INNOVATION IN AMERICAN GRAND STRATEGY—THE EASY AND THE HARD

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**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
CONSTRANTS

- 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