

# THE STATESMAN

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## Announcements:

Extension programs are now available in California, Arizona, and Utah. New classes are starting regularly. [Click here for the extension program schedule](#)

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April 12-17 [Statesmanship Invitational](#)

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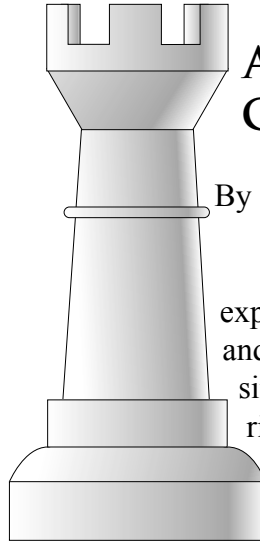
June 14-26 [Youth for America \(Sessions 1-4\)](#)

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## AMERICA'S NEW GRAND STRATEGY

By Oliver DeMille

The United States is currently experiencing a Grand Strategy Crisis—and the most powerful nation in the world since the Roman Empire better get it right. Such a crisis typically comes along once a generation, when the nation drops its old grand strategy and selects a new one. Unfortunately, this significant change, which has happened three times in U.S. history and will likely occur again in the next two decades, is hardly noticed by the large majority of the people. It affects them in many ways, but by the time most people know about it it's too late to change.

For those who lead a nation, the grand strategy is more than a set of guidelines or even a list of goals or objectives. The grand strategy is a vision of where a nation wants to go, of what it seeks to accomplish in the world—a vision shared by its decision-making elite. A grand strategy is the guiding principle for foreign policy and all international relations for a nation. “How” to achieve the grand strategy is a subject of ongoing debate among the elite in any free nation, but “what” the strategy should be is only considered on those rare occasions when a nation decides to drastically shift gears.

In such times, big changes occur. In the United States we have shifted grand strategies three times: between 1776 and 1796, from the Revolutionary War through the ratification of the Constitution; between

1856 and 1876, from the rise of Lincoln through the Civil War and into Reconstruction; and again from 1929 to 1949 during the Great Depression and WWII.

In each case, once a grand strategy was adopted, national leaders pursued it until world events required significant changes. The American Founding generation adopted a grand strategy of Constitutionalism, also known as Republicanism or Manifest Destiny. This grand strategy was two-fold: First, the founders expected the United States to expand naturally and spread the new American system of free, limited, representative government from the Atlantic states all the way to the Pacific Ocean. Secondly, through example, they wanted the nations of the world to see the success of this model and follow it.

After the Civil War, U.S. leaders adopted a strategy of Nationalism: the focus shifted to increasing American national strength and status in the world. Teddy Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Delano Roosevelt were among those who helped pursue this strategic vision. “America must take its place as a leader of nations,” became the sometimes spoken but always central focus of the U.S. policy elite.

At the end of two devastating world wars and a bleak depression, U.S. decision makers again adopted a new grand strategy—Internationalism. The focus of this grand strategy was simple: use international organizations, treaties, and international diplomacy, conferences and cooperative arrangements to make the world safe for democracy and capitalism. The idea was to contain communism, keep it from spreading, and simultaneously support the spread of democracy and capitalism as far and wide as possible. Hopefully, if the strategy worked, communism would not only stop growing but its support around the world would begin to diminish, to be replaced by democracy.

In short, the foreign policy history of the United States might be summed up as Constitutionalism, then Nationalism, and finally Internationalism. Unfortunately, Internationalism became woefully outdated in the early 1990s—and the world found out just how outdated on September 11, 2001.

Amazingly, however, few have come forward with a new plan for America’s Twenty-First Century Grand Strategy. This is partly because the grand strategy is considered and chosen by the intelligentsia—the average American doesn’t even know what the phrase means. But this can’t explain the whole problem: in similar periods in the past numerous ideas were put forth by the national elite to debate, discuss, consider, discard, improve and adopt. The incredible silence of our modern leadership is something new in the United States.

Three proposals have been made which purport to be new grand strategy proposals, but each of them is more tactical than strategic. First, President George Bush may have been outlining such a strategy change in his “Axis of Evil” speech. Certainly the full eradication of terror is a change in tactics, but to what end? What is the goal of the war on terror? If it is to make the world safe for democracy and the spread of capitalism, it is a new tactic for the old strategy of Internationalism. Besides, to truly end terrorism would require using U.S. might to restructure and redirect the leading terrorist states in the world, including Saudi Arabia and nuclear powers China and possibly Russia. Nothing in the “Axis of Evil” speech or since seems to advocate such a strategy. Just beating up on the smallest terrorist states, as much as they deserve it, still leaves terrorism healthy and growing. Unless the axis of evil includes China, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan (former Soviet Union), Uzbekistan (former Soviet Union) and over twenty other nations, a few attacks on weak opponents hardly amounts to a moving, visionary national grand strategy.

A second proposal is outlined by Ambassador Mark Palmer in his book *Breaking the Real Axis of Evil*. Ambassador Palmer goes well beyond the Bush Administration and suggests that America adopt as its national purpose the ousting of all dictators in the world by 2025. He argues that dictatorship is the true evil in the world, and that democratic nations led by the United States and its President should strategize and implement a plan to get rid of all the dictators everywhere. He even lists the dictators by name, and gives a suggested tactical approach to ousting each—some peacefully, others by sanction and pressure, still others by force. This proposal is not really a

new strategy, but simply the tactical application of Internationalism to a different enemy—dictators instead of communists.

A third strategy is suggested by Secretary of State Colin Powell. He calls it “A Strategy of Partnerships” and argues that the world should be kept basically the same as it is—the U.S. at the head with its allies, intervening “decisively to prevent regional conflicts,” and embracing Russia, China, and other powers in a world that increasingly adopts American values. This will be accomplished by partnerships which put “us at odds with terrorists, tyrants, and others who wish us ill” and to whom “we will give no quarter.” At the same time, we will be “partners with all those who cherish freedom, human dignity, and peace.” Powell’s Foreign Affairs article, published in January of 2004, leaves some glaring questions. The whole point of Internationalism was to encourage partnerships with those seeking freedom and peace. But Powell says nothing about what the partnership will do, what its goals are, except the same old Internationalism that we’ve been pursuing since 1945. Powell’s argument, while claiming to explain the Bush strategy, is actually less of a change than Bush’s “Axis of Evil” or Palmer’s proposal to rid the world of dictators.

All three proposals have pros and cons. But the amazing thing is that none of them, and nothing else to date, proposes a new grand strategy for the United States—something at the level of change from Royalism to Constitutionalism, Constitutionalism to Nationalism, or Nationalism to Internationalism. The current proposals just redirect, rekindle and rehash (respectively) the grand strategy we’ve followed for fifty years—Internationalism.

What’s really new in our time is the dearth of statesmen proposing a new direction at a time when real strategy is needed to deal with new challenges. Generals lose when they fail to learn the lessons of past wars; generals also lose when they attempt to fight new wars with old strategies. This adage applies even more to statesmen.

To put this in context, each time a new grand strategy was needed in American history, many of the leading members of the establishment held on to the past strategy, just as the Clinton and Bush

Administrations still pursue the status quo—an international world where the U.S. is top dog and capitalism keeps spreading new markets for U.S. companies. The good news is that this grand strategy is much better than China’s, Osama bin Laden’s, or perhaps any other current nation’s strategy.

The bad news is that no nation in history has ever maintained the status quo; big powers like Egypt, Babylon, Greece, Rome, France, Spain and Britain all tried. Nations become top powers by seeking to change or obtain something, not by trying to keep things the same. Big powers only stay big powers when they remake themselves, when they adopt a new grand strategy like Rome and later Britain did. The U.S. has remade its strategy three times, and all of them came from dealing with the big challenges, not the minor nations. Bush’s axis of evil, while there is much truth to his argument, doesn’t take nearly as much courage, grit or will as Reagan’s “evil empire,” FDR’s choice to beat Hitler, Wilson’s “world safe for democracy,” Lincoln’s decision to prove out the founder’s experiment with blood, or Washington’s “life, fortune and sacred honor.” In short, statesmen are needed in the next two decades to formulate and implement a grand strategy which requires virtue, wisdom, diplomacy and courage at Churchillesque, Ghandi-like and Jeffersonian proportions.

If the U.S. is to maintain its prosperity, it must adopt a powerful new grand strategy and then pursue it effectively and courageously. And if it is to maintain and even regain its freedoms, it must simultaneously adopt a good grand strategy and the right one. In other words, it is time for statesmen to begin to discover, present and promote the merits of proposed grand strategies for the Twenty-First Century. If the patterns of history hold, we have about twenty years to get the right ideas into the debate and influence the huge choice ahead.

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