
NEW WORLD COMING: **AMERICAN SECURITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

MAJOR THEMES AND IMPLICATIONS

The Phase I Report on the Emerging Global Security Environment
for the First Quarter of the 21st Century

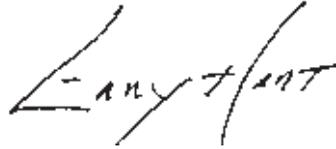
The United States Commission on National Security/21st Century

September 15, 1999

Preface

In 1947, President Harry Truman signed into law the National Security Act, the landmark U.S. national security legislation of the latter half of the 20th century. The 1947 legislation has served us well. It has undergirded our diplomatic efforts, provided the basis to establish our military capabilities, and focused our intelligence assets.

But the world has changed dramatically in the last fifty years, and particularly in the last decade. Institutions designed in another age may or may not be appropriate for the future. It is the mandate of the United States Commission on National Security/21st Century to examine precisely that question. It has undertaken to do so in three phases: the first to describe the world emerging in the first quarter of the next century, the second to design a national security strategy appropriate to that world, and the third to propose necessary changes to the national security structure in order to implement that strategy effectively. This paper, together with its supporting research and analysis, fulfills the first of these phases. As co-chairs of the Commission, we are pleased to present it to the American people.

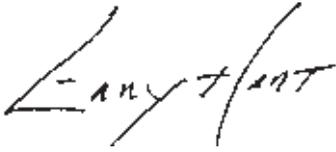
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Gary Hart

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Warren B. Rudman". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first name "Warren" being the most prominent part of the signature.

Warren B. Rudman

U.S. COMMISSION ON NATIONAL SECURITY/21st CENTURY



Gary Hart
Co-Chair



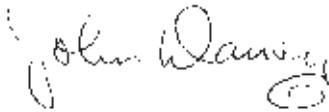
Warren B. Rudman
Co-Chair



Anne Armstrong
Commissioner



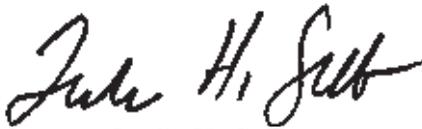
Norman R. Augustine
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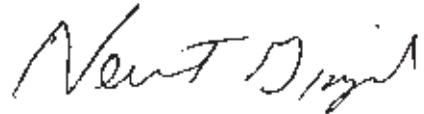
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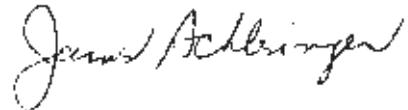
Lee H. Hamilton
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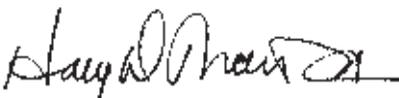
Lionel H. Olmer
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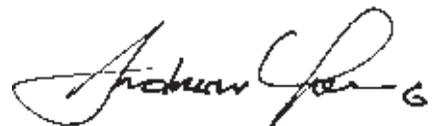
Donald B. Rice
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Harry D. Train
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Andrew Young
Commissioner

This paper consists of four parts: a contextual introduction; an articulation of twelve basic assumptions and observations; fourteen key conclusions about the global environment of the next quarter century; and a statement of their essential meaning for American national security strategy in the 21st century. The U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century will build upon this foundation to recommend a new strategy for the advancement of American interests and values. It will then propose, as necessary, new structures and processes for U.S. foreign and security policies in order to implement that strategy.

Introduction

In the next century, the spread of knowledge, the development of new technologies, and an increasing recognition of common global problems will present vast opportunities for economic growth, regional integration, and global political cooperation. The size of the world's middle class may increase many times over, lifting literally tens of millions of people from the depredations of poverty and disease. Authoritarian regimes will increasingly founder as they try to insulate their populations from a world brimming with free-flowing information, new economic opportunities, and spreading political freedoms. We may thus see the rise of many new democracies and the strengthening of several older ones. However fragile this process may be, it holds the hope of less conflict in the world than exists today.

Realizing these possibilities, however, will require concerted action on the part of the United States and other mature democracies around the world. Active American engagement cannot prevent all problems, but wise policies can mitigate many of them. The United States and governments of kindred spirit must

work harder to prevent conflicts as well as respond to them after the fact. Otherwise, the promise of the next century may never be realized, for greater global connectedness can lead to an increased possibility of misfortune as well as benefit.

The future is one of rising stakes. While humanity has an unprecedented opportunity to succor its poor, heal its sick, compose its disagreements, and find new purpose in common global goals, failure at these tasks could produce calamity on a worldwide scale. Thanks to the continuing integration of global financial networks, economic downturns that were once normally episodic and local may become more systemic and fully global in their harmful effects. Isolated epidemics could metastasize into global pandemics. The explosion in scientific discoveries now under way bears the potential of near miraculous benefit for humanity; misused, in the hands of despots, the new science could become a tool of genocide on an unprecedented scale. During the next 25 years, dilemmas arising from advances in biotechnology increasingly will force some cultures to reexamine the very foundations of their ethical structures. As society changes, our concept of national security will expand and our political values will be tested. In every sphere, our moral imaginations will be exercised anew.

For all that will be novel in the next century, some things will not change. Historical principles will still apply. There will still be great powers, and their interaction in pursuit of their own self-interests will still matter. As ever, much will depend on the sagacity and good character of leadership. Misunderstandings, misjudgments, and mistakes will still occur, but so will acts of bravery borne on the insight of exceptional men and women.

Today, and in the world we see emerging, American leadership will be of paramount importance. The American moment in world history will not last forever; nothing wrought by man does. But for the time being, a heavy responsibility rests on both its power and its values. It is a rare moment and a special opportunity in history when the acknowledged dominant global power seeks neither territory nor political empire. Every effort must be made to ensure that this responsibility is discharged wisely. It is to this end that our study is ultimately directed.

Our View of the Future

As we look to the future, *we believe that:*

1. An economically strong United States is likely to remain a primary political, military, and cultural force through 2025, and will thus have a significant role in shaping the international environment.
2. The stability and direction of American society and politics will help shape U.S. foreign policy goals and capacities, and hence the way the United States may affect the global future.
3. Science and technology will continue to advance and become more widely available and utilized around the world, but their benefits will be less evenly distributed.
4. World energy supplies will remain largely based on fossil fuels.
5. While much of the world will experience economic growth, disparities in income will increase and widespread poverty will persist.
6. The international aspects of business and commerce (trade, transportation, telecommunications, investment and finance, manufacturing, and professional services) will continue to expand.
7. Non-governmental organizations (refugee aid organizations, religious and ethnic advocacy groups, environmental and other single-issue lobbies, international professional associations, and others) will continue to grow in importance, numbers, and in their international role.
8. Though it will raise important issues of sovereignty, the United States will find it in its national interest to work with and strengthen a variety of international organizations.
9. The United States will remain *the* principal military power in the world.
10. Weapons of mass destruction (nuclear, chemical, and biological) and weapons of mass disruption (information warfare) will continue to proliferate to a wider range of state and non-state actors. Maintenance of a robust nuclear deterrent therefore remains essential as well as investment in new forms of defense against these threats.
11. We should expect conflicts in which adversaries, because of cultural affinities different from our own, will resort to forms and levels of violence shocking to our sensibilities.
12. As the United States confronts a variety of complex threats, it will often be dependent on allies; but it will find reliable alliances more difficult to establish and sustain.

Conclusions

On the basis of the foregoing beliefs, and our understanding of the broad context of the international security environment that will emerge over the next quarter century, we conclude that:

- 1. America will become increasingly vulnerable to hostile attack on our homeland, and our military superiority will not entirely protect us.***

The United States will be both absolutely and relatively stronger than any other state or combination of states. Although a global competitor to the United States is unlikely to arise over the next 25 years, emerging powers—either singly or in coalition—will increasingly constrain U.S. options regionally and limit its strategic influence. As a result, we will remain limited in our ability to impose our will, and we will be vulnerable to an increasing range of threats against American forces and citizens overseas as well as at home. American influence will increasingly be both embraced and resented abroad, as U.S. cultural, economic, and political power persists and perhaps spreads. States, terrorists, and other disaffected groups will acquire weapons of mass destruction and mass disruption, and some will use them. Americans will likely die on American soil, possibly in large numbers.

- 2. Rapid advances in information and biotechnologies will create new vulnerabilities for U.S. security.***

Governments or groups hostile to the United States and its interests will gain access to advanced technologies. They will seek to counter U.S. military advantages through the possession of these technologies and their actual use in non-traditional attacks. Moreover, as our society becomes increasingly dependent

on knowledge-based technology for producing goods and providing services, new vulnerabilities to such attacks will arise.

- 3. New technologies will divide the world as well as draw it together.***

In the next century people around the world in both developed and developing countries will be able to communicate with each other almost instantaneously. New technologies will increase productivity and create a transnational cyberclass of people. We will see much greater mobility and emigration among educated elites from less to more developed societies. We will be increasingly deluged by information, and have less time to process and interpret it. We will learn to cure illnesses, prolong and enrich life, and routinely clone it, but at the same time, advances in bio-technology will create moral dilemmas. An anti-technology backlash is possible, and even likely, as the adoption of emerging technologies creates new moral, cultural, and economic divisions.

- 4. The national security of all advanced states will be increasingly affected by the vulnerabilities of the evolving global economic infrastructure.***

The economic future will be more difficult to predict and to manage. The emergence or strengthening of significant global economic actors will cause realignments of economic power. Global changes in the next quarter-century will produce opportunities and vulnerabilities. Overall global economic growth will continue, albeit unevenly. At the same time, economic integration and fragmentation will co-exist. Serious and unexpected economic downturns, major disparities of wealth, volatile capital flows, increasing vulnerabilities in global electronic infrastructures, labor and social disruptions, and pressures for

increased protectionism will also occur. Many countries will be simultaneously more wealthy and more insecure. Some societies will find it difficult to develop the human capital and social cohesion necessary to employ new technologies productively. Their frustrations will be endemic and sometimes dangerous. For most advanced states, major threats to national security will broaden beyond the purely military.

5. *Energy will continue to have major strategic significance.*

Although energy distribution and consumption patterns will shift, we are unlikely to see dramatic changes in energy technology on a world scale in the next quarter century. Demand for fossil fuel will increase as major developing economies grow, increasing most rapidly in Asia. American dependence on foreign sources of energy will also grow over the next two decades. In the absence of events that alter significantly the price of oil, the stability of the world oil market will continue to depend on an uninterrupted supply of oil from the Persian Gulf, and the location of all key fossil fuel deposits will retain geopolitical significance.

6. *All borders will be more porous; some will bend and some will break.*

New technologies will continue to stretch and strain all existing borders—physical and social. Citizens will communicate with and form allegiances to individuals or movements anywhere in the world. Traditional bonds between states and their citizens can no longer be taken for granted, even in the United States. Many countries will have difficulties keeping dangers out of their territories, but their governments will still be committed to upholding the integrity of their borders. Global connectivity will allow

"big ideas" to spread quickly around the globe. Some ideas may be religious in nature, some populist, some devoted to democracy and human rights. Whatever their content, the stage will be set for mass action to have social impact beyond the borders and control of existing political structures.

7. *The sovereignty of states will come under pressure, but will endure.*

The international system will wrestle constantly over the next quarter century to establish the proper balance between fealty to the state on the one hand, and the impetus to build effective transnational institutions on the other. This struggle will be played out in the debate over international institutions to regulate financial markets, international policing and peace-making agencies, as well as several other shared global problems. Nevertheless, global forces, especially economic ones, will continue to batter the concept of national sovereignty. The state, as we know it, will also face challenges to its sovereignty under the mandate of evolving international law and by disaffected groups, including terrorists and criminals. Nonetheless, the principle of national sovereignty will endure, albeit in changed forms.

8. *Fragmentation or failure of states will occur, with destabilizing effects on neighboring states.*

Global and regional dynamics will normally bind states together, but events in major countries will still drive whether the world is peaceful or violent. States will differ in their ability to seize technological and economic opportunities, establish the social and political infrastructure necessary for economic growth, build political institutions responsive to the aspirations of their citizens, and find the leadership necessary to guide them through an era

of uncertainty and risk. Some important states may not be able to manage these challenges and could fragment or fail. The result will be an increase in the rise of suppressed nationalisms, ethnic or religious violence, humanitarian disasters, major catalytic regional crises, and the spread of dangerous weapons.

9. *Foreign crises will be replete with atrocities and the deliberate terrorizing of civilian populations.*

Interstate wars will occur over the next 25 years, but most violence will erupt from conflicts internal to current territorial states. As the desire for self-determination spreads, and many governments fail to adapt to new economic and social realities, minorities will be less likely to tolerate bad or prejudicial government. In consequence, the number of new states, international protectorates, and zones of autonomy will increase, and many will be born in violence. The major powers will struggle to devise an accountable and effective institutional response to such crises.

10. *Space will become a critical and competitive military environment.*

The U.S. use of space for military purposes will expand, but other countries will also learn to exploit space for both commercial and military purposes. Many other countries will learn to launch satellites to communicate and spy. Weapons will likely be put in space. Space will also become permanently manned.

11. *The essence of war will not change.*

Despite the proliferation of highly sophisticated and remote means of attack, the essence of war will remain the same. There will be casualties, carnage, and death; it will not be like a

video game. What will change will be the kinds of actors and the weapons available to them. While some societies will attempt to limit violence and damage, others will seek to maximize them, particularly against those societies with a lower tolerance for casualties.

12. *U.S. intelligence will face more challenging adversaries, and even excellent intelligence will not prevent all surprises.*

Micro-sensors and electronic communications will continue to expand intelligence collection capabilities around the world. As a result of the proliferation of other technologies, however, many countries and disaffected groups will develop techniques of denial and deception in an attempt to thwart U.S. intelligence efforts—despite U.S. technological superiority. In any event, the United States will continue to confront strategic shocks, as intelligence analysis and human judgments will fail to detect all dangers in an ever-changing world.

13. *The United States will be called upon frequently to intervene militarily in a time of uncertain alliances and with the prospect of fewer forward-deployed forces.*

Political changes abroad, economic considerations, and the increased vulnerability of U.S. bases around the world will increase pressures on the United States to reduce substantially its forward military presence in Europe and Asia. In dealing with security crises, the 21st century will be characterized more by episodic "posses of the willing" than the traditional World War II-style alliance systems. The United States will increasingly find itself wishing to form coalitions but increasingly unable to find partners willing and able to carry out combined military operations.

14. The emerging security environment in the next quarter century will require different military and other national capabilities.

The United States must act together with its allies to shape the future of the international environment, using all the instruments of American diplomatic, economic, and military power. The type of conflict in which this country will generally engage in the first quarter of the 21st century will require sustainable military capabilities characterized by stealth, speed, range, unprecedented

accuracy, lethality, strategic mobility, superior intelligence, and the overall will and ability to prevail. It is essential to maintain U.S. technological superiority, despite the unavoidable tension between acquisition of advanced capabilities and the maintenance of current capabilities. The mix and effectiveness of overall American capabilities need to be rethought and adjusted, and substantial changes in non-military national capabilities will also be needed. Discriminating and hard choices will be required.

Seeking an American National Security Strategy

In many respects, the world ahead seems amenable to basic American interests and values. A world pried open by the information revolution is a world less hospitable to tyranny and more friendly to human liberty. A more prosperous world is, on balance, a world more conducive to democracy and less tolerant of fatalism and the dour dogmas that often attend it. A less socially rigid, freer, and self-regulating world also accords with our deepest political beliefs and our central political metaphors—the checks and balances of our Constitution, the “invisible hand” of the market, our social creed of *E Pluribus Unum*, and the concept of federalism itself.

Nevertheless, a world amenable to our interests and values will not come into being by itself. Much of the world will resent and oppose us, if not for the simple fact of our preeminence, then for the fact that others often perceive the United States as exercising its power with arrogance and self-absorption. There will also be much apprehension and confusion as the world changes. National leaderships will have their hands full, and some will make mistakes.

As a result, for many years to come Americans will become increasingly less secure, and *much less secure than they now believe themselves to be*. That is because many of the threats emerging in our future will differ significantly from those of the past, not only in their physical but also in their psychological effects. While conventional conflicts will still be possible, the most serious threat to our security may consist of unannounced attacks on American cities by sub-national groups using genetically engineered pathogens. Another may

be a well-planned cyber-attack on the air traffic control system on the East Coast of the United States, as some 200 commercial aircraft are trying to land safely in a morning’s rain and fog. Other threats may inhere in assaults against an increasingly integrated and complex, but highly vulnerable, international economic infrastructure whose operation lies beyond the control of any single body. Threats may also loom from an unraveling of the fabric of national identity itself, and the consequent failure or collapse of several major countries.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that threats to American security will be more diffuse, harder to anticipate, and more difficult to neutralize than ever before. Deterrence will not work as it once did; in many cases it may not work at all. There will be a blurring of boundaries: between homeland defense and foreign policy; between sovereign states and a plethora of protectorates and autonomous zones; between the pull of national loyalties on individual citizens and the pull of loyalties both more local and more global in nature.

While the likelihood of major conflicts between powerful states will decrease, conflict itself will likely increase. The world that lies in store for us over the next 25 years will surely challenge our received wisdom about how to protect American interests and advance American values. In such an environment the United States needs a sure understanding of its objectives, and a coherent strategy to deal with both the dangers and the opportunities ahead. It is from the Phase I Report—both this document and the research and analytical study from which it is drawn—that this Commission will seek to develop that understanding, and build that strategy, in Phase II. We will unveil that strategy in April 2000.