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## Restraining Order: For Strategic Modesty

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Even in an era of globalization, when information, people, goods, services, and, yes, weapons, armies, and terrorists may travel much more efficiently than in the past, geography still matters. At the start of the Cold War, the United States chose to relinquish the protection given by wide ocean buffers and relatively unthreatening neighbors to protect poor and depleted European and Asian allies whose own geography made them vulnerable to Soviet expansion. Today, however, the Cold War is long over, these allies have grown prosperous, and it's time for America to reclaim its strategic depth.

The Cold War left a legacy that has been difficult for Americans to transcend. The global network of American bases and military commands is ready for use, and many U.S. allies, despite their posturing complaints about U.S. policy, often encourage our interventionism as a way of ducking responsibility for maintaining their own security. It is also true that post-Cold War conflicts that developed in or near the collapsed Soviet empire, and the violent ethnic rivalries and failed states of Africa and Asia, have tempted U.S. intervention. When President Obama and other policymakers claim that security is indivisible—that instability anywhere threatens American security and prosperity everywhere—they are saying that the United States must undertake the burden because someone has to do it.

The United States would be better off pursuing a different grand strategy, one that would regain the advantages of our geography and accustom our friends once again to carrying the responsibility for their own security. Though we are the globe's strongest nation—with a very powerful military, the world's largest economy, and an enticing culture—we have neither the need nor the resources to manage everyone else's security. We can meet the challenges of globalization and terrorism without being the self-appointed and self-financed global police force.

Restraint would offer the opportunity to reinvigorate the foundations of America's strength. Foreign distractions, among other causes, have led the United States to neglect its transportation infrastructure, its educational system, its finances, and its technology base. If we were to restrain the global interventionism that has become our second nature since the end of World War II, we could ensure our safety while preserving our power to deal more precisely with threats that may materialize in an uncertain future.

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