AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY: FITTING TRUMP’S GLOBAL SCHEME

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**American Foreign policy: Fitting Trump’s Global Scheme**   
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**Introduction**

After the presidential election of Donald Trump, the Miller Center of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia([[1]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_edn1" \o ")) called on some big thinkers to discuss the future of American foreign policy. Attendees of these meetings commented that there were no agreements among speakers.

They couldn't agree on whether China would replace the U.S. as the world's leading power. They couldn't agree on whether Islamic extremism would be central or peripheral in the years ahead. They couldn't agree on the significance of America's unpopularity. They couldn’t agree on the future of NATO. They couldn’t agree on the future of the Middle East. And most importantly they couldn’t agree on limitations of the new global order and the emergence of new trends of global governance.

However, there were two competing papers that illuminated most of the issues roiling to and from the issues at stake. The first was by John Ikenberry([[2]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_edn2" \o ")) of Princeton. He argued that the U.S. will not face one big threat in the coming decades. Instead, there will be a ''diffuse, shifting and uncertain'' array of security challenges: collapsing nation-states, global warming, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, pandemics, and energy scarcity. The second by Michael Auslin who stated that: “Like Presidents Bush and Obama before him, Donald Trump’s personality so enrages his critics and so enthralls his supporters, that a dispassionate assessment of his actual policies requires almost superhuman effort by observers”. He continues to say that there is a consistency to Trump’s approach to the world, one that those in both opposition and defense should at least understand. In short, when a foreign policy is really about the home front, in Trump’s view, then his more radical instincts are pursued (such as on free trade); conversely, on issues that are purely foreign in their impact, such as alliances or U.S. security policy, Trump is far more willing to follow the status quo, at least for now. First is the question facing all presidents: Is their policy the right policy? Barack Obama certainly seemed to have a consistent, logical policy; it was, however, one that seemed manifestly inadequate to the challenges he faced. Trump may find himself facing the same criticisms if his policies do not lead to greater global stability or do not protect American interests. This may be all the more likely if he continues to adopt some of Obama’s policies vis-a-vis China, Russia, and North Korea. If Trump has a world view based largely on instinct (as many want to believe), the logic of Trump’s foreign policy appears to be largely and relatively consistent worldview, however, this offers no assurances that the team charged with implementing that policy, or the process by which that policy is formed, will be neat, collegial, or even logical itself. The White House is ordained to be perpetually consumed by infighting, public contradictions, and back-and-forth on policies. That, however, is the norm for any White House, and certainly marked both George Bush and Barack Obama’s presidencies.

Attempting to analyze Trump’s talks and declarations about how to develop a new foreign policy direction, one realizes that he forecasts the replacement of randomness with purpose, ideology with strategy, and chaos with peace. He claims that he intends to shake the rust off of America’s foreign policy, to invite new voices and new visions into the fold. He has repeatedly asserted that his foreign policy will always put the interests of the American people, and American security, above all else. That will be the foundation of every decision that he will make. America First will be the major and overriding theme of his administration.

**Sinking U.S.A. 20th Century Contributions**

Trump titles that the U.S.A. has a lot to be proud of. In the 1940s, it saved the world. The Greatest Generation beat back the Nazis and the Japanese Imperialists. Then U.S.A. saved the world again, from totalitarian Communism. The Cold War lasted for decades, but the U.S.A. won. Democrats and Republicans working together got Mr. Gorbachev to heed the words of President Reagan when he said: “tear down this wall.”

Unfortunately, after the Cold War, Trump states that “our foreign policy veered badly off course. We failed to develop a new vision for a new time. In fact, as time went on, our foreign policy began to make less and less sense. Logic was replaced with foolishness and arrogance, and this led to one foreign policy disaster after another. We went from mistakes in Iraq to Egypt to Libya, to President Obama’s line in the sand in Syria. Each of these actions has helped to throw the region into chaos, and gave ISIS the space it needs to grow and prosper. It all began with the dangerous idea that we could make Western democracies out of countries that had no experience or interest in becoming a Western Democracy.” Trump again repeats to proclaim: “We tore up what institutions they had and then were surprised at what we unleashed. Civil war, religious fanaticism; thousands of American lives, and many trillions of dollars, were lost as a result. The vacuum was created that ISIS would fill. Iran, too, would rush in and fill the void, much to their unjust enrichment. Recently, our foreign policy has been a complete and total disaster, no vision, no purpose, no direction, no strategy.”

**Trump’s Categorization of Five Main Weaknesses in Foreign Policy.**

First, America no longer has a clear understanding of its foreign policy goals. Since the end of the Cold War and the breakdown of the Soviet Union, the U.S.A. lacked a coherent foreign policy.

One day bombing Libya and getting rid of a dictator to foster democracy for civilians, the next day watching the same civilians suffer while that country falls apart. The legacy of the Obama-Clinton interventions was weakness, confusion, and disarray. They have made the Middle East more unstable and chaotic than ever before. They left minorities subject to intense persecution and even genocide. Their actions in Iraq, Libya and Syria have helped unleash ISIS. And the U.S.A. is now in a war against radical Islam, but President Obama won’t even name the enemy!

Hillary Clinton also refused to say the words “radical Islam,” even as she pushed for a massive increase in refugees. After Secretary Clinton’s failed intervention in Libya, Islamic terrorists in Benghazi took down the U.S.A. consulate and killed the ambassador and three Americans.

Trump addresses U.S.A. friends and allies saying that America is going to be strong again. America is going to be a reliable friend and ally again. It is going to finally have a coherent foreign policy based upon American interests, and the shared interests of our allies.

The U.S.A. under my administration, Trump asserts, will get out of the nation-building business, and instead focusing on creating stability in the world. The American moments of greatest strength came when politics ended at the water’s edge. It needs a new, rational American foreign policy, informed by the best minds and supported by both parties, as well as by close allies.

Secondly, Trump’s long-term plan is to halt the spread and reach of radical Islam. He is assertive to contain the spread of radical Islam even if events require the use of military force. But to him it’s a philosophical struggle, like America’s long struggle in the Cold War. In this; Trump promises to be working very closely with allies in the Muslim world, all of which are at risk from radical Islamic violence. He asserts to work with any nation in the Middle East region that is threatened by the rise of radical Islam. But this has to be a two-way street – they must also be good to the U.S.A. and remember all what the Americans are doing for them.

To Trump the struggle against radical Islam is also to take place in the U.S.A. homeland. He states that there are scores of recent migrants inside our borders charged with terrorism. He continues to reveal that for every case known to the public, there are dozens more. The U.S.A. must stop importing extremism through senseless immigration policies.

Thirdly, the U.S.A. should rebuild its military and the economy to counter the Russians and Chinese who have rapidly expanded their military capabilities, and that of their economies. Trump justifies this on the following:

“Our nuclear weapons arsenal – our ultimate deterrent – has been allowed to atrophy and is desperately in need of modernization and renewal.”

“Our active duty armed forces have shrunk from 2 million in 1991 to about 1.3 million today.”

“The Navy has shrunk from over 500 ships to 272 ships.”

“The Air Force is about 1/3 smaller than 1991. Pilots are flying B-52s in combat missions today which are not efficient anymore.”

Trump is organizing his administration to change the U.S.A. trade, immigration and economic policies to make the economy strong again – “and to put Americans first again.” He claims that this will ensure that workers, in America, get the jobs and higher pay that will grow U.S.A. tax revenue and increase the economic might of the nation.

Fourth, the U.S.A. must develop a foreign policy based on American interests. For Trump, businesses do not succeed when they lose sight of their core interests and neither do countries.

He cites what happened in the 1990s when the U.S.A. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were attacked and seventeen sailors were killed on the USS Cole. America’s reactions were counterproductive by placing more effort into adding China to the World Trade Organization which has been a disaster for the United States.

In the Middle East, Trump’s goals are to defeat terrorists and promote regional stability, not radical change. He claims to be clear-sighted about the groups that will never be anything other than enemies.

Trump promises to work hard to live peacefully and in friendship with Russia and China. The U.S.A. has serious differences with these two nations, and must regard them with open eyes. But the U.S.A. is not bound to be adversary to these nations.

Finally, Trump verbally commits himself to work with allies to reinvigorate Western values and institutions. Instead of trying to spread “universal values” that not everyone shares, the U.S.A. ought to understand that strengthening and promoting Western civilization and its accomplishments will do more to inspire positive reforms around the world than military interventions.

Fifth, Can the U.S.A. pursue a grand strategy in its foreign policy? To be able to do that, it has to embrace what Trump calls a ''milieu-based approach.'' In essence, the U.S.A. would make itself the center of a series of new global institutions where nations could come together and solve common problems. During the 1940s, the U.S. excelled at this, Trump notes. Dean Acheson and others initiated the Atlantic Charter, the Bretton Woods agreements, the Marshall Plan and the U.N. The idea was that capitalism could be organized internationally. Problems could be addressed in common. The U.S. could leverage its power more effectively if embedded in multilateral institutions with broad legitimacy. This order has been torn asunder because the Bush administration refused to operate within it. And so it's time to update. The new global architecture would have common features.

There would be a global social services sector, providing health care, education, shelters, emergency services and other parts of any healthy community. Second, there would be renewed security alliances, in part to enmesh China before it becomes so powerful that it's uncontainable. Third, the U.N. would be reformed and a Concert of Democracies would be created, where the free world could respond as threats emerge.

**Scholarly reaction to Trump Foreign Policy**

George Friedman([[3]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_edn3" \o ")) disputes Trump’s visualization of foreign policy and states that a global system would be workable if the great powers shared common political principles. But Russia, China and the U.S., among others, do not have common understandings or interests, so it will only lead to paralysis.

Regardless of Trump’s hopes for, Charles Krauthammer([[4]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_edn4" \o ")) asserts that the world will look as it's always looked - a world of competing nations, vying for power. This world in his view will also have a steady feature. That is a continued U.S.A. dominance. Even events of the past few years have not undermined American economic and military supremacy. For the foreseeable future, the world will have one big global power, and a number of regional ones.

Derek Cholle([[5]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_edn5" \o ")) argues, the global arena is witnessing increasingly regional competition. Nationalism is back, if it ever went away. And so in Asia, China competes with Japan and South Korea. In Central Europe, Russia competes with its neighbors. In the Middle East, Iran bids for dominance.

Most scholars are warning Trump of the overarching rivalry between democracy and autocracy. A few years ago, democracy seemed on the march, but now authoritarian governments are confident and thriving. Russia, China and other nations have an interest in seeing autocracy spread and in striping off democratic reforms.

In the future, Cholle and Kagan concludes, the U.S.A. is going to have to stabilize regional conflicts and gradually push back against the autocratic tide. The U.S. will also remain the most ardent champion of liberty in the face of Islamist anti-modernism. American predominance is not a danger. It's the only thing standing between us and regression to a more dangerous world.

There's little evidence that different nations with their contradictory moral cultures can really cooperate, except in utter crisis. But Kagan underplays post-national threats. More than in the 19th century, security threats come in the form of global guerrillas, loose nukes and disintegrating nations.

Notwithstanding, nations are trapped in a hybrid world, in which many problems are post-national but the social structures are unavoidably national. The interesting bright spot is that both Ikenberry and Kagan believe in a Concert of Democracies, an emerging body where countries that do share values can rebut autocracy and consolidate their common success.

**U.S.A. and War on Terrorism**

It looks like Trump is not ready to dispense with the Global War on Terror. He asserts that the scourge of radical Islam still constitutes a serious threat to the stability of the international system. Recently, the world has witnessed a series of terrorist attacks take place in the West, while the governments of countries such as Nigeria, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and others, struggle to quell insurgent forces and terrorist groups. Four countries in particular merit America's close attention over the span of the next several years: Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria. All represent a new type of menace. They resemble "failed" or "collapsed" states in form([[6]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_edn6" \o ")). Yet they are inherently precarious because new radical inspired states (or "terror" states) are developing within their borders([[7]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_edn7" \o ")). This past decade, the conventional academic wisdom argued certain failed states undermined global stability because terrorists could operate with impunity from inside such countries([[8]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_edn8" \o ")). Nowadays this threat is undergoing a stunning metamorphosis, with insurgent-based movements transforming into new states and challenging the host governments of these four countries for supremacy.

In Iraq and Syria, terrorists fighting under the banner of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) have murdered Western countries citizens, massacred and enslaved ethnic and religious minorities, and looted and pillaged centers containing historical and cultural artifacts. In Libya, the country has descended into anarchy since the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi. Rival militias fight for control over stretches of territory, while ISIL-affiliated and other terrorist groups infiltrate the country due to the lack of a central government. In Afghanistan, a recent deadly wave of terrorist attacks has called into question whether the Afghan government could survive should the few remaining US military forces depart.

Notwithstanding, if America decided to disengage from these countries, radical Islamists could exercise more pressure in Iraq and Syria, Libya may devolve into a terrorist haven, and Afghan cities may soon start falling to the Taliban.

Today, the Afghan, Iraqi, Libyan, and Syrian governments are all fighting for their very survival, and America has the ability to play a role in determining whether they ultimately endure or perish. Surely, some policymakers and scholars believe the protracted conflicts raging within these countries are not (or no longer) America's primary concern, that such wars can only be resolved by local political actors, and that the United States should not be bestowing foreign aid upon politically corrupted governments led by useless utilitarian-minded elites or rushing to the defense of human rights and international law every time some beleaguered autocrat clinging to power violates the rules of war. While such views hold merit, the domestic security environments in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria are seemingly becoming more hazardous by the day. Hence, the United States risks a great deal in terms of its national security interests if it decides to turn away from these countries.

**Where Do Trump stand On This?**

Trump has decided to confront the rise of this new menace, primarily by striving to degrade and ultimately destroy ISIL in western Iraq and northern and eastern Syria and recently on March 1, 2017 he asserted to fight against all extremism all over the world with the assistance of allies to share in the costs. In addition, the new American government will likely try to block the expansion of ISIL's self-proclaimed caliphate to include portions of Libya as well as prevent the conversion of the Taliban into a new state in Afghanistan. State-building conversely remains the primary strategic means to address this challenge. Unfortunately, America's track record in terms of prosecuting such ventures has not been very impressive, and whether an ISIL and/or Taliban-led state can be beaten back largely depends upon Washington's desire to remain engaged in a series of protracted conflicts.

The United States seeks to bring about endings to all of these prolonged conflicts that are suitable to U.S.A. interests and definitive in nature. In Afghanistan, Washington strives to ensure the survival of the Afghan government and prevent the return of the Taliban to power. In Iraq, America is assisting the Iraqi government in an effort to evict ISIL from its strongholds and reassert Baghdad's authority over newly reconquered territories. In Libya, the United States is committed to helping broker a political solution to resolve the current governing crisis through the United Nations. In Syria, Trump aspires to neutralize ISIL and is no longer interested in pressuring Assad to leave power. The main problem, however, is none of these objectives are readily realizable on account of how the designated host governments exercise authority within these four countries.

All of the above mentioned four countries are embroiled in civil wars that show no signs of near restoration. The Taliban are self-confident to mount a challenge to the Afghan government. The Iraqi government recently reasserted its control over a good number of strategic cities, but it remains unknown as to when Mosul will be liberated from ISIL's rule. Libya's political deadlock cannot be resolved solely through dialogue and compromise. And Assad is not about to relinquish his authority in Syria. Instead, the Russian Federation has deployed military assistance to Damascus, presumably in the hope of ensuring the Assad regime's survival. Moscow's military intervention in Syria is problematic for the United States because the presence of Russian forces lessens the possibility of dislodging Bashar El- Assad from power. The Kremlin's strategy thus appears to consist of bombing U.S.A. backed anti-Assad forces to prop up the Syrian government, while using Syria as a "testing ground" to display Russia's military capabilities([[9]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_edn9" \o ")).

**U.S.A. Prominence and Long-term Wars**

Why are acts of political violence so pervasive in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria today? The hard truth is the contemporary problems which torment these four countries are at least partially due to America's actions and or indecisions. In Afghanistan, the origins of this country's troubles date back to the days of the Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989) when the United States and other regional and western states supported the Islamic militants against the invasion of the USSR and its Afghan communist-led weak government. After the departure of Soviet troops America turned away from Afghanistan, leaving the Islamic militant factions to fight among each other, which set the stage for the Afghan state's disintegration([[10]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_edn10" \o ")). Since the onset of the war in Afghanistan in 2001, the United States and its coalition partners have sought to rebuild a broken country. But the Afghan state remains largely propped up by the U.S.A. government and the Taliban do not appear to be interested in engaging in formal negotiations([[11]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_edn11" \o ")).

The situation in Syria is catastrophic. The political order has disintegrated and is being fragmented. Although the United States has publicly called for Assad's departure and threatened military action in response to the Syrian government's purported usage of chemical weapons, no military campaign has been initiated against the Assad regime. Instead, with the exception of the battle for the city of Kobane (which Kurdish forces, with the assistance of US airpower, successfully defended from an ISIL advance), Washington has been reluctant to enter the fray. Recently, there has been some talk about the United States and Turkey creating a "buffer zone" in Syria along the Turkish border, but it is unclear as to how it would be managed([[12]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_edn12" \o ")). As of now, in addition to enhancing its airpower capabilities at its Air Base in Turkey, the White House has decided to deploy a small contingent of US Special Operations Forces to Syria to provide "advice and assistance" to "local forces" battling against ISIL.

The mistakes of the US-led military occupation In Iraq are well known now. A sequence of fateful policy decisions seriously undermined domestic order and produced the rise of an insurgency([[13]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_edn13" \o ")). The U.S.A. military soon enough, and with much effort and sacrifice, suppressed the Iraqi insurgency by following an innovative strategy grounded in counter-insurgency tactics. But a premature withdrawal in 2011, followed by the application of exclusivist governing practices by local politicians during Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's tenure, reawakened sectarian hostilities across the country and aggressively undermined the legitimacy of the government in the eyes of many Iraqi citizens. In 2014, Baghdad surrendered a significant portion of its territory along with several major cities to ISIL. It is unclear whether the Iraqi military will be able to attract confidence among the northern parts of Iraq such as Mosul and its surrounding villages.

While the security situations in the above mentioned countries are all unique, the respective political systems are afflicted by the same syndrome: state failure. The host governments in question all suffer from crises of legitimacy on account of their inabilities to assert political authority and to provide social services to their own citizens. Libya is definitely not different.

In Libya, NATO went to war against the Gaddafi regime in 2011 in response to the late autocrat's determination to institute a bloody crackdown so as to stave off rebellion. But the NATO-led military intervention accomplished very little (other than the overthrow and slaying of Gaddafi, which in turn led to the opening of a security vacuum in his regime's wake)([[14]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_edn14" \o ")). Today, the situation on the ground clearly reveals the inherent shortsightedness of the international community in not deploying a multinational peacekeeping force to Libya in the early days of the post-Gaddafi era. On account of domestic political considerations in Western capitals, however, the decision was made to only conduct an air war in the hopes of avoiding becoming too heavily involved. The absence of a united central government in Libya sparked a major political crisis involving rival governing coalitions laying claim to power, as well as opened the door to the possibility that Libya could become a "satellite" of ISIL.

As such, basic issues of legitimacy and authority will continue to vex these troubled political systems, and if such matters are left unresolved, acts of political violence will unfortunately remain an endemic feature of these societies with a spill over to the West. A variety of academic studies claim ineffective governance and exclusionary rule are the key drivers of state failure and civil conflict. Unfortunately, the ruling elites of failing states, for the most part, do not seem to care much.

The U.S.A. has addressed the local governing officials of Kabul and Baghdad of the need to demonstrate a credible commitment to democracy by respecting the institutional foundations of their political systems. Americans were and still are naïve to think that sound institutionalization could be defecated given the tribal culture of these societies. Local officials have concomitantly failed.

In Libya and Syria, political order has deteriorated to such an extent that the only way to stabilize these countries is to entail the insertion of a disciplined and well equipped and trained military force for an indefinite period of time. In brief, there are few options from which the United States can select to address the security challenges posed by these countries. In Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States has fought two long and expensive wars. In Libya and Syria, America is noticeably more gun-shy. And in all of these countries even the most powerful local political actors cannot enforce their rule and cultivate much legitimacy([[15]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_edn15" \o ")).

**Trump and the Global War on Terror**

Islamic terrorism, in the early years post-September 11 era, represented the dominant security concern facing the United States. In confronting this threat, the US government began adhering to a new and ambitious foreign policy doctrine, consisting of capturing and killing terrorists, working with other state actors to undermine the capabilities of such groups to carry out attacks, and forcefully uprooting radical oppressive states and replacing them with new democratic-oriented political systems. Now, after the expenditure of much blood and treasure, the United States seeks to avoid becoming entangled in any more protracted conflicts in the Middle East. But for Trump a strict adherence to this aim could prove to be rather costly if insurgent-based movements convert themselves into new states.

Extremists Rebellions differ from states in terms of their respective organizational structure and functionality. Literature of political science reveals that rebels of all sorts are characterized by small, lightly armed bands practicing guerilla warfare from rural base areas. States, by contrast, are "coercion-wielding organizations" capable of waging war against other states and providing social services to people on account of their ability to project authority through the amassing of resources. Bearing this in mind, Trump’s strategy is to rally local powers and the West at large to crush ISIL and reverse converting itself from an insurgent force into a new state. In terms of its functions, ISIL behaves very much like a state by combating other states, eradicating threats to its own authority within its self-proclaimed caliphate, providing social services to those who live under ISIL's rule, as well as extracting resources in return. ISIL has also captured military equipment and vehicles, welcomed foreigners into its ranks, and created an internal security force to impose its rule (which permits the organization to maintain its writ over an expanse of territory). ISIL though more closely resembles a type of "phantom state” that engages in "hybrid warfare." Governing entities like ISIL can develop inside politically unstable countries([[16]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_edn16" \o ")).

How difficult it is to defeat ISIL? So far, the United States has opted to confront ISIL in Iraq and Syria, albeit to a lesser degree in the latter. That said there are several major concerns with the current Trump’s strategy. To begin, Trump has no desire to reengage fully in Iraq by deploying large numbers of American soldiers. Instead, Trump is betting on the notion that the Iraqi army will be able to ensure the job. Yet judging by the state of the Iraqi army's professionalism (or lack thereof), vulnerability to sectarianism, and likely inability to broker deals with the Sunni tribes in the northern and western regions of the country, it will be very difficult to repeat history. American forces are thus arguably needed to help evict ISIL, hold territory, foster lasting political arrangements with the Sunni tribes, and monitor Baghdad's governing practices. To date, Iraqi forces have experienced some one-sided Shiite oriented success on the battlefield, but it appears U.S.A. air support and assistance from sectarian militias was essential.

Even if ISIL's forces were to be expelled from all the major cities and surrounding areas currently under its control in Iraq, the group could still remain a functioning entity within some Syrian cities and retain the capability to wage an insurgency in Iraq and or could go underground as ready cells to launch terrorist attacks in major cities([[17]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_edn17" \o ")).

At present, the U.S.A. government and the international community lack the political will to confront ISIL directly on Syrian soil because of the sheer complexity involved in terms of trying to pacify the country. By targeting ISIL, the United States seems to believe it is possible to deny the organization the ability to function as a state. According to such thinking, without a sound economic base and politically astute leadership, ISIL will not be able to project its authority.

It remains unknown as to what governing entity could ultimately supersede ISIL. It is idealistic or non-realistic to think the Free Syrian Army could establish authority over the northern and eastern regions of the country, since it lacks the capability to vanquish ISIL on the battlefield. In light of these circumstances, Trump thinks that reconstructing the Syrian state to its pre-civil war composition (and without the Assad regime in control of any territory) may be on impossibility.

In Afghanistan and Libya, by working to prevent the return of the Taliban and the establishment of a new ISIL outpost, the United States seems to be pursuing a similar strategy grounded in denying the Taliban and ISIL affiliates the opportunity to acquire the capacity to function as new states. US foreign policy in North Africa and Southwest Asia is therefore coming to be based around inhibiting these actors from acquiring access to the financial, human, and military resources necessary for them to challenge the host governments in place.

**Unrefined State-Building in the Middle East**

The main problem with adhering to a state-building approach is that the United States lacks a workable blueprint for how to go about rebuilding failed states successfully. Since the onset of the Global War on Terror, America has spent a significant amount of blood and treasure in trying to rebuild Afghanistan and Iraq. However, the fact is Washington has not succeeded in stabilizing either. This is clearly evident in the fact that, after the U.S.A. military withdrawal from Iraq in 2011, the Iraqi government and its military forces showed themselves to be completely incapable of halting ISIL's takeover of large portions of territory. The same can be assumed about Afghanistan, for Washington's decision to remain military engaged in this country post 2016 signals that the United States harbors serious doubts as to whether or not the Afghan government and its military forces can withstand a Taliban offensive without sustained American military support. The historical record reveals America has rebuilt states following the cessation of armed conflict, most notably in Germany and Japan in the aftermath of the Second World War. But the United States is currently trying to rebuild failed (not functional) states in war-torn, ethnically diverse societies which have been historically defined by an absence of democracy, economic underdevelopment, and traditional-tribal rule. As such, any U.S.A. blueprint based upon the state-building successes of post-war Germany and post-war Japan is rather useless in terms of its ability to serve as a guide for state rebuilding efforts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria.

Taking the above into consideration, how would Trump proceed? In its war against ISIL the United States has sought to obstruct the group's own state-building efforts by authorizing raids led by Special Operations Forces on targets, inserting a small contingent of expeditionary units into Iraq and Syria to assist local forces, and waging war from the skies. While there are considerable virtues to this strategy, Iraqi forces are still not able to expel ISIL from all of its major strongholds, and no Sunni Arab force exists in Syria which could possibly defeat the terrorist group on the ground. Any further American involvement according to Trump should thus coincide with the founding and fitting of a professionally trained local military force that is capable of asserting legitimate authority and providing security over liberated areas once ISIL has been forcefully evicted hopefully with the help of ally states in the region. Conceivably, the same model could also be replicated in Afghanistan and Libya to some degree, provided that the United States is able to find local partners on the ground and establish productive channels of cooperation with neighboring states. In Afghanistan and Iraq, Trump is likely to continue to work with the national armies along with any supportive units that have received a proper screening. In Libya and Syria, locating, training, equipping, and organizing new professional military forces will prove to be a much more arduous task, namely, because local actors may prefer to fight against their respective host governments (or may not wish to work together)([[18]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_edn18" \o ")).

Trump openly said that, the amassing of professional military forces in Libya and Syria is absolutely necessary since they are needed to crush ISIL and its affiliates. In brief, the absence of such forces at present inhibits the founding of political order within these fractured societies. By working towards the peaceful resolutions of these armed conflicts in the United Nations the international community can assist with the building of such forces over time.

Nowadays, America is confronted with the shortcomings of its military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as the unforeseen consequences of NATO's brief campaign in Libya and Washington's decision to refrain from doing more in Syria to prevent domestic order from disintegrating in the early stages of the outbreak of violence. To make matters worse, the world is also bearing witness to a vulgar type of state-building taking place in Iraq and Syria. In the event ISIL maintains capable power, America would have virtually no other option but to try to "contain" it’s further spreading out. The deadly terrorist attacks in Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon, France, Belgium, and elsewhere indicates that ISIL and its affiliate organizations possess an international reach. Consequently, the international community should expect acts of terrorism to occur on a frequent basis as long as ISIL and its affiliates persist.

Based upon the United States' experiences in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars alongside the findings of a variety of academic studies, military intervening in Middle East conflicts is not a remedy for resolving them or replacing authoritarian governments with durable democratic regimes. Furthermore, rebuilding failed states is tremendously time-consuming, and the success of any foreign assistance program largely depends upon whether local political actors are willing to play by a new set of rules promulgated from afar and govern effectively. Still, the United States cannot categorically admit its democracy-promoting ventures in Afghanistan and Iraq have failed; nor can it turn a blind eye towards Libya and Syria. As such, Washington could plausibly reestablish state building as the centerpiece of its foreign policy to address the security threats posed by all of these countries.

The due course in Afghanistan as it stands dictates acts of political violence ranging from assassinations and terrorist attacks to armed clashes among rival forces and retribution killings will continue to define Afghan and Iraqi politics as long as the domestic security environments remain fragile([[19]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_edn19" \o ")). As bad as the situations are in Afghanistan and Iraq, things are debatably worse in Libya and Syria.

ISIL appears to be shifting its resources to Libya so the group can operate from an "alternative base" in the city of Surt. Meanwhile, the international community is observing a stalemate process in Syria taking place along ethno-sectarian and tribal lines, and the results do not look promising. How can the United States engage in state-building?

It is also unclear as to whether the United States can succeed outright since neighboring states such as Pakistan and Iran will continue to advance their own respective interests in Afghanistan and Iraq. The United States would find itself striving to counter various forces pressing for the fragmentation of the Afghan and Iraqi states. Although the United States is playing a leading role by working through international channels, such efforts may ultimately not amount to much if the local actors on the ground wish to keep on fighting.([[20]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_edn20" \o "))

Thereafter, Trump ultimately would need in the future to concentrate his efforts on orchestrating economic recoveries and providing social services within these countries as hostile forces are eradicated, for no new state can come to acquire legitimacy if ordinary people under its rule sparsely trust one another and remain hopelessly unable to earn a decent living. Economic development, social reconciliation, and the revival of ordinary life would thus need to follow closely behind the cessation of major combat operations. Lastly, it would likely be necessary for the United States and/or other member states of the international community to maintain an indefinite yet nominal military presence within some (or possibly all) of these countries so as to provide new states with the opportunity to consolidate as inexperienced leaders learn how to properly enforce their rule and cultivate genuine legitimacy. Of course, however, this blueprint for rebuilding failed states is quite vague.

**Conclusion**

Trump has proclaimed that the United States currently finds itself at a crossroads. If America decides to cut its losses and adopt the position that rebuilding failed states is too costly, then the United States and the free world should brace for the likely rise of radical-inspired states. Since such an outcome is perceived by many within the corridors of power in Washington as an unacceptable risk, America's war against radical Islam continues today. Assuming the United States wishes to keep on fighting the Global War on Terror by striving to neutralize terrorist organizations and quell insurgencies across the greater Middle East, Trump needs to re-evaluate whether the current tactics being employed at its discretion to further its respective counterterrorism and counterinsurgency strategies are beneficial to U.S.A. interests in the long run. In addition and on the long run, Trump could not consider placing some time, spatial, and resource limitations upon U.S.A. involvement in the Global War on Terror, for continuing along the current course of waging multiple wars arguably amounts to an unwise and tiring foreign policy doctrine with potentially horrible consequences. Finally, Trump needs to define clearly what constitutes an American victory in the Global War on Terror, and create a set of reliable criteria to approximate America's progress to date. As a result of this unfortunate state of affairs, avoiding defeat in these protracted conflicts would therefore necessitate that Washington keep waging an uphill struggle for better strategies into the foreseeable future. A rise in military budget called for by Trump with a lack of proper strategy is midriff option.

[[1]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_ednref1" \o ") The Miller Center is a nonpartisan institute that seeks to expand understanding of the presidency, policy, and political history, providing critical insights for the nation’s governance challenges.

[[2]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_ednref2" \o ") John Ikenberry Publications:

2016 Between the Eagle and the Dragon: America, China, and Middle State Strategies in East Asia

2015 The Future of Liberal World Order

2015 The Future of Multilateralism: Governing the World in a Post-Hegemonic Era

2015 America, China, and the Struggle for World Order: Ideas, Traditions, Historical Legacies, and Global Visions

[[3]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_ednref3" \o ") George Friedman; Donald Trump Has a Coherent, Radical Foreign Policy Doctrine January 20, 2017. This piece is part of a special RCW series on America’s role in the world during the Trump administration. The views expressed are the author’s own.

[[4]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_ednref4" \o ") Charles Krauthammer; Trump’s Foreign-Policy Revolution; January 26, 2017.

[[5]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_ednref5" \o ") Derek Chollet, Eric S. Edelman, Michèle Flournoy, Stephen J. Hadley, Martin S. Indyk, Bruce Jones, Robert Kagan, Kristen Silverberg, Jake Sullivan, and Thomas Wright; Global Governance & Politics Building “situations of strength”; February 2017.

[[6]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_ednref6" \o ") For definitions of "failed" and "collapsed" states, see Robert I. Rotberg, "The Failure and Collapse of Nation-States: Breakdown, Prevention, and Repair," in Robert I. Rotberg, ed., When States Fail: Causes and Consequences (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 1-10.

[[7]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_ednref7" \o ") Tim Arango, "ISIS Transforming into Functioning State that Uses Terror as Tool," New York Times, July 21, 2015, http://www.nytimes. Com/2015/07/22/world/middleeast/isis-transforming-into-functioning-state-that-uses-terror-astool; "ISIS Is Not a Terrorist Group," Foreign Affairs 94, no. 2 (March/ April 2015): 87-98.

[[8]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_ednref8" \o ") Robert I. Rotberg, "Failed States in a World of Terror," Foreign Affairs 81, no. 4 (July/August 2002): 127-140. For a discussion on this topic, see also Michael J. Mzaar, "The Rise and Fall of the Failed State Paradigm," Foreign Affairs 93, no. 1 (January/February 2014): 113-121.

[[9]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_ednref9" \o ") Adam Entous, "US Sees Russian Drive Against CIA-Backed Rebels in Syria," Wall Street Journal, October 5, 2015; Steven Lee Myers and Eric Schmitt, "Russian Military Uses Syria as Proving Ground, and West Takes Notice," New York Times, October 14, 2015, http://www. nytimes.com/2015/10/15/world/middleeast/russian-military-uses-syria-as-proving-groundand-west-takes-notice.html. Yet, President Vladimir Putin has recently ordered Russian military forces to withdraw from Syria, presumably because a negotiated political settlement of some sort between Damascus and certain rebel groups is within Russia's best interest. For a more nuanced discussion, see Max Fisher, "Putin Withdrawing Russian Forces from Syria: Why Now and Why It Matters," Vox, March 14, 2016, http://www.vox.com/2016/3/14/11224544/ Putin-Syria-Russia-withdraw.

[10]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_ednref10" \o ") Martin Ewans, Afghanistan: A Short History of Its People and Politics (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 238-260. For a discussion on US involvement in the Soviet-Afghan War, see Steve Coll, Ghost Wars: The Secret History y of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, From the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001 (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 50-186.

[[11]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_ednref11" \o ") For a discussion on this issue, see Charles J. Sullivan, "The Coming Fall of Kabul," PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo 386, George Washington University (September 2015).

[[12]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_ednref12" \o ") Erin Cunningham, "US, Turkey Aim to Create Buffer Zone on Syrian Border. Nobody Knows How," Washington Post, August 13, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/ world/middle.

[[13]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_ednref13" \o ") Thomas E. Ricks, Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq, reprint ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2007). See also Larry Diamond, "What Went Wrong in Iraq," Foreign Affairs 83, no. 5 (September/October 2004): 34-56.

[[14]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_ednref14" \o ") Tony Karon, "'Mission Accomplished' in Libya? Not So Fast," Time, January 30, 2012, http://world.time.com/2012/01/30/mission-accomplished-in-libya-not-so-fast/. For an analysis of the oversights and policy blunders associated with the NATO-led military intervention in Libya, see Alan J. Kuperman, "A Model Humanitarian Intervention? Reassessing NATO's Libya Campaign," International Security 38, no. 1 (Summer 2013): 105-136.

[[15]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_ednref15" \o ") For a discussion on the indicators of state failure in all of these countries, see "Fragile States Index 2015," Fund for Peace (2015), http://fsi.fundforpeace.org/. According to the index rankings, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria are currently listed as being on "High Alert" whereas Libya is on "Alert."

[[16]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_ednref16" \o ") Goldstone, "Pathways to State Failure," 288.

[[17]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_ednref17" \o ") Kenneth M. Pollack and Barbara F. Walter, "Escaping the Civil War Trap in the Middle East," 39.

[[18]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_ednref18" \o ") Michael D. Shear, Helene Cooper, and Eric Schmitt, "Obama Administration Ends Effort to Train Syrians to Combat ISIS," New York Times, October 9, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/10/world/middleeast/pentagonprogram-islamic-state-syria.html.

[[19]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_ednref19" \o ") Michael Weiss and Michael Pregent, "The US is Providing Air Cover for Ethnic Cleansing in Iraq," Foreign Policy, March 28, 2015.

[[20]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme" \l "_ednref20" \o ") Somini Sengupta and David E. Sanger, "After Years of War in Syria, U.N. Passes Resolution on Talks," New York Times, December 18, 2015.

**السياسة الخارجيّة الأميركيّة تتناسب ومخطّط ترامب العالمي**

تعلّق الحاضرون في الإجتماعات المرتبطة بالسياسة الخارجيّة الأميركيّة بعد الإنتخابات الرئاسيّة لدونالد ترامب على غياب اتّفاقات حول مستقبل موقف الولايات المتّحدة في النظام العالمي. فالعلماء لا يتوافقون حول وجود إمكانيّة أن تحلّ الصين محلّ الولايات المتّحدة الأميركيّة كقوّة قائدة للعالم. ولم يستطيعوا الاتّفاق إذا ما كان التطرّف الإسلامي سيكون مركزيًّا أم ثانويًّا في السنوات القادمة. كذلك، لم يتمكّنوا من التوافق حول خطورة لاشعبيّة أميركا. ولم يتمكّنوا من التوافق حول مستقبل الناتو. وما استطاعوا التوافق حول مستقبل الشرق الأوسط. والأهمّ أنّهم لم يتمكّنوا من التوافق حول مسألة محدوديّة النظام العالميّ الجديد وظهور تيّارات جديدة للحوكمة العالميّة.

وكانعكاس لرؤية ترامب حول السياسة الخارجيّة الأميركيّة، يختلف جورج فريدمان مع تصوّر ترامب ويصرّح أنّ نظامًا عالميًّا قد يكون عمليًّا إذا قامت القوى الكبرى بمشاركة المبادئ السياسيّة المشتركة. ولكنّ روسيا، والصين، والولايات المتّحدة الأميركيّة، فضلًا عن دول أخرى، لا تتمتّع بمفاهيم أو مصالح مشتركة، وبالتالي ستكون النتيجة الشلل لا غير.

بغضّ النظر عن آمال ترامب، يؤكّد شارل كروثامير أنّ العالم سيبدو كما ظهر دومًا، عالمًا يضمّ أممًا متنافسةً تتزاحم على السلطة. وبنظره سيتّسم العالم بمعالم ثابتة. إنّها سيطرة مستمرّة من جانب الولايات المتّحدة الأميركيّة. وحتى الأحداث في السنوات القليلة السابقة لم تساهم في تقويض الهيمنة الأميركية الإقتصاديّة والعسكريّة. بالنسبة إلى المستقبل القريب، سيكون للعالم قوّة عالميّة كبيرة واحدة وعدد من القوى الإقليميّة.

ديريك كول يجادل قائلًا بأنّ الساحة العالميّة تشهد منافسةً إقليميّةً متزايدةً. القوميّة تعود أدراجها، وكأنّها لم ترحل أبدًا. وكذلك في آسيا، تتنافس الصين مع اليابان وكوريا الجنوبيّة. في أوروبا الوسطى، تتنافس روسيا مع جيرانها. وفي الشرق الأوسط، تراهن إيران على السيطرة.

يقوم معظم الفقهاء بتحذير ترامب من المزاحمة الأساسيّة بين الديمقراطية والإستبداديّة. منذ سنوات قليلة، بدت الديمقراطيّة كأنّها تسير قدمًا، ولكن الآن تُعتبر الحكومات المتسلّطة واثقة ومزدهرة. فلروسيا، والصين ودول أخرى مصلحة في معاينة انتشار الإستبداديّة وفي القضاء على الإصلاحات الديمقراطيّة.

في المستقبل، يستنتج كول وكاغان، أنّه سيكون على الولايات المتّحدة الأميركيّة الحدّ من الصراعات والتصدّي تدريجيًّا لموجة الإستبداد. كذلك ستبقى الولايات المتّحدة بطل الحريّة الأكثر حماسةً في وجه الأصوليّة الإسلاميّة. فإنّ السيطرة الأميركيّة لا تشكّل خطرًا. إنّها الأمر الوحيد الذي يقف بيننا وبين التدهور إلى عالم أكثر خطورةً. ثمّة دليل صغير أنّ الأمم المختلفة بثقافاتها الأخلاقيّة المتضاربة تستطيع حقًّا التعاون، ما عدا في أزمة جامحة. ولكنّ كاغين يتحفّظ على التهديدات التالية للقوميّة. وتأتي التهديدات الأمنية، أكثر ممّا كانت عليه في القرن التاسع عشر، على شكل عصابات عالميّة، وإرهاب، وأسلحة نوويّة، وأمم متفكّكة.

بالنسبة إلى ما ذكر أعلاه، يحتاج ترامب أن يحدّد بوضوح ما يؤلّف نصرًا أميركيًّا في الحرب العالميّة ضدّ الإرهاب، ويستحدث مجموعةً من المعايير الموثوقة لتقريب موعد تحقيق تطوّر أميركا. نتيجةً لهذا الوضع المؤسف، قد يستلزم بالتالي تجنّب الهزيمة في هذه الصراعات الممتدّة، مواصلة واشنطن لصراعها الذي يتطلّب الكثير من الوقت والجهد بغية التوصّل إلى استراتيجيات أفضل في المستقبل المنظور. أمّا الزيادة في الميزانيّة العسكريّة التي دعا إليها ترامب في ظلّ فقدان استراتيجيّة سليمة يشكّل خيارًا حاجزًا.

- See more at: https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/american-foreign-policy-fitting-trump%E2%80%99s-global-scheme#sthash.nDGXnkQh.dpuf