



Strategic Leadership: Framework for a 21st Century National Security Strategy

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About the Phoenix Initiative

The Phoenix Initiative is a collective effort to provide an intellectual and policy framework for the next administration. The group initially came together three years ago to discuss on a regular basis the state of the world, America's place in it, and the best ways for advancing America's interest and values. Our goal was to develop ideas and concepts that made sense from a policy—as opposed to a political—perspective and to make the case for them on that basis alone. That is also the basis of this first report—a manifesto meant to marshal the best practices and ideas of the progressive tradition in U.S. foreign policy and adapt them to a rapidly changing world.

Preface by Susan E. Rice:

As one of the founders of the original Phoenix Initiative in early 2005, I felt strongly that it was time for a group of younger foreign policy thinkers to come together and work through common positions not only on a set of specific issues, but also on how America should define and pursue its interests in a post-Cold War world, a world still resistant to tidy categorization. The point was not to write a paper in support of a specific candidate or for a specific occasion or political purpose, but instead to consider a fresh strategic perspective. I regret that my responsibilities as a Senior Advisor to the Obama campaign prevented me from seeing this project to fruition.

Strategic Leadership: Framework for a 21st Century National Security Strategy is the product of over three years of discussions and debate on everything from fundamental assumptions about the nature of the international order in the 21st century to U.S. policy toward the Middle East. At a time when the United States truly must rise from the ashes of a failed foreign policy, this report breaks away from such traditional concepts as containment, engagement, and enlargement and rejects standard dichotomies of realist power politics versus liberal idealism. It starts from a set of U.S. national interests as old as the nation itself and asks how we can safeguard and pursue those interests in this 21st century world. Without pretense of answering all questions and addressing all issues, the report offers bold and genuinely new thinking about America's role in such a world.

From this foundation, the thinkers and practitioners in the Phoenix Initiative have developed a different conception of American leadership. They accept that regardless of who is elected in November, the clock will not magically turn back to 1991, after the fall of the Soviet Union, or even back to September 12, 2001, when the world mourned with us. They see opportunities as well as challenges in the deep and unavoidable interconnectedness of our age, the rise of countries on every continent as emerging powers, and the broadening of the global agenda.

In this world, America has many more potential allies and friends, indispensable partners in tackling problems of common security. There is no illusion that international cooperation is easy. It is, though,

essential to our own security as well as to international peace and prosperity. We must recognize that the world has not stood still over the past decade, waiting for America to reclaim the mantle of global leadership. Our ability to lead requires the kind of leadership—strategic leadership—laid out in this report.

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