

warrants, and still others have simply vanished, in a reminder of the darkest hours of Latin American history. As the victims of chavismo's repression multiply, what comes next is unlikely to be peaceful.

Chávez's "liberation" of the people was not meant to end with his regime's killing unarmed protesters. Yet it has done so—not despite the messianic leader who once eschewed redeemers, but because of him. Today's Venezuela is a totalitarian dictatorship in the heart of a democratic continent, a regime of the kind we once blocked economically or brought down by force. It has more political prisoners than China or Cuba. And such is its moral bankruptcy that hidden, drug-tainted cash—touted on Instagram by a new oligarchy of revolutionaries' offspring—ends up in the same havens once favored by corrupt neoliberals.

Foreign praise has run dry, along with oil money; those who once welcomed Venezuelan consulting contracts and campaign financing now conveniently avoid the topic. Around the world, and in particular in Latin America, pockets of the Left keep a silence that—in light of the abuses—can only be described as shameless. There is a particular sadness to human-rights crusaders who once bravely fought murderous military regimes but now are quiet in the face of chavista cadres' firing on unarmed protesters and "disappearing" opponents. If mass graves do not discriminate based on ideology, neither should we.

The Organization of American States has attempted to apply a doctrine that originated with none other than Betancourt: "Regimes that do not respect human rights and violate the freedoms of their citizens should be submitted to a rigorous quarantine and eradicated through the collective action of the international juridical community." If Venezuela still has OAS allies blocking more effective quarantining, we should expose and censure them, too.

Mercosur has suspended Venezuela from its membership; thanks to the work of populists over the past decade, it is powerless to do more. The Obama and Trump administrations have sanctioned select regime officials, most recently Maduro himself. They should go further, in particular after the regime's corrupt wealth abroad and its smuggling efforts. That money can be held hostage to encourage transition; the Vatican has a higher chance of success than discredited foreign politicians. The trouble is that others have been even more circumspect. The European Union denounced the new constitutional assembly and yet, strangely, stopped short of sanctions. Do not look to Russia or China for solutions; they are too preoccupied with preserving their investments and their strategic Latin beachhead. They are exactly the wrong people to ask for deliverance from human-rights abuses, an overdue realization in the region.

In his 1999 flight of fancy, Chávez forgot that Shakespeare's boatswain failed to arrest the tempest engineered by sorcerer Prospero. Only in the wreckage was the kingdom redeemed. Another Briton, Edmund Burke, could have charted the course of Venezuela's populist revolution: In the barricades, they dreamt of a revolution to free the people from corrupt elites who had long repressed them, but now, "at the end of every vista, you see nothing but the gallows." At a time when populists celebrate American withdrawal from the world, Venezuela's tempestuous fate should remind us that something far worse than American leadership on the world stage is its absence.

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Trump's Conservative Internationalism

It aims at a globalism rooted in nationalism

BY HENRY R. NAU

DOES Trump have a foreign policy? You know the old saw: No one knows what Donald Trump thinks, even if his name is "Donald Trump." True, but let's try. If we can get beyond the man's personality, we see that Trump's foreign policy is actually very conservative and deserves more support from conservatives of all stripes.

Despite the ridicule it has received, "America first" is a good starting principle for American foreign policy. At the Center for the National Interest in April 2016, Trump said, echoing Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher before him, that "the nation-state remains the true foundation for happiness and harmony." It is the only building block of a truly free—that is, decentralized—international system that accommodates genuine multicultural diversity. In America, Europe, and elsewhere, it is also the incubator of freedom. As Walter Russell Mead writes in the *Wall Street Journal*, "nationalism—the sense that Americans are bound together into a single people with a common destiny—is a noble and necessary force without which American democracy would fail."

Conservatives have always favored a different world order than liberals do, one based on nationalism. Liberals seek to expand international institutions and restrain global capitalism, just as they champion big government and regulated markets at home. Conservatives, by contrast, emphasize national sovereignty, limited government, and competitive markets abroad, just as they do at home. They count on personal responsibility and civil-society institutions (family, neighborhood, churches) to foster opportunity and restraint. They deplore government mandates and unconditional welfare and foreign aid. The goal is a "republican" world, one in which free nations live side by side, responsible for their own defenses and economies, and cut deals with other nations, including authoritarian ones, to the extent their interests overlap.

It is also true, as Trump advisers H. R. McMaster and Gary Cohn tell us, that "the world is not a 'global community' but an arena where nations, non-governmental actors, and businesses engage and compete for advantage." "Where our interests align," they continue, "we are open to working together." Where interests

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differ, “we will . . . take their measure, deter conflict through strength, and defend our interests.”

For many conservatives who are nationalists and realists, that’s enough. They assume that all nations put their own interests first and defend themselves with sufficient vigor to contain conflicts before they spread across the globe.

Nonetheless, a nationalist or realist has to take into account the ideological make-up of the international arena. As I discuss in my book *At Home Abroad*, nations have two types of interests: geopolitical interests, such as geography and size, that affect the nation’s territorial security; and ideological interests, or the values and institutions that the nation seeks to secure. The two are distinct, one not determined by the other. No nation is just a territory. For example, how many Americans would defend a United States that was authoritarian like Russia? How many Chinese would defend a China that was liberal like America? Nations are not only lands to defend; they are also heartlands, lands where their citizens’ values, institutions, and memories lie.

The heartland or ideological interests of nations change more readily than their territorial interests. And if the ideologies of different nations converge, territories can become less threatened. That’s what happened in Europe between 1917 and 2017. France and Germany and other European nations converged in the values and institutions they sought to defend. They became more republican or democratic and less monarchic and authoritarian, and while their geopolitical circumstances did not change, their ideological interests overlapped more. They found it easier to resolve differences and to think in terms of common interests.

We need to ask therefore not just *what* nations have in common, that is, where their overall interests overlap, but *how much* they have in common, what is the *degree* of overlap. If nations have almost no values or institutions in common, as in the case of Nazi Germany and the free world, national sovereignty does not ensure peace. If they have a lot in common, as in the case of advanced democracies today, nations can live together in peace without a lot of global centralization. As Professor Mark Haas points out in his path-breaking book *The Ideological Origins of Great Power Politics*, the “ideological distance” among various nations determines the extent to which their interests align or differ.

Thomas Jefferson, an early advocate of limited government, understood this already at the beginning of the American republic. When he contemplated the formation of new states in the Louisiana Territory, he saw them as “sons” or “sister republics” living side by side with the United States under similar laws and language. He concluded: “Keep them in the union, if it be for their good, but separate them, if it be better.” Alexander Hamilton, who favored strong federal government, thought differently. He saw the new states as potential competitors and sought to preempt their independence by annexing them to the United States.

In short, Hamilton envisioned a nationalist world with little in common among separate nations. Jefferson envisioned a nationalist world that was also internationalist, a *conservative* internationalist world of separate nations responsible for their own defense and economy yet living side by side in peace because they share republican values and similar laws or constitutions.

Realists acknowledge such a world but can’t explain it. Henry Kissinger observes in *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?* that the democratic nations of the North Atlantic world (the U.S.,

Canada, and Europe) do not follow the conventional rules of the balance of power: These nations retain powerful defenses but do not threaten one another with military force. But this republican peace is exactly the conservative-internationalist world that Thomas Jefferson envisioned, one which lacks centralized institutions that usurp national sovereignty and features separate, independent republics that maintain their own armed forces and are responsible to their own national institutions.

With all the difficulties in the world today, this vast community of democratic nations (which also includes Japan and South Korea) persists. It constitutes the principal difference between the world of 1917 and the world of 2017. And if an “America first” approach works better today, that is only because nationalisms overlap more today than they did previously.

Trump recognizes this reality. Referring to disputes between “nationalists” and “globalists” on his staff, he responds in his folksy cadence, “Hey, I’m a nationalist and a globalist; I’m both.” And he is. Already as a candidate he said he would “work with our allies to reinvigorate Western values and institutions.” As president, he said in Poland:

Americans, Poles, and the nations of Europe value individual freedom and sovereignty. We treasure the rule of law and protect the right to free speech and free expression. We empower women as pillars of our society and of our success. We put faith and family, not government and bureaucracy, at the center of our lives. . . . And above all, we value the dignity of every human life, protect the rights of every person, and share the hope of every soul to live in freedom. That is who we are. Those are the priceless ties that bind us together as nations, as allies, and as a civilization.

His globalism, however, is nationalist, not universalist. Every country differs. In Saudi Arabia, Trump said: “We are not here to lecture—we are not here to tell other people how to live, what to do, who to be, or how to worship.” Shared bonds are constituted from the bottom up, from the roots of the people and the nation, not from the top down, from the rigid ideology of cosmopolitan elites and perfectionist plans of global bureaucrats. And shared bonds are forged in struggle, not preordained by history: “Just as we won the Cold War, in part, by exposing the evils of Communism and the virtues of free markets, so too must we take on the ideology of radical Islam.”

Trump does not reject globalism, in other words, but roots it in nationalism.

IN the world Harry Truman and Ronald Reagan confronted, the divide between Communist and republican nationalism was so wide that there was little globalism. It was necessary to nurture democracies in Germany and Japan, where they had never or barely existed before. The presidents who initiated and ended the Cold War understood that ideology (heartland) was at stake, not just spheres of influence (land). Truman insisted that the division of Germany and Europe was about oppression and freedom, and Reagan refused to accept the legitimacy of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, because both presidents understood that nationalism was safe only if it was republican.

Since the end of the Cold War, however, spreading democracy has become less urgent. The world is already a much better place. The entire advanced industrial world is democratic. When Trump

warns against “the dangerous idea that we could make Western democracies out of countries that had no experience or interest in becoming a Western democracy,” he has a point, especially if he is talking about spreading democracy to remote countries such as Vietnam and, more recently, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Given a better world, Trump doesn’t have to endorse a global crusade for freedom the way Truman and Reagan did. He is right to question whether we should try “to support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world,” as George W. Bush advocated.

The U.S. should not abandon the battle for freedom. But it should focus its efforts primarily on Eastern Europe and the Korean Peninsula, not on the Middle East and southwest Asia. In the long run, a Ukraine that falls under the sway of resurgent Russian imperialism or a Korea that slips into the satrapy of China will do more to roll back the interests of America around the world than will a serious but not existential threat from terrorism and ISIS.

Without a sense of priority, nationalists tend to be reactive: Live and let live, they preach, until someone attacks you. Then destroy the attacker. But what if terrorists and rogue states, perhaps with great-power sympathizers looking on (Iran and Russia in the Middle East, or China and North Korea in Asia), attack the United States in many different places at once? The United States winds up entangled in multiple crises, and costly

world where the United States might be attacked. The United States does station forces permanently in Europe (and in Korea under other treaty commitments). If there is an attack against Europe’s (or South Korea’s) borders, American soldiers will die immediately. That is a stronger trigger committing America to defend Europe (or South Korea) than any words in the NATO treaty or from the lips of an American president.

Last year, in response to Russian aggression in Crimea, NATO placed military forces permanently on the Russian border for the first time since the end of the Cold War. Four NATO members—the United States, Canada, France, and Great Britain—stationed about 1,000 troops each in the Baltic states and Poland. Upon taking office and months before he went to Europe, Trump affirmed these military actions and thereby strengthened America’s commitment to Article 5 in a more meaningful way than words could have ever done.

Why did he not then also utter the words? Because his purpose was to make the European allies face up to their alliance commitments, especially that of defense spending, which has lagged historically behind their expressed promises. Later, in the Rose Garden and again in Poland, Trump endorsed Article 5. His actions suggest he never intended otherwise. Alas, the journalistic kerfuffle missed the real story.

Trump’s strategy in Asia is even more explicit. There he has openly embraced America’s allies. His first unofficial foreign visitor was Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan, and Trump has

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wars in Afghanistan and Iraq divert America’s attention from Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and China’s militarization of island outposts in the Pacific. Trump’s nationalism is vulnerable to such distraction and dissipation if it considers all threats to be equally important.

Let’s assess where Trump is on these two fronts, defending the major borders of freedom from resurgent authoritarianism in Russia and China and quenching the flames of terrorism in more remote parts of the Middle East and southwest Asia.

Trump’s strategy toward Europe and Russia is a far sight better than almost all analysts have acknowledged. Many commentators, including some thoughtful conservative ones, criticized Trump after his trip to Europe in May for having failed to reinforce America’s commitment to Article 5 of the NATO treaty, which calls an attack on one NATO member an attack on all. But they missed a crucial point. Trump’s trip to Europe was intended to highlight Europe’s commitments to the alliance, not America’s. Article 5 has been invoked only once, when the European members declared their solidarity with the United States after 9/11. Early in his NATO speech, Trump complimented Europe for that decision: “Our NATO allies responded swiftly and decisively, invoking for the first time in its history the Article 5 collective-defense commitments.”

Trump was also subtly pointing out that Europe’s commitment to Article 5 is different from America’s. Europe does not station forces permanently in any of the hot spots around the

so far handled adroitly a difficult relationship with South Korea. The new South Korean president favors a more conciliatory approach to North Korea and halted temporarily the deployment of additional launchers to complete the THAAD (terminal high-altitude area defense) missile-defense system in South Korea. Trump has said that North Korea will not acquire a nuclear weapon and missile capability that can threaten Hawaii or the U.S. mainland.

Korea, not ISIS or Syria or even Ukraine, is clearly the most volatile and consequential issue Trump faces. It cannot be solved *peacefully* without China’s partnership. The best approach is to press ahead with some combination of enhanced allied defense and persistent diplomacy.

The former includes Japanese–South Korean military cooperation, which gets China’s attention, and the latter perhaps another round of, yes, fruitless inter-Korean talks, which would entrap North Korea. As Reagan’s deployment of intermediate-range nuclear forces showed in Europe, defense measures do not undermine diplomacy but leverage it, and diplomacy does not slow down defense initiatives but counts on them. THAAD and talks go together, preferably with China at the table. In the long run, a strong economy in Asia is also crucial, which means Trump should quickly find an alternative to the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement, which he terminated.

The gravity of the Korean situation suggests how important it is that Trump’s nationalist strategy not get the U.S. entangled in

escalating and debilitating conflicts in the Middle East or southwest Asia. Early in his tenure as president, Trump employed the military playbook in Syria and Afghanistan that Obama had so studiously avoided. U.S. cruise missiles hit government air bases in Syria, and a tunnel-busting bomb buried Taliban terrorists on the Afghanistan–Pakistan border. Trump is sending more American advisers and trainers to both conflict zones. Will this do the trick?

Probably not. In Afghanistan, Defense Secretary James Mattis admitted recently, “we are not winning.” Winning, he went on to say, would involve Afghan forces’ containing the violence and residual U.S. forces’ helping to train troops and maintain high-end capabilities. But that’s the existing strategy. Since American combat forces withdrew, Afghan forces have not handled a rising level of violence. The best option remains, as Mattis implies, to continue what we are doing but do it more effectively, and for one purpose only—to keep the Taliban from setting up training camps to attack America.

In the Middle East, the fighting to extinguish the “caliphate” of ISIS is going much better, but the post-conflict reconstruction challenge remains. Trump made a laudable pitch in Riyadh to get Sunni Arab countries to put more forces on the ground in Syria and to stop the flow of financial resources to ISIS and other terrorist groups. And his Iran policy combats Shiite terrorism in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. But none of this will reintegrate disaffected Sunnis fresh from their hellish experience under ISIS. Nor does it solve the problem of Kurdish forces and their demand, virulently resisted by Turkey, for political autonomy from Iraq and Syria.

Can Russia help? Maybe. It’s not ideal, but Trump has to find a way to contain the terrorist threat in the Middle East without a major commitment of American forces and without conceding too much influence to Russia, especially in Ukraine.

Purchasing Russian cooperation in Syria by lifting sanctions and affirming Russian aggression in Ukraine is a bad deal. It confuses priorities. Ukraine is far more important for the future of freedom than is Syria.

Nevertheless, some cooperation with Russia could underwrite a stalemate in the Middle East, one in which a Saudi-led coalition on the ground forestalls an Iranian attempt to build a terrorist bridge across northern Syria and Iraq. The United States backs Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel, and a moderate government in Iraq; Russia backs Assad and Tehran. Both the United States and Russia act to marginalize ISIS and its sequel (there will be a sequel). In this scenario, tensions and fighting would persist across northern Iraq and Syria among Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish groups, but Washington and Moscow would coordinate strikes in the air and compromises on the ground (like the recent cease-fire in southwestern Syria) to prevent a reemergence of terrorists capable of training militants to attack America, Europe, or Russia. America’s primary interest would be met.

TRUMP’S foreign policy is more coherent and conservative than many acknowledge. It seeks to realize a conservative-*internationalist* world order that builds on national sovereignty rather than international institutions and uses the military to strengthen diplomacy rather than engage in nation-building.

On the main borders of freedom, Trump seeks to devolve more responsibility to U.S. allies. This transition is long overdue and won’t be achieved without breaking a few eggs. Europe and Japan are vastly more wealthy today than they were in 1950, yet they still do not carry a proportionate share of the world’s defense and trade responsibilities. Trump zeroed in on that fact during his trip to Europe. When he left, Angela Merkel, Germany’s chancellor, seemed to have gotten the point: “The times in which we could totally rely on others are to some extent over. . . . We Europeans must really take our fate into our own hands.” Notice the adverbs. By “totally,” she confirms that Europe free-rides excessively. By “to some extent,” she acknowledges that the American commitment is still there. By “really,” she suggests that this time Europe might actually mean it. Trump got her attention without significantly placing the alliance itself in doubt.

On the peripheral borders of freedom, Trump has to avoid further Iraqs and Afghanistans. American voters have made it pretty clear over the past 70-plus years that they will not accept long wars in relatively remote regions where the threat and battle lines are ill defined (such as Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq) even after an attack on their own soil (such as 9/11). Spreading democracy in the Middle East or southwest Asia is simply not feasible at any acceptable cost, and what is worse, it diverts resources from higher-priority threats to American freedom.

Trump’s nationalism offers some needed discipline. It is not universalist. Commitments vary depending on how much the national interests of the world’s democratic republics overlap. They overlap a great deal on the borders with authoritarian powers Russia and China. Here Trump calls for strong and more balanced defense commitments, reinvigorated economic growth, and diplomatic realism. The objective is to defend freedom’s gains over the past 70 years. They overlap less in more remote parts of the world where the primary interest is to defeat terrorism, not to spread democracy. Here Russia and China may assist. The objective in the Middle East is to keep terrorism on the run, not to run Russia out; the objective in Northeast Asia is to lock Pyongyang in, not to lock China out.

Most important, contrary to conventional wisdom, Trump’s nationalism is not anti-globalist. As McMaster and Cohn write, “America First does not mean America Alone.” Rather, it means globalism built on nationalism, free countries taking care of themselves and sharing common values. Trump can revitalize America’s republican nationalism. He can offer a conservative vision of the world that builds on Jefferson’s idea of “sister republics” living side by side in peace without large global institutions.

Such conservative internationalism protects the American people by securing borders at home, killing terrorists wherever they emerge, strengthening republican allies, worrying more about the rollback than the spread of democracy, cooperating as needed with authoritarian powers, and doing the things at home that build strength and character—creating jobs and economic growth, promoting military modernization, and urging Americans to renew their loyalty to one another by their loyalty to the nation. As Trump said at his inauguration, “When we open our hearts to patriotism, there is no room for prejudice.” Nationalism of this variety offers a vital vision for sustainable globalism.

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