

Restoring American Leadership

Cooperative
Steps

to Advance Global Progress

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The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and are not necessarily the views of the Open Society Institute, the Center for American Progress, The Century Foundation, or the Security and Peace Institute. We offer these steps as reasonable approaches the U.S. government could take to help restore American leadership in the world.

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The Open Society Institute, a private operating and grantmaking foundation, aims to shape public policy to promote democratic governance, human rights, and economic, legal, and social reform. On a local level, OSI implements a range of initiatives to support the rule of law, education, public health, and independent media. At the same time, OSI works to build alliances across borders and continents on issues such as combating corruption and rights abuses.

OSI was created in 1993 by investor and philanthropist George Soros to support his foundations in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Those foundations were established, starting in 1984, to help countries make the transition from communism. OSI has expanded the activities of the Soros foundations network to other areas of the world where the transition to democracy is of particular concern. The Soros foundations network encompasses more than 60 countries, including the United States.

OSI's Washington, D.C., office focuses on addressing violations of civil liberties in the United States and expanding OSI's policy and advocacy work in the areas of criminal and civil justice reform, international development assistance, and global economic policy. The Cooperative Global Engagement Project, based in the Washington office, is building a broad coalition of support for a U.S. foreign policy based on collaborative approaches to problem solving with the international community. The initiative aims to shift popular discourse in order to prompt U.S. policymakers and other Americans to make foreign policy decisions in the context of U.S. citizenship in a global community. This publication is a product of the Cooperative Global Engagement Project.



A joint initiative of the Center for American Progress
and The Century Foundation

The Security and Peace Institute (SPI) was formed in January 2005 as a joint initiative of the Center for American Progress and The Century Foundation. SPI works to advance a responsible U.S. foreign policy based on strong defense, collective security, capable international institutions, and effective promotion of democracy and the rule of law. As part of this mission, SPI will place special emphasis on identifying and promoting emerging voices in progressive foreign policy, thereby building the next generation of foreign policy thinkers. SPI's primary activities will be to convene foreign policy conferences and meetings, support fellows, and sponsor research. The Institute has offices in both New York and Washington, D.C.

The Center for American Progress is a nonpartisan research and educational institute dedicated to promoting a strong, just, and free America that ensures opportunity for all. We believe that Americans are bound together by a common commitment to these values and we aspire to ensure that our national policies reflect these values. We work to find progressive and pragmatic solutions to significant domestic and international problems and develop policy proposals that foster a government that is “of the people, by the people, and for the people.”

The Century Foundation conducts public policy research and analyses of economic, social, and foreign policy issues, including inequality, retirement security, election reform, media studies, homeland security, and international affairs. The foundation produces books, reports, and other publications, convenes task forces and working groups, and operates eight informational websites. With offices in New York City and Washington, D.C., The Century Foundation is nonprofit and nonpartisan and was founded in 1919 by Edward A. Filene.

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Overview

The United States today faces a daunting array of international crises: the global war on terror, postwar violence and reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan, and nuclear weapons programs in Iran and North Korea. In addition, simmering transnational problems that have received insufficient attention or resources during the past decade—including the spread of HIV/AIDS, global warming, and economic development—now pose grave risks.

None of these critical issues can be addressed by the United States alone. Each requires the effective participation of allies, new and traditional, and international institutions. Failing to engage these indispensable partners will make U.S. efforts less effective, and jeopardize the stability, security, prosperity, and health of Americans.

Over the course of his administration, President George W. Bush has said he is committed to “effective multilateralism,” and his public remarks envision a world in which strong alliances and revitalized multilateral organizations play a key role in solving transnational and regional challenges. But effective multilateralism must involve more than ad hoc cooperation with countries that share a specific goal. Now, in his second term, President Bush has the chance to bring “effective multilateralism” to life and ensure that the United States has sufficient leverage to successfully deal with pressing global challenges.

The road will be a difficult one, but the rewards will extend far beyond our borders. As the United States confronts crises around the world, it also faces unprecedented hostility from abroad. The United States has come to be viewed by many countries, including many of the nations of the Middle East, as aggressive, unilateralist, and dedicated to a narrow vision of national security. Polls show that even the citizens of our strongest allies in Europe and Asia have a generally unfavorable view of the United States. These perceptions undermine America’s security because none of our most critical challenges can be dealt with by our nation alone or by coalitions of the willing. By rallying other nations and institutions to our side, we stand to make great gains in seemingly intractable international problems, as well as in international public opinion. Doing so will reverse a trend that now bodes ill for our long-term standing in the world.

This report is offered as a starting point for restoring America’s international alliances. The papers in the report, written by experts in 13 fields, recommend how the president can make progress in areas where his personal commitment to action is needed and where global alliances can help strengthen the national security goals of the United States. They

cover a wide range of topics, from international cooperation in the war on terror to curbing proliferation of nuclear weapons to advancing the rights of women across the globe. Each paper offers a specific set of recommendations for executive action by the president consistent with his stated values, as well as a brief overview of the administration's position on the issue to date.

These initiatives are not meant to be an exhaustive agenda for the second Bush administration. Instead, they represent the most promising opportunities—areas where U.S. action offers the greatest possibility for generating movement on intransient problems. The specific recommendations have been selected to reflect the president's own priorities, as articulated in previous statements, and are consistent with his foreign policy vision.

Addressing each of these problems is in the national interest. Resolving any of them will require strengthened international cooperation. These papers are offered as constructive contributions to the ongoing debate about how America can best assert responsible leadership in a new era.

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