



Truman National Security Project

The September 11th Generation

The National Security Beliefs of Voters Under 30

A Truman Paper

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Introduction:

In the 2004 election, everyone thought they knew where young people stood.¹ They were filling campus courtyards protesting the war. They were filling the campaign coffers of liberal candidates. And they were filling busses headed for get-out-the-vote drives in swing states. Pundits spoke of the reawakening of political youth, and the force that this “baby boomlet” generation would become in American politics. This confluence of far-left politics and grassroots activism left security-minded Democrats in despair. How could the party take responsible, strong national security positions without losing the next generation of voters and alienating our crucial activist base?

But a funny thing happened when we examined the data on youth attitudes. This conventional wisdom turned out to be dead wrong. The traditional dove-hawk, liberal-conservative dichotomies describe little about today’s young. Instead, we found that young voters, ages 18 to 30, hold a new political orientation that does not fit into old stereotypes. They are simultaneously human rights crusaders and supporters of a strong military. They are more concerned about both traditional and non-traditional security threats, more comfortable with the use of force, and more in favor of free trade than their elders. Indeed, this generation holds complex and nuanced views which straddle traditional lines of party affiliation, income, class, and ethnicity. They are the September 11th Generation, a generation that is quietly but powerfully helping to reshape our national security debate.

Debunking the Myths

The legend of the liberal young is a familiar story that seemed to fit 2004. The picture of politically powerful youth arrayed against the military, against free trade, and against war appeared frequently in the media. But this was a caricature of a new generation drawn from the outdated iconography of the Vietnam era. Casting youth as 1960s-style liberals not only defies the facts; it defines our generation in terms irrelevant to the ways we define ourselves. But before we can see this generation afresh, we must begin by debunking the myths.

Take, for example, military force. Far from being pacifists, people under 30 were more *pro-war*, at the outset of the Iraq war, than any other age group in America. Despite the images of youth protestors in the media, young Americans supported military action in Iraq by a three-to-one margin, a wider split than any other age group. And while the young were certainly split along partisan lines (young Republicans were nearly unanimous in their support), over 60% of young Democrats also supported the war in 2002.² This support dropped (as it should have!) based on

¹ Throughout this paper, we refer to “youth”, “the young”, and “students”. The first categories refer to Americans between the ages of 18 and 30. “Students” is used when polls refer specifically to college students, primarily the Harvard Student Poll, which is a biannual poll of college students across all categories of higher educational institutions the country. The “September 11th Generation” is a broader term coined to refer to the set of beliefs held by the majority of those under 30, for whom September 11th forms our seminal, coming-of-age political memory, as Vietnam or World War II formed for earlier generations. Except where particularly indicated, we analyzed the views of young people across party lines, not those held solely by self-identified Democrats.

² In comparison, only 33% of Democrats over 65 supported the war. “Generations Divide Over Military Action in Iraq,” The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, October 17, 2002. These findings were supported by a Harris Interactive Survey, which found that 69% of teenagers supported military intervention in response to the terrorist attack. Harris Interactive Survey. Rochester: New York, 28 September 2001.
<http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newscats.asp?NewsID=366>, (cited 18 April, 2002). Support for the war

the faulty prosecution of the war, but even by 2005 when a majority of all Americans (57%) – and young voters (55%) -- felt that the war in Iraq was not worth the cost in lives and dollars,³ a majority of students (54%) still supported the military action to remove Saddam Hussein from power.⁴

Or take the Howard Dean phenomenon. The media, following the story of liberal youth, saw Howard Dean as embodying the protest vote of the young. Although Governor Dean's actual platform was hardly as far to the left as the media made it out to be, Dean was portrayed as the reincarnation of the 1970s anti-war movement—a man who won the hearts of America's young voters by appearing to pull the Democratic party back its traditional, Vietnam-era, liberal roots.

But not only were Dean's voters not primarily young—the young people that did pick one of the most liberal candidate in the race did not fit the traditional liberal mold of their elders. While photo ops showed fresh-faced activists at campaign stops, only 18% of Dean's activist supporters were under the age of 30 (roughly the same percentage as all Democratic voters under thirty). In fact, youth were the *smallest* age group supporting Dean, aside from senior citizens.⁵ The vast majority of Dean's supporters were the middle aged, well-off and well-educated baby boomers who have held liberal views since the Vietnam War. These numbers support what a separate Pew survey found about the young in general: young people in the conventional liberal mode are far *less* politically engaged than their peers who identify as conservatives, centrist Democrats, or any other political category.⁶

Moreover, young Deaniacs held far more centrist views than their elders within the Dean camp. Most Dean supporters, according to a post-election Pew survey, held a traditionally liberal set of views: they were more secular than most Democrats, believed that military force is to be used only in extremis and not, even when threatened, preemptively, felt allies should have a significant say in U.S. policy; believed that domestic issues should garner greater attention than foreign policy problems, and felt that the war in Iraq was wrong.⁷

Yet, while two-thirds of middle-aged Dean activists favored pulling troops out of Iraq immediately in mid-2005, regardless of the consequences, 61% of young Dean supporters favored *keeping* troops there to stabilize the region. That was an even greater percentage than the general population. And while only 13% of middle-aged Dean supporters felt that military

among the young declined precipitously over time, as it became clear that weapons of mass destruction were not present, and that our military was becoming bogged down. We address this change of heart later.

³ September and October 2005 Democracy Corps Data.

⁴ June 2005 Survey of College Students from Panetta Institute. To be sure, polls only represent a snapshot of public opinion at any one time and change with new developments in Iraq and at home. However, the core values behind these sentiments of a belief in American power, a strong military, and engagement abroad have remained remarkably stable over time. Moreover, the sentiments in this polling data has been born out by anecdotal evidenced and informal focus groups conducted by members of the Truman Project across the country. For more on focus group descriptions of young voters' reactions, see the Harvard Student Polls.

⁵ "The Dean Activists: Their Profile and Prospects," The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, Washington, D.C.: April 6, 2005.

⁶ "Beyond Red vs. Blue: Republicans Divided About Role of Government – Democrats by Social and Personal Values," The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, The 2005 Political Typology, Washington, D.C.: May 10, 2005.

⁷ "The Dean Activists: Their Profile and Prospects."

preemption could ever be justified, nearly three times as many young Dean supporters felt that it was sometimes justifiable.⁸

In fact, among the under-30 electorate as a whole, many of those who opposed the war did so not out of knee-jerk pacifism, but for hard-headed security reasons that were not far removed from the calculations of war supporters. Young opponents of the war worried that Iraq was a distraction from catching terrorists—the real threat America faced. (Over half of young Americans worried that the war in Iraq might hurt our prosecution of the war on terror, compared to only one third of Americans over thirty who opposed the war for that reason).⁹ Young people believed that war with allies was preferable because waging war without allies was likely to be ineffective and make us less secure in the long run.¹⁰ Many appeared to believe, quite reasonably, that the Bush Administration had ignored the hard realities of nation-building, would not be greeted with roses and garlands, and would leave American troops mired in Iraq, fighting a stubborn insurgency, and contributing to global instability. These assessments were remarkably prescient. In other words, very few young voters who opposed the war fit the conservative stereotype of being weak on security.

Nor did the young—whether pro- or anti-war, express shame about being American, a sadly common perception associated with the Vietnam generation. Young people are overwhelmingly enthusiastic to identify as patriotic Americans. Over the past five years of polling, 87-92% of college students (a group generally more left-wing than the total under-30 population) have consistently described themselves patriotic.¹¹

Finally, on trade, despite the publicized protests against the WTO since Seattle 2000, there is little truth to the conventional wisdom that paints youth as anti-globalization. In fact, a solid 68% of people under 30 believe that free trade is good for America. That is 20% *more* support than any other age group in America. Moreover, half say that free trade has either definitely or probably helped their personal financial situation—indicating a personal stake in free trade that is likely to last.¹²

It may be tempting to dismiss such sentiments as reflections of a naïve optimism that will change when the young face firsthand job loss and competition due to outsourcing. But this strong support is probably better seen as a product of the September 11 Generation's new perspective on work. Unlike past generations, today's youth do not plan to have a job for life, an expectation that fuels fears of job loss and outsourcing. Instead, young people expect a great deal of volatility and change in their jobs—and their careers--both from external shocks and from personal choices. This generation knows it cannot expect job stability—instead, they value

⁸ "The Dean Activists: Their Profile and Prospects."

⁹ "Generations Divide Over Military Action in Iraq." *The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press*, October 17, 2002. By April 2005, 64% of voters ages 18-25 felt that the war in Iraq was not part of the war on terrorism, compared to 36% who did not. Greenberg, Quinlan, Rosner Research, Youth Monitor Frequency Questionnaire, April 21-28, 2005.

¹⁰ When students nationwide were given the choice between "going to war in Iraq if the UN is not allowed to conduct effective weapons inspections," and going to war "only with the support from its allies in the United Nations" 51% chose the latter, and only 18% chose the former, while 28% felt that we should simply not engage in military action against Iraq. *Institute of Politics Survey of Student Attitudes*, October 2002.

¹¹ *Harvard Student Surveys, 2000-2005*

¹² "Foreign Policy Attitudes Now Driven by 9/11 and Iraq," *The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press*, August 18, 2004.

options. Expanding trade means more options and lower prices as buyers. And while young people expect their careers to be volatile, they know that they will be steady consumers throughout their lives. Thus, the effects of trade on prices are likely to affect young people more than the effects of outsourcing on any particular job they might hold.

Understanding where young people stand on trade points to a larger need. To grasp how this generation thinks about foreign policy, it is not enough to look at discrete issues cast in the terms of old debates. We must try to tap the experiences and expectations that compose this generation's zeitgeist.

Understanding the Foreign Policy Outlook of Voters Under 30

The most important insight about the September 11 Generation is simple: *Americans under 30 hold a set of beliefs that cannot be captured in the simple Cold War-era liberal-conservative or hawk-dove dichotomies.*

This should not be surprising: each generation is defined by its own set of catalyzing events, and by different generational moods and beliefs. The generations before us wrestled with the ideological challenge of Soviet communism, the fear of nuclear weapons, and the divisive debate over the Vietnam War. These events shaped their general worldview. The Cold War outlook translated into a set of foreign policy rules of thumb, which carried over into their beliefs and policies on how to face an age of terror.

Similarly, to understand how Americans under-30 think about foreign policy it is important to understand the general beliefs about the world and cataclysmic events that shape our way of looking at the questions, events, and policy challenges we face.

First, we should underscore that the September 11th Generation is hardly a homogenous group. It instead differs by political orientation, by race and ethnicity, and by an attitudinal split between Gen X (those over-25, comprising a particularly small generation with an especially strong distrust of government and a yen towards entrepreneurship), and Gen Y (those born after 1980, the children of the Boomers who compose a second large “boomlet”, who are particularly community-oriented and trusting of authority).¹³

Overall, voters under 30 still fit conventional stereotypes by identifying slightly more as Democrats (42%) than do most voters (29%). And far more young voters identify as liberal (34%) than do all voters (19%).¹⁴ But these numbers break down starkly by race. Young whites are moving away from the Democratic Party. In 2002, for example, 47% of white voters 18-24 years old identified as Republican—nearly ten points higher than their parents' generation.

¹³ We owe this generational research breaking down Gen X and Gen Y also known as the Millennial Generation to leading social scientists Neil Howe and William Strauss. Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*, (Vintage, New York: September 5, 2000) and Jane Eisner, *Taking Back the Vote Getting American Youth Involved in Our Democracy*, (Beacon Press, New York: 2004).

¹⁴ Voters under thirty identify slightly more as independents (27%) compared to all voters (25%), and less as Republicans (31% of young voters, compared to 35% of all voters). Slightly fewer young voters identify as conservative (34%) and moderate (31%) than do the general public (39% combined). *September and October 2005 Democracy Corps Data*.

Among the slightly older 25-36 year olds, only 27% of white voters identified as Democratic.¹⁵ Meanwhile, young minorities remain on the left, especially African Americans under 30, 86% of whom identified as Democratic.¹⁶

Voters under 30 – particularly those under 25, a large and growing demographic force – are far more conservative than the Vietnam Generation. Protected by attentive parents, they are close to their families and are the first generation to grow up with more conservative sexual, religious, and social mores than the generation immediately preceding them. Sixty-seven percent of voters ages 18 to 25 feel that religion is important in their family lives, and over half attend church at least once a month.¹⁷ They are also more prone to accept authority and trust the government than voters in their late twenties and early thirties. These beliefs help explain why the young Caucasians of this generation lean more Republican than past generations of young people—a fact the Democratic Party would do well to notice.¹⁸

In addition to their unabashed patriotism, voters under 30 have deep respect for the military. The numbers are overwhelming: more than 70% of college students (the most liberal contingent of this group) trust the military to do the right thing all or most of the time. The military is by far the most respected public institution among the young.¹⁹

But the September 11th Generation are not old-fashioned conservatives. They distrust large corporations. They have even less confidence in “spin”—from the media and from politicians—but they believe that the government can—and should—be an active force solving problems in America. They embrace multiculturalism and a multilateral world view: after all, they have grown up in a truly pluralistic society—where most schools enroll students speaking dozens of languages; where Caucasians are often minorities themselves amid other minorities, and where that reality is not threatening.²⁰ In national security terms, these beliefs matter. While the rest of the population cast a vote for President Bush in 2004 out of fear for American security, the September 11th Generation saw through this ruse and doubted Bush’s claims that he would protect America better. While President Bush won the popular vote in 2004, young voters picked John Kerry instead.

These attitudinal trends are cemented by historical events. For voters under 30, the main catalyzing foreign policy event of our lives has been the fall of the Twin Towers. Hence, on issues of national security, we are collectively the “September 11th Generation”. But the tragedy of September 11 begins with the climax of the story—and it is important to start at the beginning.

The September 11th Generation was raised amid enormous optimism. The Cold War was distant: a 21-year-old in 2005 was only five when the Soviet Union disintegrated. Our first political

¹⁵ Cited in Anna Greenberg, “What Young Voters Want,” *The Nation*, February 11, 2002.

¹⁶ *New York Times* exit polling, 2004 election.

¹⁷ Greenberg, Quinlan, Rosner Research, Youth Monitor Frequency Questionnaire, April 21-28, 2005.

¹⁸ According to the *New York Times* exit polls from 1972-2004, more voters ages 18 to 29 identified as Republican in 2000 (46%) and 2004 (45%) than since 1988 (52%). The percentage of voters 18 to 29 identifying as Republican had dropped to 34% in both 1992 and 1996.

¹⁹ *Institute of Politics, Harvard Student Surveys*. See Ganesh Sitaraman and Previn Warren, *Invisible Citizens, Youth Politics After September 11*, (Boston: Institute of Politics, 2003).

²⁰ *Howe & Strauss*.

memory was the triumph of freedom: the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of Soviet communism. American values were strong and spreading: America turned to NATO not just as a Cold War alliance of realpolitik, but increasingly as a vehicle to promote democracy and human rights. In school, we learned that we lived in the “end of history”, a time when U.S. values, aided by an enormous economic boom and the promise of globalization, would spread peacefully across an improving world.

American power was real, vast, and a force for good. We never knew the pain of military stalemate and the self-doubt of the Vietnam generation. Instead, we watched our first war on television, culminating in the first Gulf War’s stunningly rapid victory. That war showed us both the power the military force, and the broad potential of multilateralism – with NATO, the United Nations, Arab countries, and even our former Soviet enemy united to defeat aggression against an innocent country.

We also saw that inaction and isolation could betray our ideals. We watched the foot-dragging in Bosnia and our failure to address genocide in Rwanda. Yet we viscerally understand that military solutions were not the only answer. Underneath the “end of history,” new problems were boiling that seemed unlike the old ones. We did not face Soviet armies in the center of Europe, but instead the threat of AIDS, ethnic conflict and Samuel Huntington’s famous “clash of civilizations”, weak states, environmental destruction, and a myriad of new issues that required new, non-military solutions.

Then, September 11 struck. Suddenly, on the cusp of adulthood, we faced the stark reality of a threat. It was not overseas, abstract, and far away -- but concrete, and in our cities. The attitudes and history that had begun shaping this generation crystallized into a new security worldview, one that simply does not fit old categories.

Americans under 30 do not doubt that we face a deadly enemy—the burning towers are etched on our generation’s collective conscience. Yet we are neither “realist” hawks nor Conservatives. We do not believe we need to surrender civil liberties at home to keep America safe.²¹ And we believe America should be willing to stand for our ideals in the world, spreading hope and preventing genocide. Crucially, perhaps because of the encompassing multiculturalism of our peer groups, young people firmly believe in a world community, despite otherwise conservative security stances. Thus, we care about the U.S. being respected by other countries, and think that the U.S. should lead cooperatively, not unilaterally—because it’s right, and because it works. In June of 2005, over twice as many voters under thirty chose the statement “America’s security depends on building strong ties with other nations” (64%) over “Bottom line, America’s security depends on its own military strength” (29%). That was over twice the margin opting for multilateralism than any other age group, and double the margin of American voters overall (who sided with multilateralism by 53% to 38%).²²

Young people do not deny the power of terror and hatred. Neither do they blindly accept the Republican strategy for a unilateral, military-led solution. They are engaged in a more difficult pursuit—trying to determine for themselves how best to meet these threats.

²¹ “Eroding Respect for America Seen as a Major Problem: Foreign Policy Attitudes Now Driven by 9/11 AND Iraq,” *The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press and the Council on Foreign Relations, August 18, 2004, pp.27.*

²² *May and June 2005 Democracy Corps data.*

While September 11th provides the starting point for the national security vision of this generation, the long-term foreign policy values and policies of those under-30 are still being formed. We are watching, learning from, and – most importantly – *fighting in* the current war in Iraq. That war will easily have an impact that rivals September 11th itself in terms of shaping this generation’s vision of national security.

For example, overwhelming confidence in America’s military superiority – and even invincibility -- catalyzed much of the September 11th Generation’s pro-war sentiment. Yet polling shows that the struggles of the war in Iraq are giving young people a more nuanced view of what military force alone can and cannot accomplish. Our troops—most of whom are our peers—were eager to go to war, but have been chastened by the realities of occupation and insurgency. They have learned first-hand, and the rest of us have learned at one remove, of the limits of military force.

But we have reached a very different conclusion from the ambiguous and painful relationship the Vietnam generation formed with the military. We care about, support and trust the military to do good in the world. We are, instead, simply becoming aware of its limits, and learning that the military is not a one-size- fits-all tool. Support for the war has gradually dimmed since 2005, as well as support for the necessity of preventative war.²³ Young people are paying attention to what is happening in the world, and changing their beliefs accordingly. We are not becoming more timid and dovish, but wiser.

Implications for the Future of the Democratic Party: Truman Democrats

Why do the beliefs of the young matter? Not only are they the future of the Party, but they have already mobilized today. Voters under 30 cast nearly 20.1 million votes in 2004. Turnout for this age group was the highest it has ever been since the voting age was lowered to 18.²⁴ And as the baby boomlet gathers force, the attitudes carried by this generation will only grow more important: they are just reaching voting age, and by the next decade will soon comprise 25% of the voting public.²⁵

We believe that the views of Americans under-30 are beginning to set into a pattern we have seen before. Their belief system has been aptly compared by generational researchers to that of the “Greatest Generation,” who fought in World War II and formed the backbone of America afterward.²⁶ Their views resemble neither George Bush’s cowboy triumphalism, nor the pacifism of the Vietnam-era, but instead the muscular, values-driven policies of our Greatest Generation leaders like Harry Truman.

The September 11th Generation seeks a foreign policy that both keeps our nation safe, and embodies our values. We care deeply about helping the poor, supporting human rights at home and abroad, safeguarding the environment, creating a real equal opportunity society, easing the

²³ *Harvard Student Polls, 2002-2005* http://www.iop.harvard.edu/research_polling.html.

²⁴ Turnout was 49%. 2004 U.S. Census, *Democracy Corps*.

²⁵ *Projection from U.S. Census, 2004, current population survey. Tabulated by Lake, Snell, Perry, and Associates, August 2004.*

²⁶ *Howe and Strauss.*

plight of the disadvantaged. More than half of all college students volunteer directly, many college students prize these activities more than their studies, and 68% of college students say that they would consider working for a non-profit for part of their future employment.²⁷ We want our government to inspire us, not just to keep us safe.

But in foreign policy Democrats have too often ceded our ideals and values to the Republicans. While conservatives have misappropriated core liberal values such as democracy and freedom, many Democratic security thinkers have embraced a narrow pragmatism. Young people see Democrats speaking of technocratic policies and diplomatic processes, not overarching ideals. By talking about pragmatic methods, but failing to link these with values and vision, they fail to provide a coherent, overarching message that can energize America's youth.

Moreover, *realpolitik* rings unrealistic to us. When facing an ideological threat, the response can only be found in an opposing and galvanizing idea. Young people agree that America's top priority must be to stop terrorists from killing innocent people. Our party leaders should be able to say this. But we diverge with the current Administration's tactics. The fight against terror is not a fight against a finite set of terrorists, but a fight against an idea that can garner new recruits catalyzed by new rounds of humiliation. Only a strategy that conveys hope, as well as strength, will be able to overturn the humiliation that engulfs the world from which radicals recruit. And only a vision that grounds idealism in pragmatic means will appeal to today's youth.

To return our Party to its own traditions, a group of young Democrats have joined to form the Truman National Security Project. The organization forms the hub of a movement dedicated to reviving the strong security, strong values tradition of the Democratic Party—for Democrats of all ages. Its goal is to rebuild an authentically progressive national security tradition capable of addressing America's vexing national security challenges. This Truman Democratic tradition is, we believe, the natural home of the September 11th Generation.

Truman Democrats believe that promoting human rights and a strong military are two sides of the same coin—not opposing values. We have seen how a strong military was essential to protecting rights in Bosnia, and how its absence allowed genocide in Rwanda. We know that the lack of military protection prevents development in war-torn countries throughout the world.

Truman Democrats also see the world's strongest army bogged down in the deserts of Iraq, and understand that national security cannot rest on military strength alone. We want to see America using our entire foreign policy toolkit to protect our country from terrorism. We know that our security also requires the multiple pillars of a strong economy, strong morale at home, and strong alliances based on shared threat.

Like President Truman, we think that foreign policy draws no clear lines between security, development, trade, and diplomacy—all are necessary for achieving our goals. We must deliver aid, not just armies—so that terrorist groups are not seen in the Islamic world as the only entities delivering charity to the poor; so that weak states are given the ability to patrol their own borders and enforce the rule of law; and so that young men can work and marry, not spend jobless hours

²⁷ *Harvard Institute of Politics polls, 2000-2005. Ganesh and Sitaraman believe that one reason for young people's alienation from public service stems from politicians' inability to convince young Americans that they are there to be public servants and serve these ideals – rather than to serve themselves.*

idling amidst radical clerics and seeking self-worth in attention-grabbing destruction. And we must fight not just with weapons, but with words and beliefs.

In concrete terms, this means that we should be matching Saudi fundamentalists dollar for dollar in education spending in the Islamic world. We should not let terrorists tell the world who Americans are; we should be funding programs for young people to get out into the far corners of the earth and represent our country, while learning how best to interact with Muslim and Arab culture. And we should not invade countries without the skills to put them back together again.

Truman Democrats, like our namesake, are not afraid of American leadership. We prefer, however, that America lead by adopting policies that seek to benefit, not simply bully, other nations. Gaining the assistance of other nations lessens our security costs, and enables us to build the worldwide net essential to catching terrorists, stopping weapons proliferation, and catching the many threats that don't respect borders.

These are not "soft" security ideas. They are strong and pragmatic means of keeping us safe.

Toward a Progressive National Security Message

How can Democrats offer a national security message to inspire and tap into the enormous political power of voters under thirty? In the 1960s, when liberalism seemed to be the dominant ideology of the future, a group of young dissidents gathered on William F. Buckley's ranch to hammer out a credo of conservatism. They articulated guiding principles -- lower taxes, limited government, and strong defense -- that sustained the movement for years. We now face this situation's mirror image: and it is time for young progressives in the September 11th Generation to do the same.

What would the September 11th Generation's ideology look like? The polling data about specific issues -- from free trade to the military -- may paint a discouraging picture of a conservative generation soon to be lost to the Democratic Party. But there is another way to speak to this generation, which offers a far more compelling alternative than the Republican vision of national security. A national security message that is responsive to the values of our generation would be grounded in the following premises:

America is an exceptional country and must lead by example. We believe America can and should lead as a great and vibrant nation whose values, integrity, opportunity, educational system, fairness, and generosity attract the rest of the world. While the conservative unilateralists in the Bush administration seem to believe American exceptionalism resides in our military dominance and our ability to force our views upon the rest of the world, we believe that America's strength comes from the vitality of our ideas and institutions, not our ability to impose these upon others. We strengthen our exceptionalism by following our values, and weaken it through hypocrisy.

America must have a strong military. We understand the critical role of military force in foreign policy, and deeply respect the sacrifices of our men and women in uniform. But while Republicans often rush to embrace military force first, we believe that the military should be used only when other options are unworkable, and for missions they are designed to fight. Then,

we believe in fighting to win: and using all resources necessary for a quick and decisive victory, rather than penny pinching and starving our fighting force.

America needs allies. Unlike conservative unilateralists, we believe terrorism can only be addressed when nations of the world band together. Alone, we cannot protect ourselves from problems that cross borders. And we cannot remain powerful by renouncing treaties and thumbing our nose at the rest of the world. With barely 4% of the world's population, the U.S. must again create great alliances, as we did after World War II, to lead other nations towards a world that is safe, humane, and prosperous.

America must use all our foreign policy tools to remain strong. We need to protect America from threats and rebuild our strength. That requires eschewing ideological differences over using the military, aid, diplomacy, and other implements of power. We must use every tool we have to stop the growth of new terrorists and master other new threats, while using the military to catch the terrorists already in the trenches.

America's security depends on free enterprise and free trade. We believe a strong economy is as critical a tool of American power as military might. But while Republican policies use trade policy to promote large corporate monopolies, we believe that too much corporate power can smother the entrepreneurial spirit. We believe that many smaller, independent businesses offer greater opportunities, better jobs, and a more dynamic economy. A free trade system built on small businesses strengthens the American economy, bolstering our security. And when this free trade system is fairly applied, it provides opportunity abroad, reducing the hopelessness that can radicalize aimless young men, and building appreciation for America.

America should promote human rights and freedom. America is a great country that should live up to its responsibilities to support the weak and the needy. We believe that upholding human rights and preventing genocide is the right thing to do. And we believe free countries are less likely to breed terrorists and other security problems that will threaten us. Force alone cannot create freedom—we believe we need to work with people inside autocratic countries, to help them liberate themselves.

These premises, drawn from the ideology of the September 11th generation, suggests a set of core foreign policy beliefs that could form the basis for a Democratic national security strategy, and offer a clear alternative to the security views of Republicans.

Conclusion

The September 11th Generation is coming to political power. But its political identity is not captured in categories created four decades ago. This generation is looking for inspiration from a vision of American national security that neither political party now espouses. The Truman Democratic movement is creating a new home for this new set of beliefs within the Democratic Party. And they are a movement we hope the Party notes. More in tune with the general population than their parents, Truman Democrats are capturing the national security beliefs of a new generation. This September 11th generation will be taking the reins in politics and policy in coming decades. They are strong, they are principled, and they are redefining the lines of our national security debates.

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About the Authors

Rachel Kleinfeld is the founder and co-director of the Truman National Security Project. Rachel consults on biosecurity and previously consulted on information-sharing across the military, intelligence, and law enforcement communities, homeland security, and trade and security issues. Like other members of the September 11th Generation, she combines her security interests with her values—she has also worked in human rights and economic development in India, Israel, and Eastern Europe, and has consulted for the World Bank. Her writings have appeared in multiple scholarly journals, as well as in the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and other regional newspapers. She is a Rhodes Scholar and holds an M. Phil from St. Antony's College, Oxford, and a B.A. from Yale University.

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