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The Sheriff: America's Defense of the New World Order

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that is important but the diligent process of identifying drivers and developing scenarios that is invaluable. To paraphrase Helmuth von Moltke, no forecast survives contact with reality; good forecasters, like good planners, excel because they have gone through the rigorous intellectual process of examining the mental geography of a problem and anticipating the various contours and conditions that could arise. Read this book only if you would like to avoid being surprised by tomorrow's predictable discontinuities.

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Gray, Colin S. *The Sheriff: America's Defense of the New World Order*. Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 2004. 232pp. \$29.95

What role should the United States play in contemporary international politics? This question, or rather debate, began at the end of the Cold War and has never really concluded. It is a unique debate because while everyone disagrees on the question, all agree on its substance—the United States is the preeminent power in the world. People refer to the United States by various names: the lone superpower, the unipolar moment, Pax Americana, and from some of its erstwhile allies and former enemies, the unilateral hegemon or hyperpower. All such names try to capture the signal fact that America carries tremendous weight in world affairs, though for obvious reasons everyone interprets the implications differently. In the United States, two different groups dominate the contemporary

study of strategy: defense analysts and scholars of international security. In both fields most writers seem content to work on very specific problems. Defense analysts tend to emphasize what many have called the Revolution in Military Affairs or military transformation, while many in international security still contend for a theory-driven approach to international conflict. However, despite the fact that strategy bridges politics and war, defense analysts narrowly focus on the details of defense policies to the exclusion of the larger political issues. On the other hand, security theorists miss even the most basic issues pursuing theoretical elegance and, consequently, tend to write only for one another. Colin Gray avoids the pitfalls of each approach in *The Sheriff*.

Colin Gray is professor of international politics and strategic studies at the University of Reading, England, and senior fellow of the National Institute for Public Policy in Virginia. He has written extensively on strategy, geostrategy, and defense policy, and has long been connected to the defense establishments of the United States and NATO. Many of his former students are working in both places and in the academy today.

Gray begins this work by trying to understand some of the major issues facing the United States in the post-post-Cold War era and finishes by noting it is the little things that imperiled everyone's ability to see the larger picture. "I found that so much about the U.S. role in the world is coming into contention, that were I to devote most of my pages to military issues, as long intended, I would be analyzing secondary issues while leaving matters of first-order significance insufficiently addressed." It is

to the issues of first-order significance that the book is addressed.

Given the fact of America's preeminence in the world, what should it do? Gray sees the United States performing the role of "sheriff" of international politics, where others suggest running an empire. Gray explains that "sheriff is of course a metaphor. By its use I mean to argue that the United States will act on behalf of others, as well as itself, undertaking some of the tough jobs of international security that no other agent or agency is competent to perform." That is precisely what the United States has been doing, albeit sporadically, since the end of the Cold War. However, during the interregnum of the Cold War and the attacks of 9/11, the United States was strategically adrift, particularly during the years of the Clinton administration, which had no real focus except in the hope of reviving multilateral institutions.

Three things gave rise to a renewed strategic focus for the United States. The first was the election of the generally experienced, conservative leadership of the Bush team; the second was the commitment to military transformation by Bush's Pentagon team under Donald Rumsfeld; and third, the catalyzing attacks of 9/11, which provided focus for their efforts. Though the administration is focused on the war on terror now, Gray believes that U.S. strategy should also prepare for the eventual return of state-centric conflict.

Gray is a classical realist. A classical realist differs from the neorealist of the academy, who emphasizes theoretical modeling from the *realpolitik* practiced by cynical German politicians of the Bismarck era. Classical realists take their lead from the writings of

Thucydides, Sun Tzu, and Clausewitz and calculate strategy in terms of power and geography, or geostrategy. Through five chapters, Gray shows why he believes the proper role for the United States is to sheriff the international system—that is, to regulate the international political order. He believes history shows that world order is not self-enforcing and unless the United States commits to regulating it, it may not be regulated at all; or, worse, U.S. neglect may encourage others to try their hand at regulating international politics, to the detriment of the current world order.

Gray makes a strong case for the U.S. role in regulating international politics. The role of sheriff will help provide the conceptual focus for military planners and advocates of transformation. He also suggests ways the United States can maintain its preponderance of power, prudent ways to serve U.S. interests as well as keep both domestic and international politics on its side, or at least not overtly hostile. What he does not address, however, is *why* the United States should act as sheriff. What is it about America that makes it the best candidate for the job? It cannot be simply because it is the most powerful country in the world.

Clausewitz famously links war—and the instruments of war, the military—to politics. The central question for strategy, then, should be to what end and for what purpose should strategy be made? To answer that question, one must first ask what are the conditions of internal politics that lead the United States to want, or need, to regulate international politics. What is it about the United States that makes it the *right* power to act as sheriff? Unfortunately,

Clausewitz himself never addressed politics much, and neither do his successors. However, if one assumes that the United States is the right country for sheriff, which Gray clearly does, then it behooves us to pay attention to what he says.

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Korb, Lawrence J. *A New National Security Strategy in an Age of Terrorists, Tyrants, and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Three Options Presented as Presidential Speeches*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2003.

Since the end of the Cold War and the subsequent demise of the Soviet Union, the United States has been in search of a new grand strategy. Over time, the question “What should be the post-Cold War U.S. grand strategy?” evolved into “What should the United States do with its preeminence?” The answers provided by the various erstwhile successors to George Kennan, who gave us the Cold War’s “containment,” have ranged from neo-isolationism—dubbed “strategic independence” by some of its advocates—to primacy, the consolidation and indefinite preservation of U.S. hegemony, of what had initially been thought to be a “unipolar moment.” Some, most notably neoconservatives, have even made the case for a U.S. empire—primacy on steroids.

The declaration by the United States of a global war on terror following the attacks of 9/11 has done little to bring closure to the grand strategy debate. Indeed, the brutally manifest new threat and the response to it, particularly as formulated in the Bush administration’s

September 2002 *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, and implemented in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, served to further fuel the debate. For many, the boldness, even arrogance, exhibited in the administration’s security strategy, especially the explicit embrace of “preemption” and the aftermath of the Iraq campaign, have raised more questions than have been answered.

It is here that Korb, with this admirably concise and sharply focused volume, steps up to the plate. In the tradition of such previous Council on Foreign Relations Policy Initiatives as *Reshaping America’s Military* by Korb (2002) and *Future Visions for U.S. Defense Policy* by Hillen and Korb (2000), Korb here lays out, in the form of presidential speeches, three alternative national security strategies.

As a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress, former director of the National Security Studies Program at the Council of Foreign Relations, and former assistant secretary of defense, Korb possesses the intellect and experience this project requires.

The author takes as his point of departure the concerns—in some corners, furor—generated by the Bush administration’s 2002 security strategy. Controversies surrounding four issues are highlighted: the embrace of preemption (and apparent abandonment of containment and deterrence); the willingness to sacrifice the principles of political and economic liberalism in the global war on terrorism by recruiting the likes of Pakistan’s President Pervez Musharraf to the cause, for example; the inclination to go it alone; and the evident internal tensions and contradictions, particularly the call for maintaining and enhancing