

INNOVATION IN AMERICAN GRAND STRATEGY—THE EASY AND THE HARD

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A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

- ✘ Evolutionary pattern of American strategy
 - + *Gradual obsolescence or shock erodes consensus*
 - + *Period of debate (late '40s, early '60s, mid '70s, early '90s, post 9/11)*
 - + *New consensus*
 - + *Adjustment*
- ✘ Now entering a period of debate
 - + *Push and pull, challenge and threat*
 - + *Malleable domestic politics*

Potential for innovation

CONSTRAINTS

- ✘ Strategic culture and tradition
 - + *Intolerance for ambiguity*
 - + *Impatience*
 - + *Difficulty understanding the impact of culture*
 - + *Peculiar national self image*
 - ✘ *Obsessive need to be liked*
 - ✘ *Difficulty understanding that American power is intimidating*
- ✘ Domestic context
 - + *Idea that public opinion shapes strategy*
 - + *Intense, vitriolic domestic political conflict fueled by the profusion of information*
 - + *National security policy a political cudgel*

EASY OPTIONS

- ✘ A tighter regional shot group
- ✘ Resisting regime change
- ✘ (Re)reliance on stand off military power and coalitions
 - + *The “Libya option”*
 - + *Conventional and counter-terrorism*
- ✘ Slower pace of military advancement
 - + *Little interest in “transformation” despite emerging technological break throughs*
- ✘ Less focus on determining outcomes

HARD OPTIONS

- ✘ Real offshore balancing
 - + *Preventing adverse outcomes rather than shaping positive ones*
- ✘ Loosening conditions for partnerships
- ✘ Tightening conditions for partnerships
 - + *The “partner problem”—flawed assumptions*
- ✘ Serious retrenchment
- ✘ A less state centric strategy
- ✘ An increased focus on nontraditional threats

THE WELL TRAVELED ROAD

- ✘ Likely trajectory—minor adjustment (the easy option) until obsolescence or shock
- ✘ Black swans may change everything
 - ✘ *Major domestic attack*
 - ✘ *Global economic collapse or pandemic*
 - ✘ *High impact technological change*
 - ✘ *Emergence of new hostile ideology*



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