
AMERICAN INTERNATIONALISM: PROMOTING FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT

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“Neither protectionist nor expansionist, American internationalism seeks to preserve liberty and to promote opportunity, human dignity, freedom, prosperity, and peace, both at home and abroad,” says Kim R. Holmes, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs. U.S. actions in support of these goals, he says, are illustrated by the articles in this journal, which provide pertinent examples of America’s engagement with the world.

Peace, prosperity, and freedom — these fundamental principles fuel the unique form of foreign policy known as American internationalism. We in America have a long tradition of acting on core values and promoting ideals like freedom of speech, the right to vote, freedom of religion, and a free press that so often challenge the power of dictators and ideologues. Unlike the leaders of unfree societies, we believe that economic and political freedoms, human rights, and opportunity are not privileges to be handed out by the elite to those they favor; they are rights of every man and woman that must be protected and promoted.

President Bush explained American internationalism this way in 2002 to the graduates of West Point: “Our Nation’s cause has always been larger than our Nation’s defense. We fight, as we always fight, for a just peace, a peace that favors liberty. We will defend the peace against the threats from terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers. And we will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent.... Building this just peace is ... America’s duty.”

Americans understand this awesome obligation. That is why we gave the President strong support for fighting terrorism, freeing the Afghan people from the Taliban, and liberating Iraqis from Saddam

Hussein’s horrific regime. American values today echo those that fueled the United States’ determination to win World War II and its dedication to rebuilding those war-torn nations. These values also guided our efforts during the Cold War. Time and again, our deeply held desire to see that everyone is free has inspired a generosity of time, talent, and life itself.

We have largely met with success. Henry Kissinger, as national security adviser, once observed that, “No foreign policy — no matter how ingenious — has any chance of success if it is born in the minds of a few and carried in the hearts of none.” American internationalism succeeds precisely because it is based on values carried in the hearts of multitudes. These values are not uniquely American, but universal and global in their appeal. They do not seek to impose specific cultural norms, but rather provide the tools and freedom for each society to realize its own potential based on its own cultural, ethnic, and religious traditions.

History has shown that the strongest, most stable, tolerant, and prosperous countries are those that respect the universal principles of human rights, rule of law, and democracy. The promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms is in the national interest of every member of the international community because governments that protect human rights are those best able to secure peace, promote

economic development, combat international terrorism and crime, avoid humanitarian crises, and improve the global environment.

Neither protectionist nor expansionist, American internationalism seeks to preserve liberty and to promote opportunity, human dignity, freedom, prosperity, and peace, both at home and abroad. When America has intervened, it has done so reluctantly and stayed only as long as necessary. We seek to leave countries better than they were before. To help those in desperate need, we contribute more to humanitarian relief, both publicly and privately, than any other country. We engage in the United Nations system to advance these objectives and all of our other interests. We also seek to make the United Nations more effective, whether we are talking about the Security Council, the Commission on Human Rights, peacekeeping, or the work of its specialized agencies.

Our core values can be seen not only in what our government does bilaterally and multilaterally. They also are reflected in the day-to-day efforts of American citizens, the private sector, religious groups, and nongovernmental organizations that promote freedom and opportunity around the world. Our dedication to principles and values is not lost on the world, even as American internationalism remains a lightning rod for criticism from those who view our motives with suspicion.

American internationalism, after all, is not a rigid doctrine. It can and often does take on the character of a president as he responds to the urgency of problems facing the world. President Bush's "distinctly American internationalism" resonates with Americans because it is a response to the real and global threats of terrorism, pandemic disease, poverty, trafficking in persons, and more. Americans support his efforts to protect innocent people from weapons of mass destruction in the hands of al-Qaeda and other terrorists; to promote freedom, good governance, and prosperity through new initiatives like the Millennium Challenge Account; and to fight HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases that ravage societies through a multimillion-dollar commitment to the Global Fund and other programs.

American internationalism is, in fact, best illustrated by U.S. actions. The articles that follow will discuss these and other pertinent examples of America's engagement with the world. We begin with a discussion of the principles and priorities that guide our multilateral engagement in the United Nations to promote freedom, democracy, peace, and prosperity.

Economist Kevin Hassett and scholar James Glassman consider how America's trade policy benefits the world economy and helps developing countries, even when it adds to our trade deficit. U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick presents a frank assessment of America's "building-block approach" to promoting security, prosperity, and freedom through trade agreements and liberalization. University of Notre Dame Law Professor Jimmy Gurulé, a former Under Secretary of the Treasury, considers how U.S. foreign policy successfully built and expanded international consensus on restricting terrorist financing.

Next, Under Secretary of State Paula Dobriansky and National Endowment for Democracy (NED) President Carl Gershman examine America's drive to spread democracy and freedom through public and private efforts. Together, their articles offer a broad picture of our effectiveness, including the growth of nascent movements in undemocratic states with our support and that of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) like the NED.

Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Tommy Thompson discusses America's effort to improve global health by improving international capabilities to respond to public health threats like SARS, and to rid the world of infectious diseases that know no boundaries but devastate whole societies. The Early Warning Global Health Initiative and the HHS Global Health Security Initiative are two examples.

Environmental threats also know no boundaries. Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs John Turner discusses America's efforts to create responsible international environmental policy to protect the world's resources and reduce the use of

harmful chemicals and pollutants. Finally, Robert Kellett of Mercy Corps discusses the work of NGOs that further America's efforts to alleviate poverty and oppression and help people secure political and economic freedoms and human rights.

Much more could be written on this issue, of course. But as these articles make clear, American internationalism is far from unilateralist. Americans believe freedom, peace, and prosperity are universal aspirations, and free countries have a responsibility to

help others realize them. As President Bush put it, and the multilateral policies described in these articles attest, "No nation owns these aspirations, and no nation is exempt from them. We have no intention of imposing our culture [on others]. America will always stand firm for the non-negotiable demands of human dignity." Working with our friends and allies, we will continue striving to defeat terror, alleviate hunger, disease, and oppression around the world, and spread the opportunities that liberty and democracy provide. ©