



U.S. National Security and Defense Policy

Conceptual Policy Possibilities for Public Discussion

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IF...

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About This Report

What is IF?

The aim of the Interactivity Foundation (IF) is to improve public policy by encouraging citizens to participate in thoughtful discussions about their public policy concerns and about the different conceptual policy possibilities for addressing them.

Why the Need?

Public policy discussions too often focus upon the specific actions that governments might take to address a problem instead of the broader conceptual possibilities that might inspire them. This is unfortunate, since the wise choice of a public policy requires an exploration of a wide range of conceptual possibilities—including the different concerns, questions, beliefs, values, goals, and interests that might motivate them. It is difficult, however, for government officials and citizens to find time and a forum to explore a wide range of contrasting policy possibilities that is free from the pressures of modern life, the need to achieve a consensus, or the need to take political action.

What Are IF Reports?

IF supports discussion projects that are designed to generate, explore, develop, articulate, and test contrasting conceptual possibilities for public policy in selected areas of concern. We believe that our discussion projects and the conceptual possibilities that we develop can help citizens explore an area of concern civilly and thoughtfully and make individual choices about which ones might be worthwhile to pursue. We present these possibilities in IF discussion reports. And we support public discussions of the possibilities and reports that we develop.

We hope that the contrasting policy possibilities presented here stimulate thoughtful discussion by providing a conceptual springboard for citizens who wish to explore the different policy possibilities and the ends to achieve them.

IF does not advocate or recommend any of the public policy possibilities in our reports. There are, on the contrary, possibilities in our reports that none of the participants who prepared the report would support—but which they still thought should be part of the public discussion about the area of concern.

The possibilities in our report are intended to be internally consistent. But they are also intended to be conceptually different from one another. The possible implementations and likely effects of the possibilities presented in our reports are illustrative and are not intended to be absolute, complete, or without exceptions. We hope that they will provide our citizens with insights into the many different policy possibilities that we have to choose among in order to address an area of public policy concern, as well as the many different and often unintended effects that each of those possibilities might have.

About This Report

What's This Report?

This report describes seven contrasting policy possibilities that two panels developed to address the concerns they thought would be the most useful for public discussion about U.S. national security and defense. It also describes their ideas about how each possibility might be implemented, and the effects it might have upon individuals, groups, institutions, and society at large.

The report was created by two panels. The specialist panel consisted of people working in the area of national security in Washington, D.C., and the generalist panel consisted of interested citizens in Madison, Wisconsin. After a year of discussions, the two panels met to meld the possibilities that they developed separately into a final report.

We hope that you will find these policy possibilities interesting, that you will understand them in the way that we intend them to be understood, that they will stir your imagination and cause you to think about other conceptual policy possibilities pertaining to U.S. national security and defense, and that you will discuss them with your friends, neighbors, and fellow citizens in the cooperative spirit in which we developed them. We fully expect that different people will have different concerns, beliefs, goals, values, and interests about U.S. national security and defense. But we hope that each person who considers the possibilities in this report will come to better understand what he or she thinks about U.S. national security and defense, and that this in turn will eventually lead to more thoughtful policy decisions.

About This Report

Why Is U.S. National Security and Defense An Area Of Concern?

One of the key duties of our government is to keep the nation safe and secure—or, in other words, to provide for our national security and defense. To do that the government continually uses its soft power, hard power, and intelligence assets to detect and fight various threats. Accelerating technological innovation, globalization, and our recent involvement in Afghanistan, the longest war in our history, have been teaching us about the changing nature of threats to our national security—from terrorism and irregular warfare to transnational crime—and are pushing us to rethink what the “readiness of a force” in particular and U.S. national security and defense more generally might mean in the 21st century.

The panelists explored U.S. national security and defense, developed policy possibilities, and explored their possible implementations and effects from many different perspectives, ranging from the personal, through the societal, to the international.

Each of the possibilities in this report could be understood as a different grand strategy for addressing national security and defense. One of the possibilities that the panelists discussed is not among them. This possibility would have required periodic review of national security and defense policies and strategies with the goal of better serving and coordinating various national interests. Some panelists were concerned that much of our national security and defense policy is reactive and ad hoc, and that emotions and political agendas sometimes have the upper hand over facts and priorities. They thus assumed that improvements could be made in the ways policy is made, evaluated, and adjusted,

and that an approach that emphasized periodic and sustained review—with the involvement of a broad range of voices and independent expertise—might enable better assessment of what is working and what is not. They thought that this possibility would use the periodic review process and as a way of opening up the public conversation on security and defense matters and that it would broaden our views about what constitutes national security, who the stakeholders in the discussion might be, and what interests, values, and goals are served by different policy possibilities. We discussed this possibility at length before recognizing that it was not very useful to include it as a separate possibility for public discussion, because it was, in a way, what our project was about.

We want to emphasize that these concerns and policy possibilities do not reflect the opinions or preferences of the panelists. They are, however, the concerns and possibilities that they thought would be most useful for a broad exploration of contrasting approaches to U.S. national security and defense.

About This Report



About This Report

How To Use It?

We recommend discussing the report in small groups (6 to 8 people) for three or four discussion sessions, with a facilitator to guide the discussion. We recommend devoting at least one hour to discuss each possibility. Feel free to contribute your own ideas to the discussion, and to further explore and develop the ideas that we present here.

As you consider the possibilities in this report and discuss them with others, you may wish to ask yourselves some of the following questions:

1. What are the values that motivate this particular possibility?
2. Why might someone hold these values? Why might someone be opposed to them?
3. What goal is this possibility trying to achieve?
4. Why might someone have those goals? Why might someone be opposed to them?
5. What actions might we take to implement this possibility were we to adopt it?
6. What effects might those actions have upon individuals, groups, institutions, and society at large?
7. How might they affect you personally?
8. What are the strengths of this possibility?
9. What are its weaknesses?
10. Who would be likely to benefit from the adoption of this possibility?
11. Who would be likely to benefit from its rejection?
12. What other approaches are available for pursuing the values and goals that inspired this possibility?
13. What effects would those actions likely have upon individuals, groups, institutions, and society at large?
14. How effective would this possibility be in achieving its desired ends if we were to adopt it?
15. What would you do to strengthen this possibility?
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Possibility A

Team Up for Safety

This possibility would try to improve our national security and defense through balanced international security partnerships that can adapt quickly to new geopolitical realities.



The United States today spends more on national security and defense than the rest of the world combined. We have the strongest military in the world, and we deploy it around the world.



1. But are we more secure for it?
2. Are we doing too much on our own?
3. Could we ask more of our allies?

Questions for discussion...

1. Would more balanced international security agreements improve our security? If so, how?
2. What do you think “balanced” means in the context of this possibility?
3. Is it really possible for the interests of other countries to overlap enough for deep cooperation of this kind?
4. What exceptions and arrangements, if any, should we make to countries that cannot pay their “fair share” for defense and security?
5. Could bolstering regional military agreements threaten other powers? If so, how?
6. Would this possibility require the United States to give up its national sovereignty? Would it make the United States subject to the will of other countries? And would that make the United States weaker and less secure?
7. Why should we think that this possibility would work, especially since so many attempts to team up for security have failed in the past?



Thinking Behind the Possibility

This possibility assumes that we do not need to be the world's only superpower to be safe and secure. It assumes that we should instead be a part of, or engage in, greater international cooperation and that we should work with other nations to help counter global threats and to provide for our mutual national security and defense. It also assumes that our allies should pay their fair share to make the world safe and secure. This possibility would thus require a more equitable commitment of resources from those allies. It would also require greater mutual trust and transparency to blend our partners' skills, resources, and commitments with our own in ways that support collective security. It recognizes that we cannot always eliminate threats or prevent atrocities, but it also recognizes that we can manage risks better and reduce negative consequences—especially if we work on multiple fronts and in a more cooperative way. Finally, this possibility maintains that we should form international security partnerships that are more contractual than ideological—and that we should do so as the need arises wherever our security interests intersect.

There are five main concerns that motivate this possibility. First, many challenges to our national security—such as terrorism, climate change, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons—are global in nature and cannot be addressed effectively by one nation alone. Second, the United States has been leading, dominating, and policing the world alone for many decades—and has thus become a target for extremists and others who are looking for a scapegoat. Third, our allies are unfairly taking advantage of our wealth and military superiority, and it is time for them to share the burden and responsibility for global security with us—especially considering that they are becoming increasingly more prosperous and able to do so. Fourth, we value life, and do not want our citizens and military service members to sacrifice to support unsavory political regimes or to procure their natural resources. Fifth, relying primarily on our own resources costs too much.

This possibility maintains that the United States could be relieved of many response roles if it relied upon trusted allies to perform major roles in their regions. Some potential allies have the population base, economic resources, and capacity to field modern militaries. Others do not. But the point of this approach is to shift the burden off the United States and have other nations bear more responsibility.

Other Perspectives

You may share many of the concerns that motivate this possibility, but still think that it is simply false that nations have the same security and defense interests as the United States or want the same kinds of compromises. Or that they even deserve to be trusted. You may think that teaming up for security sounds like a good idea in theory, but that Americans are too naïve about the interests and intentions of other countries. You may think that countries have many competing interests and that teaming up for safety would lead us into foreign entanglements, as some of our founding fathers warned; disagreements about priorities and threats; inaction; or ultimately reduced security.



Possible Implementations	Possible Effects of These Actions
<i>We could —</i>	<i>These actions could —</i>
1. Streamline partnership operational protocols where possible	> Increase agility
2. Engage Russia in global conflict mitigations	> Bring Russia more into the international security community
3. Establish common standards for the type and quantity of armaments across partners	> Reduce innovation in military armaments; pushback from other countries
4. Cap and floor “alliance” contribution per country	> Prevent other countries from getting a free ride
5. Develop more “zones of responsibility” where partners shoulder more day-to-day activities	> Strengthen regional security associations
6. Other partners may be deferred to or take leadership roles where they have demonstrated specialized humanitarian or special operations capacity	> Increase regional capability of first response
7. Form agreements based only on common threats	> Lead to shared responsibility

Possibility **B**

Build a National Security Economy and Strong Economic Ties

This possibility would promote a strong domestic economy as a foundation for our national security. It would also shape the global economy to serve our security and stability interests.



Questions for discussion...

1. What do you think it means to have a strong economy? How do you think it relates to national security?
2. Do you think that strengthening our domestic economy would really reduce the likelihood of international conflict? If so, why? If not, why?
3. How do you think other countries might react to our attempts to shape the global economy to serve our defense and security interests?
4. Do you believe that following this possibility is more likely to make us weaker or stronger as a nation? Why?
5. Do you support this possibility? If so, why? If not, why?



Thinking Behind the Possibility

This possibility maintains that a strong and influential nation promotes its national security through a healthy domestic economy and economic relationships with other nations that allow for their security and prosperity. A strong domestic economy provides resources for the health and welfare of its citizens, builds the material basis for essential security and defense infrastructure, and promotes robust participation in the global economy in ways that establish credibility and leadership.

This possibility stems from a concern that nations with weak economies can seldom project influence upon others or protect themselves from security threats. Weak economies also generate domestic instability, thereby making a nation an unreliable ally and a possible source of instability that can threaten neighboring nations. Democratic nations seldom endure prolonged economic deprivation without threats to their institutions. Nations that build up their defense and security establishments beyond their ability to pay for them likewise invite instability. And nations that fail to protect their strategic economic interests in multilateral trade and financial agreements may also find their security interests undermined.

This possibility thus assumes that a nation's ability to project influence, deter conflict, and defend itself is unavoidably linked to its economic strength and access to resources. It further assumes that the human desire for peace, prosperity, and stability creates conditions for "higher uses" of national wealth. Understanding the centrality of a healthy economy to national security and defense promotes a more thoughtful assessment of the importance of having a strong infrastructure and an educated and healthy citizenry. Centering policy on a nation's economic health thus allows us to meet pressing human needs that, when left unmet, often provide the context for tensions and conflict. It allows an economically strong nation to serve as a useful ally and provider of assistance to more troubled nations. It thus allows a strong nation to participate in the global economy in a cooperative fashion, making war less likely when shared prosperity among nations is at risk.

This possibility recognizes that national security cannot simply be measured in the number of troops, ships, and planes an economy can reasonably support. National security may also be assessed on measurements such as number of patents for innovation, number of bright foreign students who desire an education from a nation's universities, or the number of best practices adopted by others. Matters such as national debt, trade balances, and energy independence may also be seen as national security considerations.

Other Perspectives

Even if you share the concerns that motivate this possibility, you may not think that strengthening our national economy is the best way to strengthen our national security. You might think that having a strong national economy does not necessarily ensure security and stability, especially if we measure it by the usual "indicators," and that it would be better to invest our natural wealth into our civil and material infrastructure. Or, you might think that an interdependent global economy is a "tide that lifts all boats," making it harder for nations to go to war with each other—and that rather than promoting a strong domestic economy, we should pursue economic interdependence instead.



Possible Implementations	Possible Effects of These Actions
We could —	These actions could —
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invest in infrastructure and make it resistant to security threats and natural disasters 2. Improve financial sector governance to guard against destabilizing “bubbles” and the risks of “too-big-to-fail” institutions 3. Negotiate international trade agreements that serve the larger purposes of security, conflict resolution, developmental assistance, human rights, and democratic governance 4. Protect our essential technology and intellectual property from cyber war, terrorism, and piracy 5. Develop international plans to optimize use of global resources 6. Provide incentives to conduct business with international entities 7. Reframe the issues of national debt, national default, and inadequate financial sector governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Increase employment and local economic growth and increase the resiliency of society > Protect against avoidable financial calamities, lessen the need for bailouts, and preserve national wealth > Provide incentives for more cooperative and humane behavior among authoritarian regimes, but may cause some hostile nations to remain closed off and deepen their repression of their own citizens > Create an updated understanding that an attack on a nation’s economy is an “act of war” but create additional trigger points for miscalculations that may escalate into a larger war > Result in greater teamwork and interdependence, but increased wealth > Strengthen economic ties, but upset Americans who perceive this as jobs/wealth leaving U.S. soil > Help us reduce national debt and avoid the excessive and destructive military spending that has led to the decline of other nations

This possibility would minimize our government's involvement abroad and cease all military engagements in other countries in an attempt to ensure greater security and prosperity at home.



Questions for discussion...

1. Do you agree that policing the world may harm the United States? If so, why? If not, why?
2. Do you think that it is possible for us to not police the world? If so, why? If not, why?
3. Is this possibility still possible in a digitally connected world? If so, why? If not, why?
4. What domestic issues should we prioritize if and when we free up our military spending?



Thinking Behind the Possibility

This possibility asserts that we ought to prioritize our own domestic issues, homeland security, and economic strength over maintaining global order. It flows from the belief that our leaders should be responsive first and foremost to citizens, and should thus concentrate scarce resources on solving problems at home.

This possibility rises from many concerns. Our attempts to police the world may breed more antagonism toward the United States, including terrorism. They may also distract our leaders' attention from solving domestic issues, and ultimately impede us from getting our own house in order. They may easily entangle us in foreign conflicts in which we have limited interests and create a situation in which we are inherently unprepared to resolve them.

This possibility also flows from a concern that we are spending too much on foreign military engagements while going deeper into debt, and that our national debt may ultimately be the greatest single national security threat we face. This possibility also recognizes that we need to be more responsible with our spending, and that spending so much on our allies does not necessarily make us more prosperous or more secure. In fact, we may be overburdening our country with debt. It would thus reduce the resources we spend on national defense to reduce the burden on our society and free up more resources to focus on domestic problems and growth, such as nation building at home.

Finally, this possibility rises from a concern that policing the world requires executive powers that inevitably undermine our constitutional system of checks and balances. Our role as the world's policeman has increasingly strengthened the executive branch over the decades. This possibility would inevitably reduce executive power by giving the president less unilateral purview over foreign defense policy.

Other Perspectives

Even if you agree that we should not police the world, you may not think that this possibility is the right way to go. You may think that it might embolden bad actors abroad and ultimately lead to more violent threats to our homeland. You may think that we have a humanitarian obligation to maintain order around the world as best we can. Or you may think that it does not go far enough. Or that it would be better for us to stay at home, or withdraw from foreign entanglements and focus instead on fixing domestic problems.



Possible Implementations

Possible Effects of These Actions

We could —

These actions could —

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| <p>1. Limit the president's ability to determine our national security policy</p> | > Preserve the Constitution's checks and balances and respect Congress' authority to determine national security policy; cripple the development of foreign policy; paralyze foreign policy decision making |
| <p>2. Shrink the size of our standing military and rely instead on our reserves and National Guard; close all foreign military bases</p> | > Reduce military costs and our military readiness |
| <p>3. Remove the United States from the United Nations</p> | > Result in less of international order or influence of U.S. values; result in UN collapsing |
| <p>4. Refuse to reduce our nuclear arsenal</p> | > Counter the perception of weakness that might result from our withdrawal |
| <p>5. End the drug war overseas</p> | > Reduce foreign entanglements, but increase flow of narcotics |
| <p>6. Continue to fund missile defense</p> | > Further grow our national research labs |
| <p>7. Establish energy independence</p> | > Potentially devastate our water supplies |

This possibility would reinvigorate general education and education about citizenship, civic responsibilities, and civil society in an effort to expand the opportunities for direct citizen involvement in national security and defense matters.



Questions for discussion...

1. Do you think it is possible for a super power with many global strategic interests to rely on a democratically determined, citizen-based approach to national security and defense?
 2. What are the risks that a mobilized society increases fear and might lead to an authoritarian society?
 3. How do we respond to shirkers and dissenters within the context of universal national service?
 4. Does this approach create the environment for “group think” on national security and defense issues, or does it provide an opportunity and responsibility for citizens to question policy directions?
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Thinking Behind the Possibility

This possibility recognizes that citizen distance from national security and defense increases as national interests grow more complex and global. The personal burdens traditionally identified with the protection of democratic nations come to be shouldered by the specialized few, not borne by the many. Some decision-makers (and many citizens themselves) feel that their fellow citizens are unqualified to participate in governance of these matters and are ill-prepared to contribute to collective responses to threats to the nation.

This possibility flows from a conviction that a democratic society is best served by approaches that are understood and supported by citizens, with widely shared citizen responsibilities. It flows from a concern about the low quality of education in the United States.

A democratic citizen in such a society needs a solid general education, critical-thinking skills, and emergency response knowledge to participate effectively in governance and preparedness. This possibility would include improving not only reading and writing skills, but also understanding of global issues and other societies. It would expand networks of citizen participation, cooperation, and resource sharing. It would build upon existing civil society organizations and educational institutions.

This possibility would assume that all citizens have a role to play in national security and defense. It would expand citizen roles in security, public safety, and emergency response, enlarging the pool of trained responders. It would create an ethic of equitable sharing of burdens to protect a safe and secure society. Universal national service, enlargement and better management of reserve forces and auxiliaries, and wide participation in emergency response exercises would increase citizens' stake in security and defense issues. We might, for example, involve all adult citizens in short periods of active national service (military or non-military) and extended periods of reserve status subject to recall in emergencies. Civil society and educational institutions would also be integrated into efforts to increase awareness, participation, and preparedness.

This possibility recognizes that national security and defense policy are about more than deterring or war. A healthy, strong, and informed society is resilient. It recognizes the threats of hostile forces, but also adapts to other situations that threaten our safety and way of life—whether in the form of natural disasters, disease, or infrastructure disruptions. The possibility appeals to our common humanity and sense of sharing in the burdens of citizenship.

Other Perspectives

You may share many of the concerns that motivate this possibility but think that this policy might not really work. You might think that regardless of how many citizens are involved, we would still need a small group of trained experts to develop and implement policy since it is so complex. You might worry that broad citizen involvement in national security and defense policy would make it more difficult to keep defense secrets and might actually cause unnecessary security breaches. Or you might think that people would be stressed if they were constantly bombarded with information about possible threats.



Possible Implementations	Possible Effects of These Actions
We could —	These actions could —
<p>1. Build on occupational and professional networks to create skilled citizen reserves (construction workers, health care professionals, science and technology specialists)</p>	<p>> Update the concepts of militias or home guards and fill the gaps left by frequent deployments of military forces of the Reserves and National Guard</p>
<p>2. Organize Web-based networks and social media that can serve as mobilization tools for citizens</p>	<p>> Provide quick and essential information in emergencies or provide the basis for additional surveillance and monitoring of citizens</p>
<p>3. Educate citizens about the legal and practical dimensions of national security and defense approaches and their own role as participants in public conversation about policy</p>	<p>> Improve citizen understanding of security and defense issues, or serve as a vehicle for official propaganda justifying actions of national security and defense elites</p>
<p>4. Train the population to a higher state of readiness to meet crises that threaten the security and safety of the nation</p>	<p>> Make citizens more resilient in the face of many types of emergencies</p>
<p>5. Expand the programs that build understanding among peoples of various nations, with emphasis on cultural exchange, language training, humanitarian assistance, and study abroad</p>	<p>> Create a sense of global citizenship or serve as a vehicle for Western cultural dominance</p>
<p>6. Educate citizens about the constitutional dimensions and moral implications national security and defense approaches and their own role in it</p>	<p>> Place a greater value on the role of the citizen and reverse the trend toward marginalization of citizens in the questions war, peace, and national survival</p>
<p>7. Require universal national service, in particular, for adult citizens to be in active service (military and non-military) for short periods of time, and extend periods of reserve status subject to recall for national emergencies</p>	<p>> Increase our societal capacity to deal with security challenges; make the human resources available for emergencies and increase the stake of citizens in preparedness issues</p>

Possibility E

Live Up to Our Ideals

This possibility would require the U.S. government to uphold human rights and civil liberties in developing and implementing national security policies.



Questions for discussion...

- 1. What do you think our ideals are?**
 - 2. What should we do if we cannot agree about what our ideals are?**
 - 3. Do you think that we have an obligation to support our ideals? If so, why? If not, why?**
 - 4. Do you think that we undermine or somehow invalidate our ideals when we do not follow them? If so, why? If not, why?**
 - 5. What level of risk to our national security are we willing to tolerate before compromising our ideals?**
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Thinking Behind the Possibility

This policy recognizes that providing for our national security is important, but not at the cost of undermining our values and way of life. The United States was founded on universal principles of liberty and justice. We have been at our best when we have lived up to them. And our example has often encouraged other countries to live up to them too.

There is, however, a concern that we are undermining our values by not practicing what we preach, and by committing immoral or illegal acts in the name of national security. This possibility assumes that we want to do the right thing and maintain the moral high ground, that living up to our ideals may encourage and inspire other countries to follow us, and that we may slide down a slippery slope to injustice and tyranny if we begin to think that the ends justify the means. It also maintains that we must preserve our core values and ideals as we pursue our national security and defense, and that this sometimes means accepting greater risks.

This approach would emphasize that living up to our ideals increases faith in our institutions and that compromising them is a great threat to our national security. Discarding our moral principles weakens us abroad.

The perception that we are hypocritical may bolster our enemies' propaganda, which in turn may undermine democracy both at home and abroad. When the government pursues policies that are contrary to our values, it actively weakens our institutions and destroys what is best within ourselves as we get used to moral compromise over time. For example, our response to terrorism by employing torture and enhanced domestic surveillance can slowly erode our freedom, privacy, due process, and the transparency of government.

Other Perspectives

Even if you agree that we should live up to our ideals, you may think that we should not impose them on others—especially when we cannot agree about what they actually are. You may think that this whole possibility is too naïve, that ensuring the safety and security of U.S. citizens sometimes warrants measures that run contrary to our values and principles, and that our ideals should not be a suicide pact. You may think that desperate times require desperate measures, and that this possibility may be interpreted as weakness, forcing us to be noncompetitive, economically weak, and hence less secure.



Possible Implementations

Possible Effects of These Actions

We could —

These actions could —

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1. Test politicians and senior leaders of government on their knowledge, understanding, and practice of our founding principles</p> | > Increase confidence in government, encourage politicians to study more, lead to certification for politicians, result in fewer people going into politics, lead to more hypocrisy in politics |
| <p>2. Require businesses to follow human resources guidelines abroad</p> | > Harm U.S. business competitiveness; lead to charges of hypocrisy (as they develop) |
| <p>3. Cut off trade and aid to countries that violate human rights</p> | > Hurt our economy and developing economies |
| <p>4. Intervene militarily abroad in support of freedom fighters</p> | > Result in supporting people who do not uphold our ideals |
| <p>5. Provide governance guidance to countries that we are rebuilding</p> | > Better governance in other countries; resentment |
| <p>6. Support more foreign-exchange programs</p> | > Enable more foreign students to learn about our ideals |
| <p>7. Rethink the use of military force to narrow the scope of targets and means of terrorism</p> | > Lead to more terrorist attacks, more revenge attacks, lower stock prices for defense companies |

This possibility would take whatever steps are necessary to maintain our national security and defense dominance over other countries to ensure global order and stability.



Questions for discussion...

1. Do you think that aiming at world dominance may backfire and make us less secure? If so, why so? If not, what not?
2. Do you believe that the world needs to be dominated or led? If so, why so? If not, why not?
3. How might American society change if we adopted this policy? And why?
4. Do you think it would be better for America to lead by example instead of force? If so, why so? If not, why not?
5. Do you think that our economy can sustain this kind of world dominance indefinitely? And what do you think might happen to us if it can't?
6. Do you think that aiming at world dominance would increase the use of government power at home?
7. How much dominance is enough?
8. Would you be willing to risk the life of your loved ones to fix another country?



Thinking Behind the Possibility

This possibility flows from the belief that it is the United States' responsibility, as the world's only superpower, to ensure global order and stability. It thus assumes that it is our obligation to police the world and to oversee global economic and political systems—and that we need to maintain our military superiority in the international community to fulfill it. But this possibility also flows from a belief that our nation is not secure as long as there is instability and emerging threats from rogue states, non-state actors, and future competitors in the world. It would take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that we will be able to meet whatever national security threats we might face.

This possibility is also motivated by altruism. We, as a nation, have selfless concerns for the well-being of people around the world. The world's problems are our problems, and we have to deal with many challenges around the world. We want to spread the benefits of liberty and democracy, including the higher quality of life, gender equality, and freedom from religious persecution that is associated with them. As the world's only superpower, we have many more global duties and responsibilities than other countries, such as promoting democracy and stability in places where regimes break down and genocides take place.

This possibility assumes that it is our place in the world to lead other countries and keep our commitments to our allies (such as NATO) and other stakeholders to ensure our national security and defense. Not trying to dominate and lead the world would create greater instability by making the world less predictable. The United States is secure and well protected by its professional, well-developed military and national security alliances. It took a long time and lots of effort to get to where we are today—a world with no major wars and global prosperity. We should thus be reluctant to cede our power or create a power vacuum that others would vie to fill.

This possibility, however, recognizes that the world and its problems are becoming increasingly complex, and that new technologies would enable us to solve problems that were previously unsolvable. Today we need the resources and political will to deal with many of our security and defense challenges, and to eliminate some of them altogether. This possibility recognizes, however, that it is very costly to be the world's policeman, peacemaker, and preacher—and that we need to provide more funding and resources to ensure our national security and defense in the global context. This means that everybody—individuals, families, institutions, and society at large—needs to contribute more and be proactive to address our military and non-military security needs.

Other Perspectives

Even if you agree that we should aim at dominance, you may think that we do not necessarily need to increase our security by spending more money on it, and that we have to use our power, influence, and resources wisely to maintain it. You may think that we can always reduce waste and do more with less, or that we could be safer and attract less attention by doing less and being a less visible target around the world. You may also think that we need to be more nuanced and act on a case-by-case basis—not only about dominance, but also about leadership and more selective engagements. If you think any of these things, then you may think that it would be better to team up for safety.



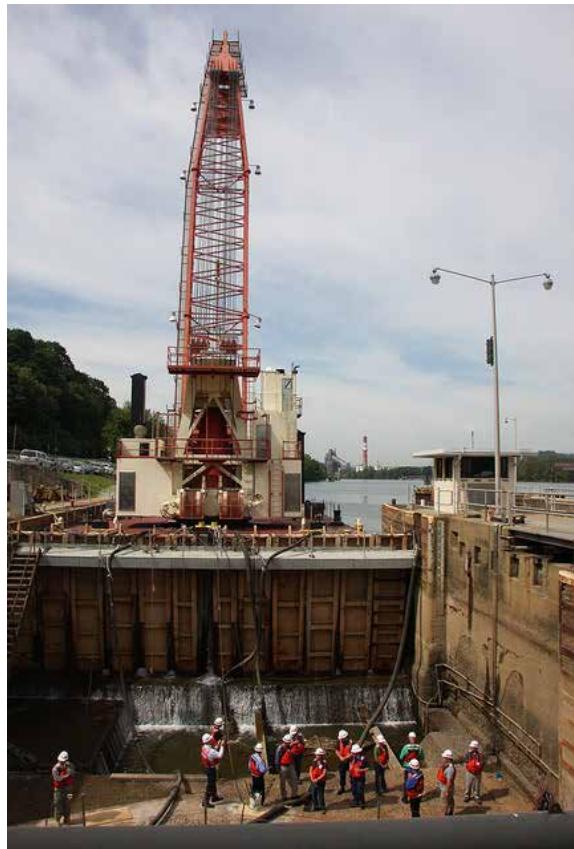
Possible Implementations	Possible Effects of These Actions
<i>We could —</i>	<i>These actions could —</i>
1. Provide more funding resources for national security	> Increase taxes and reduce entitlements
2. Promote and support democratic-oriented regimes and factions	> Help maintain peace, foster resentment and instability abroad, encourage more rebellions in the expectation that we will intervene
3. Reinstate the draft and require compulsory service	> Deepen patriotism, improve self-reliance, have more people serving and engaged with the military, cause more protests
4. Increase the size of military forces; accelerate the development and purchase of new weaponry	> Threaten other nations and lead to their aggression
5. Engage in cyber “cold-war,” i.e., go on the offensive; engage in active cyber war	> Help us control cyber crime; increase the number of cyber attacks against us
6. Itemize how we spend tax money	> Get buy-in from the public; increase the responsibility of our leaders
7. Engage in preventive wars against rogue states	> Weaken nuclear regimes, increase nuclear proliferation, increase the number of alliances against us, dilute international norms we support

This possibility would treat changes in our environment that jeopardize the existence of our citizens, government, and infrastructure as national security threats, on a par with military threats, and take appropriate measures to prepare for and protect against them.



Questions for discussion...

1. How do you justify spending large sums on preparing for low probability events such as asteroids hitting the Earth?
2. Does including environmental threats in national security and defense planning complicate the policy environment? In what ways?
3. How might including environmental threats in this policy area force consideration of the full cost of our way of life?
4. Does national “energy independence” tend to contribute to global solutions to environmental threats or the lessening of citizen concern?
5. What approaches might help developing nations avoid the cycle of environmental degradation as they attempt to raise their citizens standard of living?



Thinking Behind the Possibility

This possibility recognizes that natural disasters and changes in global environmental patterns could cause as much harm to human beings, their settlements and their infrastructure as violent conflicts and wars. It recognizes the large role played by military forces in dealing with disasters. It assumes that policies related to the prevention of, remediation of, and adaptation to severe environmental harms have a place in national security discussions.

This possibility flows from concerns that changes in global environmental patterns create the potential for extensive damage to our communities and will likely serve as conflict-generators in other parts of the world. The domestic threat comes in the form of harm to populations, habitability of vulnerable areas, and the viability of civil society, physical infrastructure, and government apparatus—including military bases and forces. Threats abroad come in the form of de-stabilization of regimes, “resource wars,” massive movements of populations, and humanitarian crises in many forms. The possibility maintains that severe ecological consequences serve as constraints on economic and political choices that are ignored at our peril.

This possibility would incorporate considerations of environmental changes and risks into national security and defense policy deliberations in more systematic way. It would factor in the need to respond to intensified cycles of emergencies. It would relocate facilities and redeploy forces away from vulnerable areas. It would look to “harden” infrastructure and increase societal resiliency. The possibility would also look to fundamental questions behind environmental degradation, whether human population and consumption patterns, capacity of natural systems, or failure to implement readily available solutions. The policies in this area would view ecosystems and resources not only as wealth, but as necessary to natural self-repair capacity and disaster recovery. The policy also recognizes that degraded environments and resources also make it difficult for developed democratic nations to respond in their traditional roles as providers of aid and assistance.

Thus the possibility foresees that difficult choices will need to be made as domestic and foreign interests and needs are balanced in policy discussions.

The possibility recognizes that dealing with environmental threats requires an appreciation of complexity and a high degree of adaptability. Some threats may take longer periods to materialize, taxing the attention spans of decision-makers and the public. Other threats may occur more rapidly and frequently than projected, straining response capabilities beyond our reasonable capacity to respond as hoped. The possibility assumes that while some environmental threats may be difficult or impossible to prevent, there remains a national security interest in dealing with threats that can be anticipated and responded to.

Other Perspectives

You may share many of the concerns that motivate this possibility but argue that this possibility is not the way to go. You may think that the Army Corp of Engineers is already focusing upon natural security. You might think that the environment does not pose as great a threat to our national security as this possibility portends. Or you might think that focusing upon natural security would prevent poor countries from developing, since they might have to compromise their environments just to develop their electricity and industry, and thereby entrench the current world order.



Possible Implementations	Possible Effects of These Actions
We could —	These actions could —
1. Develop weapons that could destroy asteroids before they reach Earth	> Create a defense mechanism to life on Earth
2. Account for environmental damage as a risk factor for domestic populations and infrastructure and modify planning and investment policies to promote safety	> Add cost to many public and private development decisions, but also reduce costs and damages in relief and recovery efforts
3. Incorporate factors such as population growth, water supply, nutrition, and public health into assessments of foreign conflict potential	> Improve conflict prevention efforts through early-stage humanitarian and economic development, but may lead to entanglement in the messy business of nation-building
4. Relocate military facilities away from vulnerable areas and make them self-sustaining	> Maintain readiness and effectiveness as the environmental challenges increase
5. Engage the international community and improve multilateral governance of environmental threats	> Increase our credibility among other nations and provide leadership by example
6. Create humanitarian relief systems that account for increased frequency and intensity of natural disasters and resulting harms	> Lead to development of more specialized relief forces that are more mission-specific
7. Institute large-scale programs of conservation, prevention, remediation, mitigation, and adaptation	> Involve national security and defense planners in matters of renewable energy, water supply, and ecological carrying capacity

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