emerged only after a century and a half of violent class conflict and interstate war that largely eradicated the *ancien régime* and its extreme inequalities.⁴⁵ Similarly, democratic state-building in the postcolonial and non-Western world has had to grapple both with the legacies of the maldistributions produced by imperial rule as well as with the inheritances of their indigenous premodern nondemocratic social and political formations. Given the privileged historical trajectory of the United States, Americans often fail to appreciate the difficulties of building liberal democracy in much of the world and to recognize the importance of occasional coercive redistribution to establish the social and economic foundation of democratic capitalism.

In spite of these notable differences, two observations about the enlarged democratic world illustrate the promise of democratic internationalism. First, despite their diversity, the members of the

enlarged democratic world also have important similarities. Most notably is their common commitment to democracy, human rights, social equity, and economic development. Even though liberal democracy and democratic capitalism did emerge in the West, they are not uniquely or essentially Western. And they have extremely wide appeal because they are particularly well suited to organizing modern polities, economies, and societies. Second, the diverse members of the enlarged democratic world face common and parallel problems associated with modernization and interdependence. These include growing social inequity, regulation of markets, and achieving environmental sustainability. This suggests that the enlarged democratic world is not necessarily primed for conflict and division, but rather has many opportunities for problem solving and community building.

What can democratic internationalism contribute to this vital relationship between Western democracies in the North and non-Western democracies in the South?

First, the democratic internationalist equity agenda will help firm the fraying foundations of democratic regimes and will help move the United States from being an outlier to a more “normal” democracy. Given the scope of the hypercapitalist world, only a wide coalition of democratic states can establish the common frameworks and standards for regulation, taxation, and growth. If the democracies are unable to advance economic equity, then the legitimacy of political democracy itself will be threatened and its appeal outside the democratic world will diminish, leading to a possible return to nationalist, statist, and nondemocratic politics.⁴⁶

Second, the responsibility agenda of democratic internationalism addresses problems experienced in both the post-colonial and non-Western democracies. It facilitates a balanced embedding of market capitalism in democratic states. Building a culture and ethos of individual and local responsibility is a particularly acute need in rapidly developing and modernizing countries because civic society, democracy, and well-functioning market economies all require this type of modern identity and culture.⁴⁷ It is also important because it helps provide a counterweight to the excessive growth of state power that tends to be antidemocratic and antiliberal.

Third, democratic internationalism can also help solve global problems. As they have developed and become more integrated in the liberal international order, postcolonial and non-Western democracies have increasingly contributed to global problems, and no globally concerted problem-solving effort can be successful without their participation and contribution. For example, much of the world’s tropical rain forests are within the territories of postcolonial and non-Western countries. Any effective effort to preserve the world’s forests will significantly depend on the countries’ willingness to undertake difficult internal regulatory efforts. As power has diffused, problem solving must increasingly encompass larger coalitions of states to be effective. Cooperation among the democracies is necessary to solve global problems, but it is ultimately insufficient without the involvement of major and rising nondemocratic states, such as China and Russia. But if the major and rising democracies do not take the lead, acting as a sort of vanguard for collective action, it will be extremely difficult to build the necessary global coalitions.

Fourth, the participation and contribution of the newer democracies in global problem-solving will be advanced by coalitional leadership and the recasting of global bargains. As international cooperation demands involvement by more states, the bargains over rights, responsibilities, and privileges in universal institutions must be renegotiated. If the Western states that brought these institutions into existence continue to insist on monopolizing leadership of them, then these institutions will be increasingly unattractive to rising post-colonial and non-Western states (both democratic and authoritarian) and their capacities to solve problems will diminish.

Fifth, the community-building project of democratic internationalism can also contribute to problem solving. This will require a conversation about principles and the thorny topics stemming from centuries of different historical experiences. All parties to this conversation must be prepared to modify their assumptions and expectations about each other. On the American side, it is time to candidly acknowledge mistakes and accomplishments, and to take more seriously the voices and perspectives of countries lacking the historical fortune of the United States. On the other side, rising democracies should acknowledge the ways in which the United States has been significantly different from European imperial great powers, and the costly contributions the United States has made to world peace, prosperity, and stability. The conversation should also forthrightly assess the ambivalent role that Marxism, communism, and socialism have played in the “development of underdevelopment.” This conversation will be far less difficult and costly than the efforts and sacrifices generations of democrats and liberals have made to advance freedom around the world. Without this conversation, it may not be possible to realize many of the opportunities of the enlarged democratic world.

THE POWERFUL NONDEMOCRACIES: CHINA AND RUSSIA

The grand strategic pivot of democratic internationalism is primarily a program for stabilizing and deepening democracy in and among democratic countries rather than an agenda for democracy promotion. It aims for the democratic world to “get its own house in order.” Nonetheless, this grand strategy has important implications for relations between the democratic and nondemocratic world, particularly China and Russia. Any effort at building community among the democracies runs the risk of appearing to be a grand strategy of confrontation toward and containment of China and Russia. Therefore, it is vital for the United States and the other democracies to continue to engage the powerful nondemocracies and encourage their greater participation in the broader global liberal order. Policy toward these two authoritarian states must continue to be a mix of “pull” and “push,” informed by the hope for the success of the “pull” with prudent preparations to “push back” against whatever revisionist agendas these states might pursue.

Realizing the goals of democratic internationalism increases the likelihood that nondemocratic countries will choose engagement and democratization rather than revisionist agendas. If the democracies cannot successfully address pressing world problems, and if they fail to live up to their own values, then the legitimacy and attractiveness of democracy will diminish. Conversely, if the enlarged democratic world is able to realize its potential, then advocates of democracy everywhere will be strengthened and its enemies undermined. Improved democratic world performance will also lay the foundations for a larger and more powerful coalition to counter revisionist efforts from nondemocratic countries.

Turning specifically to China, the future of Chinese relations with the West is burdened by historical narratives that should be openly and critically examined. Chinese antidemocrats, nationalists, and revisionists employ a historical storyline in which the West, including the United States, has ceaselessly victimized China. This is more a carryover from the communist ideology of the Mao period than it is accurate history.⁴⁸

It is also a significantly distorted and incomplete picture of U.S.-China relations. This is true in five senses. First, China across its long history was—like other great states—significantly imperial and colonial. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, China was victimized primarily by the Europeans and most aggressively by its Asian neighbor, imperial Japan. Throughout the period of Eu-

ropean encroachment of East Asia, the United States generally opposed territorial concessions and spheres of influence in China. Instead, the United States supported an open door for trade, and many Americans went to China to help the Chinese overcome the legacies of domestic oppression, disease, and poverty.

Second, U.S. opposition to Japanese imperial aggression in China and elsewhere in Asia in the 1930s and 1940s led the United States to first place an embargo on Japan and then wage a costly war against it. China suffered horribly from Japanese depredations, but it was primarily the United States, not China, that defeated imperial Japan. Third, despite the relative weakness of China, the Roosevelt administration insisted that China receive one of the five permanent seats on the UN Security Council. Fourth, U.S. opposition to the communist party in the 1940s was based on warranted concerns that Mao's policies would result in economic stagnation and continued poverty as well as widespread deaths of citizens, major impediments to the communist utopia.

Fifth, since the late 1970s, the United States has supported the Chinese opening to the world, including its participation in the WTO and other global bodies, and generally welcomed Chinese prosperity and growth. China has overall been a great beneficiary of the emergence of the United States as a great power and, more generally, of the postwar liberal international order.⁴⁹

Turning to Russia, the legacies from the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Russian empire still shape Russia's relationship with the democratic world and the United States. This relationship is also shaped by Russia's incomplete transition to political democracy and a market economy. It is likewise shadowed by Russian grievances about the encroachment of the West after the Cold War, which Russians view as unfavorable and imposed revisions of the Cold War settlement.⁵⁰

While Russia's transition to democracy is significantly incomplete, Russians today enjoy vastly more political freedom and economic opportunity than they have across the long centuries of Russian autocracy and communist rule. But for many observers in the United States, the incompleteness of Russia's transition to democracy and its historical claims in the former Soviet space point toward a renewal of geopolitical competition. However, the American debate about Russia's future trajectory is clouded by distorted accounts of the impact of competing American and Western policies and influences in ending the Cold War. The post-Soviet transition policies, which the United States did so much to shape, failed to adequately answer the vital question of distribution during the rushed privatization of Soviet state economic assets.⁵¹ The West sought to export into Russia the Reagan/Thatcher-era model of disembedded, laissez-faire capitalism. In contrast, the Roosevelt and Truman administration reconstructions of Germany and Japan were guided by its New Deal economic-political model. This attention to wealth distribution laid a much broader and firmer foundation for political democracy and market capitalism in postwar Germany and Japan.

AMERICAN LEGACIES, DILEMMAS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

The U.S. role as leader of the free world alliance and as hegemonic order builder has been at least as significant in shaping the United States domestically as in shaping other parts of the world. Most important, Cold War America mobilization for the East-West struggle served to strengthen and extend the New Deal "social bargain." But with the end of the Cold War and the advent of a globalized economy, the United States today finds itself with a "political deficit," a gap between what the federal government needs to do to sustain broad middle class prosperity, and what the American electorate and political parties have committed to undertake. Closing this gap will require a domestic commitment

to restore and preserve the social and economic aspects of the liberal democratic order. This domestic agenda can be significantly assisted by international cooperation with other liberal democracies, and democratic internationalism is the logical foreign policy of a progressive America.

It is easy to overlook that the great half-century struggle with fascism and communism made it easier—perhaps even possible—for the United States to cope with a wide array of domestic problems. Between the late 1930s and the end of the Cold War, the United States was in a “long war” that required a nearly continuous military mobilization. Foreign struggle paradoxically brought great domestic benefit for the United States. In effect, sustained mobilization for global conflict required and made it possible for the United States to build a strong state, manage an industrial economy, reduce social inequalities, and foster national cohesion. Ironically, it was the fascist and communist challenges from abroad that pushed the development of U.S. capitalism in a more progressive direction.⁵²

The long war also had significant impact on equity, class, and social welfare in the United States. Veterans’ benefits, particularly the GI Bill, opened the door to the middle class for millions of Americans. The post-Sputnik commitment to bolster education broadened social opportunity. And the initial success of racial integration within the armed services contributed to the integration within society at large.

American sensitivity to social, class, and racial issues was heightened by their communist challengers’ ideological vision of mass improvement and social equality. As a result, the performance of U.S. capitalism in the 1950s and 1960s in providing full employment, health care, and adequate housing took on international significance. Competition with the global communist movement increased the willingness of political and economic elites to make concessions to improve working conditions and take care of the less fortunate. At the same time, the threat posed by the Soviet communist state served to delegitimize more radical programs with comprehensive agendas for change. Ironically, the struggle with Soviet communism helped American capitalism overcome many of the flaws and instabilities that Marxists had long criticized and that were acute in the 1930s.

The net result of fifty years of global struggle was the strengthening and extension of a social bargain that achieved many progressive goals but was not solely based on the establishment of a domestic progressive consensus. Because of this global conflict, the American polity became both more democratic and more cohesive. These global challenges helped substitute for a domestic consensus to modernize American political institutions, thus the progressive agenda.

Its indispensable role as the promoter of capitalism internationally also profoundly shaped the United States. On the one hand, the United States’ favorable position within the expanding capitalist system contributed to American prosperity and growth. On the other hand, the growing domestic strength of the conservative Republican and corporate coalition in the 1980s eroded progressive taxation and economic equity. This diminished federal commitment occurred at the same time that U.S. workers were increasingly exposed to competition from new, low-wage capitalist economies. Alongside these structural shifts, the New Deal social democratic contract was increasingly under political pressure from laissez-faire fundamentalists and neoliberals, most notably in the Reagan administration and its successors.⁵³ As a result, the United States today finds itself without the Cold War’s pressures for equity and strong state capacities, but with the economic and ideological pressures to “disembed” capitalism and weaken the state.

Given this situation, what is the relationship between the progressive domestic program of renewal and a foreign policy strategy of democratic internationalism? To begin, restoring and modernizing the New Deal social contract within the United States will require a domestic political coalition

along populist, progressive, and liberal lines. As equity and opportunity continue to diminish, it seems likely that support for a new domestic progressive agenda will grow. However, this domestic political mobilization is necessary but insufficient to tame and regulate capitalism, given the scale and scope of the global capitalist system and the extent of American economic integration within it. This means that any domestic agenda of social democracy will depend on the success of a democratic internationalist coalition among leading capitalist and democratic states. If progressives can succeed in turning domestic policy in the United States, they will find themselves in a world hospitable to their agenda, an enlarged democratic world with many potentially willing partners. The enlarged democratic world is particularly hospitable because it contains so many models of democratic countries successfully addressing common contemporary problems. The international environment has changed, but it still has favorable implications for the American domestic New Deal project.

Furthermore, the United States is well equipped to take advantage of opportunities for coalition building among the democracies. The exceptional diversity of American society and the links that its peoples have with the rest of the world is an asset for forging transnational democratic progressive alliances. The United States is also well situated to contribute to coalition building because of its success in creating the most extensive system of interstate alliances in history. In addition, the United States is uniquely poised to contribute to solving global problems and to renegotiating and extending global bargains because the existing complex of international institutions and multilateral bargains were forged under U.S. leadership. Coalition building requires multilateral diplomacy, and the United States has often been exceptionally capable of such diplomacy. All of these assets combined give the United States a special capacity for community building.

Conclusion

For the United States to adapt to the world created by its success, it will need to devise new strategies. Historically, the United States was successful because it innovated to solve new problems, and it will have to do the same now. It needs to better address festering and chronic domestic fiscal, equity, and institutional problems; acknowledge its own shortcomings and their sources; and recognize—and even copy—the innovations and advances of others. Within the broader community of democracies, there are many models and orientations that the United States should attempt to emulate.

Realizing these opportunities requires the United States to acknowledge and confront the outdated legacies that have accumulated across the period of U.S. dominance and leadership. This baggage includes mindsets inherited from the long wars against fascism, communism, and imperialism, and those associated with American exceptionalism. Collectively, these mindsets blind Americans to the ways in which the United States has become peculiar rather than exceptional and lagging rather than leading.

The future of the United States rests upon domestic foundations. The assault on the foundations of past success by *laissez-faire* fundamentalists and nationalists with exclusive and peculiar agendas for American identity are threats to future success of American democracy, abroad and at home. The programs of democratic internationalism should take advantage of the opportunities created by past success to strengthen the community and problem solving within the enlarged democratic world. The future of world politics and the United States hinge on the ability of the democracies to solve their problems. By reframing and reorienting its grand strategy toward democratic internationalism, the United States has its best shot to extend the American century.

Endnotes

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 2. See G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).
 3. U.S. foreign policy has never been solely guided by liberal internationalism. In the vigorous historical debates about U.S. foreign policy, other powerful positions that are nationalist and imperialist have often shaped U.S. policies in ways that are deeply inconsistent with the agendas of liberal internationalism. Also, the necessities of great power balancing against major geopolitical rivals has interacted complexly with the agendas of liberal internationalism, sometimes enabling and supporting, while at other times subverting and diminishing those objectives. For a magisterial account of the U.S. foreign policy debate, see David Hendrickson, *Union, Nation, Empire: The American Debate over International Relations, 1789–1941* (Lawrence, KS: The University Press of Kansas, 2009).
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