



Truman National Security Project

Truman Democrats: Strong. Smart. Principled.

A Truman Paper

Creating Truman Democrats: A Three-Step Program for Rebuilding Democratic National Security Policy

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The Truman National Security Project is dedicated to creating a Democratic Party with a strong, smart, principled security stance that sets the terms of the foreign policy agenda. Truman Papers are intended to spark debate while building a coherent set of ideas that articulate our vision of a unique national security policy based in Democratic values.

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Introduction

On the morning of November 2, 2004, Americans gazed upon a dangerous world. In Iraq, our troops were fighting an urban guerrilla war with no obvious end in sight. Iran and North Korea, implacable enemies and terrorist financiers, were on the cusp of becoming nuclear powers—if they were not already. The 9/11 Commission had declared our intelligence system broken. Civilians were being kidnapped in Afghanistan, regular Americans vacationing in friendly countries were stunned by the vehemence of anti-Americanism, and staunch allies were forced by domestic opinion to reduce their support for America, and to pull their troops from serving alongside our own. A four-year record of such foreign policy should have been a gift to Democrats. Instead, the election turned on two issues: national security and values—and Democrats lost.

The fact that the incumbent president could win with such a record speaks to the dire situation Democrats now face in national security. The problem is not new: since the late 1960s, polls show increasing American distrust for Democrats on security issues. But it is now urgent—Democrats owe it to the American people to provide a serious alternative to current security policies that are making us less safe.

To regain our position as the preeminent party for national security, we believe Democrats must address a three-fold challenge.

- ***First, we must confront a hostile rhetorical landscape.*** Conservatives have hijacked the language of strength and security since we abandoned these issues over the past thirty years—we must take these concepts back.
- ***At the same time, we must heal the values divide within our party.*** A perceived split between Democratic values and strength now prevents Democrats from embracing a strong and principled strategic vision of national security. Democratic security thinkers must become comfortable talking about values again, and Democratic rank-and-file must become comfortable with strength.
- ***Finally, we must offer a strong, alternative foreign policy platform.*** A Democratic national security posture must reflect both our desire to keep Americans safe, and the deepest convictions that brought us to the Democratic Party. We must offer Americans a new vision of strength, with principle.

This Truman Paper is a first foray into confronting these issues.

The Problem: The Party of Idealists vs. the Party of Pragmatists

The Democratic Party just lost an election we should have won. The election turned on national security. And we must now confront an undeniable fact: Americans don't trust Democrats to keep them safe.¹ We may have been able to duck the problem during the last few decades. But that time is past. The terrorist threat is a fight that will take many years, and it has brought security home. Americans are scared for their children, they fear another random attack. So long as this real threat persists, Americans, particularly core Democratic groups such as women, will be voting on national security. If Democrats wish to enact our domestic agenda, we must first prove that we can confront the threats America faces abroad. Even more important than getting into office is what we do afterward. If we are the party in charge, we need to have a strong vision of our national security strategy for the 21st century. We do not have one now.

The first step toward crafting such a policy is to understand why it has not emerged already. The incoherence in Democratic foreign policy does not stem from a lack of expertise. We have a serious cadre of hard-nosed foreign policy experts with a record of government service and a deep understanding of our hard security tools. Nor do we lack strategic thinkers. A lively intellectual debate on Democratic foreign policy strategy has begun to spill from op-ed pages to the pages of political journals. But in foreign policy, Democrats are divided into two camps: The Party of Idealists and the Party of Pragmatists. The split has left us unable to harness strength and values together in the crafting of national security policy.

The Party of Idealists talks in the ethically-based language of Democratic activists. But scarred by a post-Vietnam aversion to American power, they remain deeply uncomfortable with American national interest and with the harder tools of foreign policy, particularly the military and intelligence communities. While they tout the morality of their beliefs, they often end up supporting discrete policies that undermine the values they hold dear. Their stances often place us on the side of repressive regimes (such as Iraq), create protectionist barriers that harm the world's poor (such as the Seattle defeat of the Doha agenda), or fail to condemn bad policies

¹ Internal party polls over the past four years found that national security and terrorism are the main preoccupations of approximately half of all Americans, and Republicans have a 40% edge on these issues. (Dana H. Allin, Philip H. Gordon, and Michael E. O'Hanlon, "The Democratic Party and Foreign Policy" *World Policy Journal*, Washington, D.C.: 2003) at 7). This Democratic weakness in national security is not a new phenomenon. According to a series of polls collected by the Roper Center, American distrust toward Democratic handling of national security started in the late 1960s, and has grown steadily worse since the party's turn inward following the Vietnam War. In 1988, 50% of those asked said Republicans were more likely to protect national security—only 27% chose the Democrats. By 2003, 63% of those polled preferred Republicans for national security policy. And that was a step up from 2001 (Roper Center polling data <<http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/>>).

Perceived foreign policy weakness was a major factor in recent electoral losses. Polling throughout the 2000 general election showed President Bush with a three-to-one lead over Al Gore on military issues (Donna Brazile and Timothy Bergreen, "What Would Scoop Do?" *Wall Street Journal*, May 21, 2003. In polls taken before the 2004 election, voters listed national security, terrorism, and Iraq as three of the top four concerns (Braiker, Brian, "Too Close to Call," *Newsweek*, October 20, 2004). Among voters who claimed security as their top priority in the 2004 election, 86% voted for President Bush (CNN exit poll data). In the 2002 midterm race, incumbent Senators Max Cleland of Georgia, and Jean Carnahan of Missouri, serious Democrats with hard security credentials were forced out of office after Republicans successfully waged a campaign to paint them as "soft".

pursued by other countries (such as Robert Mugabe's penchant for torture and land grabs). This vocal and visible camp scares Americans, who feel that the Democratic Party does not value their safety. And since the idealists' policies do not advance the values they claim to uphold, Americans see the Democratic Party as confused and morally rudderless.

Many of our foreign policy experts live in another Democratic Party—the Party of Pragmatists. Perhaps out of fear of being lumped with starry-eyed Wilsonians, they invoke technocratic thinking when attempting to convey hard-nosed strength. This cohort offers strong, sensible policies. But they are deeply uncomfortable grounding these policies in values. Their *realpolitik*, practically a party line at establishment bastions such as the Council on Foreign Relations, turns off our party's base, who are led to believe that there is little difference between conservatives and Democrats on foreign policy. Meanwhile, by talking policies and methods, not values and vision, they fail to provide a coherent, overarching message that can inspire the American people.

The split in our party has given Republicans the opportunity to take our ideals for themselves. Democrats today who use the core language of liberalism, such as democracy and individual freedom, are seen as Republicans in sheep's clothing. This theft, however, was an inside job. Democratic idealists had, ironically, repackaged these liberal ideals as imperialist enterprises. Meanwhile, our security thinkers, having embraced pragmatism, were happy to eschew such soft-headed values for *realpolitik*.

We must retake our values, because realism alone defines a way of thinking that is incapable of addressing fundamentalist, religiously-inspired terror—one of the key threats of our day. Realism is not realistic for meeting the problems at hand. As President Truman and George Kennan understood, when facing an ideological threat, the answer can only be found in an opposing and catalyzing idea. Only a vision that conveys hope, as well as strength, will be able to overturn the hopelessness and humiliation that now engulfs the world from which radicals recruit.

Moreover, the chasm between strength and principle leaves Democrats with a profoundly ineffective and incomplete language of security. Both our idealists and our pragmatists see strength and values in opposition—and each side stands for only one. Meanwhile, conservatives, particularly the present Administration, see the purpose of strength as the means through which America can propel our values into the world. They have managed to combine these two powerful forces. Thus, while Democrats can appeal only to the American mind, Republicans can appeal to both the head and the heart. Bush can talk about liberty, freedom, and what is right—while Democrats are left discussing plans, programs, and what is sensible. We speak of strength as a cold, intimidating thing divorced from our ideals. Conservatives can talk of strength in a language that lifts the concept up into the realm of morality. That is a powerful brew.

The split in our party has left us with a profoundly confused foreign policy stance. Democrats embrace human rights—but think words like democratization are for neo-cons. We will build shantytowns to protest apartheid in South Africa, but we feel it is imperialistic to support democracy in Iran. We protest the killing of children in the Iraq War—but we raise no hue and cry against the murder of children in their schoolhouse in Beslan. It is time to accept that this moral logic is not logical. And it is not moral. It is time to rejoin strength and values within the Democratic party.

Obstacle I: Republican Ownership of the Security Terrain

So long as our national debate defines “strength” solely in terms of military force and unilateral action, the Democratic Party will never be able to embrace the concept and become the party of national security. We must first change the way in which our country has come to think and talk about security in the past twenty years.

Our current security debate is deeply at odds with the past century of American foreign policy. In the early decades of the Cold War, security was a broad concept. It implied not just a strong military, but also a strong economy, strong morale at home, and strong alliances based on shared threat. After World War II, President Truman and his wise men created a security structure that would buttress world stability for the good of America. They had the vision to see that America was safer in a world that was more peaceful, more just, and more prosperous. Politicians from Truman to Kennedy articulated this idea of enlightened self-interest, and could then explain to Americans why it was in their security interest to support the unprecedented Marshall Plan, the creation of multilateral bodies such as the European Union, binding alliances such as NATO, our first standing foreign aid program, and reduced protectionism. New policies such as the Peace Corps fit easily into this complex understanding of our security. This was the mainstream of American foreign policy, and the Democratic Party was its shepherd.

Today, grand strategies voicing similar ideas fall on fallow terrain, because conservatives have transformed the rhetorical landscape. In the 1960s, disillusionment with America after the Vietnam War pushed Democrats away from national security policy, while social change at home pulled the party towards domestic issues. Republicans stepped into the foreign policy vacuum. For twenty years, they have dismantled America’s characteristically broad understanding of global security, word by word. Americans have instead been taught that national security equals military strength alone, and the ability to engage in unilateral strategies overseas. We pursue narrow self-interest over enlightened self-interest, and are surprised that we reap resentment, anger, and balancing behavior—from allies, not enemies.

The result of the militarized security discourse is that smart policies and grand strategies can’t get off the blocks without being slapped with the deadly label of “soft.” Activities to build international alliances to share the costs of war, development efforts to disrupt fundamentalist schooling abroad—all are framed as soft policies that are not on the level of hard security, or high politics. Americans are taught that if they want to be safe, they must accept this version of “strength.” There is no other, equally coherent and strong, alternative.

The way we think and talk about national security has consequences—particularly for our politicians. Either they must signal that they understand the unprecedented danger we now face by backing simplistic security measures, or they are deemed weak-kneed doves who are unfit to govern in an age of terror. In an era where no one in public life can afford to be seen as soft on security, everyone is forced to adopt this twisted and simplistic notion of “strength.” And thoughtful, critical ideas for improving our country’s national security are lost in the debate.

This redefinition of American national security has not just emasculated our ability to talk intelligently about foreign policy—it has actually harmed our ability to carry out national security. The U.S. military, for instance, has a long history of post-conflict stabilization and

nation building. Our civil affairs units were integral to the success of stabilizing and democratizing Japan and Germany after WWII. In fact, civil-political affairs work has been a key part of military action since the time of the Monroe Doctrine. But beginning in the 1980s, military action to govern countries following conflict came under concerted attack by conservative think tanks. They called such work “soft,” and said that it “distracted” from the real work of our military—which was redefined as simply fighting battles, not winning wars.

The conservative discourse has given our military a larger and larger role in foreign policy, but it simultaneously stripped the military of the tools needed to carry out the work they were given. Years of pounding away on message have made even the military itself forget its proud history. Our subsequent lack of preparation for nation-building in Iraq shows the price, in flag-draped coffins, of the narrow conservative view of security.

Retaking the security discourse, so that our politicians can confidently voice strong and smart policies, must therefore be a crucial goal of the Truman Democratic movement.

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Obstacle II: The Democratic Values Divide – and How to Address It

Our failure to capture the rhetorical terrain cannot be solved by speechwriting and messaging workshops. As the philosopher Wittgenstein said, “we cannot say what we cannot think.” In other words, our problems lie not in articulation, but in understanding. We cannot counter the conservative security message until we can clarify our values to ourselves, and can think of these values as supportive of, rather than contrary to, strong policies.

What problems must we address to meet this challenge? First, we must move past the wound that is Vietnam. The Vietnam War scarred the generation of baby boomers who have become our party’s public figures and funding base. The lessons drawn were manifold. Some learned to distrust American action abroad, believing that the war was an imperial misadventure, and that we needed to perfect ourselves at home before we earned the right to pursue moral causes elsewhere. Some became cynical about American power altogether, and focused on criticizing America first. Others developed a deep, abiding hatred for war that slid into visceral pacifism. Still others partook of a misguided dislike for the military, blaming the victim, as it were, for the bloodshed.

Vietnam has left an abyss at our center that we have not been able to bridge. We now need to ask ourselves if these gut reactions make sense. Are cynicism, pacifism, and distrust of America the ideals of the Democratic party? Do they help us to uphold our deepest values? Or are they simply a historical legacy that it is time to shed? We have a duty to remember the tragedy of Vietnam, and to draw important policy and moral lessons from our mistakes there—but we must not let bitterness taint our party. As representatives of the generation that has come of age after the Vietnam War, we and much of our cohort believe it is time to move on.

But Vietnam is not the only problem. Democrats have also confused clear statements of morality with simplistic statements of action. Too many wince at words like “evil.” But what else can one call, for instance, terrorists who capture a school full of children and force them to drink

their own urine for days, then kill six-year-olds indiscriminately in the terrible *dénouement*? Calling this evil is simply calling a spade a spade.

Deciding how to confront this evil is a second step—and here is where deep understanding, pragmatism, and a full appreciation for how best to achieve our goals must be brought to bear. Strength and moral clarity do not entail simplistic jingoism. Franklin Roosevelt, Truman, and John F. Kennedy all put forth nuanced, thoughtful policies—but they did not shirk from speaking plainly about the need to defend our security against threat, and the need to stand for the values of freedom.

Take two of the dominant foreign policy issues today: the promotion of democracy, and the war on terror. Democracy and freedom are core values of liberals—they are *the* values of liberty from which our name was crafted. They are also the means to advance human rights and economic opportunity abroad, values which we uphold in every one of our policies at home. Yet Democrats have split their baby Solomon-like, eschewing the idea of democracy promotion, while promoting human rights, a strategy destined to kill both.

Our party's aversion to democracy promotion stems less from moral relativism than from a tendency to confuse means with ends. Few Democrats believe that authoritarianism is superior to democracy. Helping people organize, meet, and choose their own form of government is hardly against Democratic values. What most Democrats would find fault with is the neo-conservative idea that we should promote a particular American brand of democracy through force. The neo-conservative push for instantaneous democratization at gunpoint simply fails in practice. And, on a moral level, it is not right to force other peoples to bear the inevitable and terrible unintended consequences of war when we cannot ensure a more positive outcome.

But there is no contradiction in favoring the expansion of freedom and refusing the simplistic pursuit of democracy by force. We need to convince the American people there is another way. Democrats can begin by accepting liberty and freedom as values we espouse—and redefining the means for achieving them.

Declaring war on terror is another rhetorical trope that makes many Democrats uncomfortable, and makes us look weak as a result. The “war” on terror suggests to many Democrats overly simplistic military solutions to a complex problem. We are scared of the imperial overtones that such a war connotes. But in the 1960s, we declared a war on poverty—and it did not, of course, mean the use of the military—it meant that poverty was going to be elevated to a strategic priority. “War” was a word implying that the goal would be prioritized, and that it would require mobilization throughout our foreign policy toolkit.

In terms of the threat and the number of American deaths at home and abroad, we are at war, and it is important to accept that fact. It is not a war we chose. And it is not a war that pits America against another culture. The war on terror is a war *within* Muslim communities—one in which we have to take a side. It is a war waged against an idea—the ideology of totalitarian, fundamentalist, radical Islam. Those who espouse this ideology are not only at war with America. They are first and foremost at war with the moderates and liberals throughout the Islamic world, whom they must silence, intimidate, and co-opt to gain power.

Whether we engage or not, the war *within* Muslim communities will continue. The liberals, women, minorities, and moderates within these communities will continue to be intimidated into silence. And, as when Germany regained the Rhineland as its first step towards World War II, each voice silenced provides more power to the ascendant, violent ideology. It is not cultural imperialism to protect the innocent from intimidation. We are not helping women by standing by idly while they are subject to honor killings and legalized beating. We are not helping the poor when we let their children be taught in the free schools set up by radical organizations to indoctrinate. Just as we stand with the Tibetans, the Burmese, and other peoples that are being silenced and oppressed, just as we took a stand on the right side of our own struggles for civil rights at home, we owe it to the liberals and moderates in these countries to take a stand on their side.

Declaring war on terror, then, is another case of separating means and ends. We agree that it must be America's strategic priority to stop terrorists from killing innocent people, and we should be able to say it. We differ on means. We think that the way to fight a war on terror is to realize that it is a fight of ideas, not a fight against a finite set of terrorists. Again, we diverge with the neoconservatives: the war on terror will not be won through raw force—repression only fuels radicalism. Instead, we must be willing to be aggressive against those already committed to using murder to attain their ends, while cutting off their base by building hope and opportunity among those they hope to recruit.

Finally, we must be ready to challenge certain philosophical assumptions that have arisen within the Democratic party. The most pernicious of these is probably the deep, unspoken belief that any goal pursued for American national interest is bad, because as a rich and powerful nation, our interests are less worthy than those of poorer and weaker nations. This belief is among those that fuel our willingness to go to war for purely humanitarian purposes in Bosnia or Somalia, but to be deeply suspicious of using force when necessary to create security for Americans.

Instead of taking the position that Americans do not deserve to have their needs served abroad when all other people have that right, we should instead call for a policy that is better both morally and pragmatically: enlightened self-interest. As Truman explained, discussing one aspect of his policy: "The foreign economic policy of the United States is designed to promote our own prosperity, and at the same time to aid in the restoration and expansion of world markets and to contribute thereby to world peace and world security."

Morally, rather than denigrating American power, we should realize that it gives us an immense ability to provide for the public goods of stability, hope, and opportunity if wielded correctly. Pragmatically, America has the most to gain through enlightened self-interest that promotes world stability and opportunity. Our status as the most powerful nation on earth inevitably invites destructive levels of envy, making us the first target for violence. Unbound unilateral action invites power balancing in ways that have already proved destructive to our diplomatic efforts in Iran, Korea, and Israel. We have the moral right to pursue our national interest—but given the pragmatic realities of balancing against power, already in play in much of the world, we can best meet the needs of Americans by pursuing strategies of enlightened self-interest.

This is the beginning of a strategy of framing and messaging that Truman Democrats must begin if our party is to regain preeminence in national security. The next step is filling in the substance.

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Moving Towards a Solution: A Truman Democratic Vision

Truman Democrats believe the future of the Democratic Party lies in uniting strength with principles. In America, we are not afraid to proclaim the values we believe in. Democrats stand for the dignity of every man and woman, no matter how poor, no matter where they are from, or what their race or creed. We believe in the capability of every human to flourish. We believe in equality of opportunity, and in providing those who were not gifted at birth with a level playing field and the means to succeed on it. We believe in progress, in leaving the world better for our children, more peaceful, more just, more secure. These values should not stop at our borders out of moral confusion and historical circumstances.

Democrats must stand for strength. Yet our way cannot--must not—be to echo Republican policies that are making our nation less safe, our path more solitary. We are not neo-conservatives: we disagree with their fundamental ideas over what constitutes power, and how American power should be deployed. While neoconservatives lionize military power and disdain world opinion, we believe power is multifaceted. Our troops cannot root out terrorist networks in Europe; American air raids cannot change the minds of children growing up in an environment of hate. Military power is crucial—but without allies, moral legitimacy, a strong economy, and the ability to influence hearts and minds abroad, it gives us very little power indeed. Neoconservatives call for hard American strength at all costs—and thus fail to gain the very goal they work toward. Truman Democrats call for strength through a more generous, compelling vision of society, a vision that is not created out of reaction to conservative ideas, but is crafted out of Democratic values.²

The first step in our vision is to accept the crucial role that hard security plays in creating a world where people can thrive and opportunity can grow in safety. In Democratic circles, those who work for human rights bask in moral approbation, while those brave souls who work with the military are treated as curiosities. Intelligence remains the field that dare not speak its name. Yet when the World Bank spoke with thousands of individuals in the developing world, security from violence was one of the overwhelmingly desired goods. In countries worldwide, our armed forces provide the deterrent that creates peace and enables people to thrive without fear of war. Intelligence is essential to meeting the terrorist threat with the most minimal bloodshed to ourselves and to those living in states where terrorists hide. Strong military and intelligence services also provide teeth to our diplomacy—it is this threat of force that gives our diplomats strength when we stand up to governments that abuse the human rights of their people. We cannot use our military frivolously. But we must understand that weakness invites aggression. We do these men and women a disservice when we are overly fearful of using them intelligently for the missions they were trained to do. We owe it to them to accept the critical part power plays in promoting our security, and the security of other nations. Our soldiers deserve two parties that understand their needs and uphold their rights.

² The phrase “a generous and compelling vision” was coined by Dana H. Allin, Philip H. Gordon, and Michael E. O’Hanlon in *“The Democratic Party and Foreign Policy,”* (Washington, DC: *World Policy Journal*, 2003). A set of policies similar to ours, with which we wholeheartedly agree, are articulated in *Progressive Internationalism*, http://www.ppionline.org/ppi_ci.cfm?contentid=252144&subsecid=900020&knlgAreaID=450004.

Second, we need to expand democracy, and the economic conditions that enable liberty to flourish. Democratization is not an American imperial venture. The European Union has enshrined democracy, the rule of law, and human rights as essential values that it promotes in its dealings with all countries. The development economist Amartya Sen has demonstrated that only democracies have been able to prevent the worst evils of poverty, such as mass famine. Not only is liberty a moral good. It is now essential for international security. Authoritarianism breeds the anger and hopelessness that radical leaders can exploit for terrorist recruitment. American support for these regimes turns this anger against us. For this reason, it is in the “hard cases”—like Pakistan and Saudi Arabia—that it is most urgent to support liberalization.

Democratization through force—the neoconservative way—does not work, and is not morally justifiable. Stable, liberal democracies do not emerge from the barrel of a gun, nor do they emerge from pushing overnight revolution. They grow from what de Tocqueville termed “habits of the heart”: ways of thinking, behaving, and contributing to the public sphere. As Václav Havel and the other playwrights and poets who pushed down the Berlin Wall can tell us, liberty grows when people within a country become citizens, when they choose to take responsibility for their own societies.

We should help this process by dramatically increasing our support for liberals, democrats, and human rights activists inside authoritarian societies, and for the rule of law institutions that can gradually change these countries. We should not shrink from pushing hard diplomatically for human rights and more open societies, even in countries assisting in the war on terror. Where the American imprimatur may hurt those we wish to help, we will have to be more creative about channeling our assistance through third parties.

Realists have always cited the dangerous naïveté of those who favor democracy over stability. These two goods do clash in many locales in the short term—the problem is real. But we do ourselves no good to ignore the fact that this “rock-and-a-hard-place” calculus is a situation created by authoritarian leaders to secure their power. Authoritarian regimes use the real threat of backlash, a threat they create and foster through their manipulation of their domestic politics, as blackmail to force us to collaborate in keeping their regimes in power.

Foolhardy democratization is indeed dangerous. And it is true that democratization is not easy—we know more about what does not work, than what does. But it is equally dangerous, and naïve, to imagine that buttressing dictators in support of stability is in our security interests. We tried that path for decades, and the bombs that are now exploding around the world have proven its sterility. People do not easily forgive a country that has handed their government the stick with which they are beaten.

Third, we must reinvigorate strong, standing security alliances. When Truman formed NATO, he did so in the belief that “no one nation can find protection in a selfish search for safe haven from the storm.” In a world where terrorists can hide in any country, where the arms trade is worldwide, and where illicit financial transactions are global, our security lies in convincing the world that we share a common threat. Our security now, as then, lies in binding together.

Many conservatives ridicule standing security alliances—what, after all, can NATO’s members offer compared to the enormous might of American hegemony? But looking to military

contributions alone is a misreading of history. America always provided the vast majority of the military might behind NATO. Our allies, however, can offer us far more than weapons. Our European allies have stronger ties with the regions from which terrorism springs, and often better human intelligence capabilities in these countries. They have legitimacy we can harness in a joint effort to open repressive regimes. Many have experience at fighting terrorism on their home soil. Others have recent, first-hand experience at countering a pervasive ideology that intimidated oppositions into silence. Moreover, we need their help to police their own borders, financial centers, radical organizations, and trade if we are to build a web that can capture radical terrorists. We cannot build a fortress around America—there will always be holes. Instead, we must build a worldwide net with our allies that will capture terrorists and smuggled weapons wherever they are.

Strong alliances require investing the time required to build a common world-view with other nations. Now, for instance, when we ask for Europe's help with democratization in the Middle East, they chafe at being squeezed into an American-led plan. When ideals are shared, we craft plans together, as we did with the Bretton Woods institutions, NATO, and even the early EU. Alliance requires give and take, and an investment of time, as well as occasionally losing some battles. But it is the only way we are going to win this war.

Fourth, achieving our foreign policy aims also requires us to act with legitimacy. When we disdain the norms of the rest of the developed world, we create a dangerous situation in which other nations wish us ill. While they cannot balance against our military, they can fail to cooperate in our alliances, undermining our efforts to present a strong, united front against terrorism. We cannot force other countries to assist in our security unless we are willing to honor the rules we wish them to follow.

Many conservatives disdain legitimacy. Why should other countries—countries in the United Nations that often abuse the human rights of their own citizens, former brutal colonial powers, nations that are merely looking out for their own self-interest and have never undertaken the grand gestures of American generosity, whose citizen-soldiers are not spread about the earth in harm's way—have any right to sit in judgment on America? Why should we let such morally suspect nations determine our morality, or rein us in? Our answer is pragmatic. Legitimacy is a form of power, and a strong one. Other countries—many, admittedly, morally suspect themselves—have used America's disdain for legitimacy to undermine our crucial foreign policy goals. Our derision of international norms has allowed other nations to turn populations of countries like South Korea against us, despite the military burden we carry for them, making it impossible for us to address the crisis in North Korea. It has turned much of the population of Europe against us, making it hard for even pro-American leaders to stand by our side or commit troops to our causes. It has also made us such a pariah in much of the world that we are radioactive to many of the very liberal, democratic activists we hope to help in the Middle East and other repressive regimes. This is no way to accomplish our goals.

Fourth, we must reduce protectionism at home, while being more generous and strategic with development aid abroad. Free trade and development aid are two sides of the same coin—they are tools of national security that fight state weakness, poverty, corruption, and social breakdown—problems that terrorists exploit to strengthen their support. Promoting free trade is also a means for breaking authoritarian regimes' control over their economies and societies. But free trade is a problem in our party—too many Democrats think that populism and protectionism

help poor Americans. In fact, it does serious damage: an American family earning \$25,000 now spends nearly three days worth of after-tax pay on protectionist subsidies and tariffs. American workers should be assisted not with protectionism, but with a social safety net of programs such as job training and adjustment assistance that would enable them to work in fields that are growing, not dying.

Finally, the fundamentals of our strength lie in our values and freedoms at home. George Kennan knew this at the start of the Cold War. We know today that we help our enemies when we harass honest immigrants in the name of security, or curtail the civil rights of our people. Turning innocent people against us, and dismantling the freedoms our country is based upon, is no way to achieve security.

Meeting the threats of the 21st century requires us to create a world where opportunity and freedom can thrive in the sanctuary of security. Such a world calls for a real commitment to liberty, human rights, and development abroad. It calls for us to accept the reality of the threat we face, and to provide our soldiers and the intelligence community with the tools and training they need to do their jobs well. And it calls on us to master our fear and uphold the liberties at home that make us a nation we are proud of.

This is the sort of generous, compelling vision of strength that Democrats could unite behind. To achieve it, we must clarify our values and question the deep assumptions that lie behind our current predilections. And we must retake the rhetorical terrain to recapture thoughtful notions of strength and security that have been lost in the last twenty years.

This is not just a call for our party, but for our country. It does no American, on either side of the aisle, in any state, a service to have only one party with credibility on national security. We must offer a better, credible alternative to the national security policy that has begun to dominate our foreign policy debate. Democrats have met the call to lead with our values before. It is time for us to lead again.

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