# ISOLATIONISM DISADVANTAGE

Thesis: The thesis of this disadvantage is that a substantial reduction in the US military presence in the world will be perceived by allies as a retreat from the globe, undermining the US ability to get nations’ cooperation in solving the world’s problems. Two critical concepts to understand with this disadvantage are the ideas of soft power and hegemony. Right now, Barack Obama has increased the soft power of the United States, or the ability of the country to persuade other nations to join with the United States in building coalitions for peace, solve global warming, decrease global poverty, etc. However, the Affirmative plan rips a long-standing commitment of the United States out from underneath the feet of a trusted ally, making the United States look flippant and reckless in its international commitments. This decreases trust not only from the topic country, but from everyone around the globe who now views the United States as wishy-washy in its desire to help the world solve its problems. This undermines the hegemony of the United States, or the global influence that one power maintains in brokering peace agreements and maintaining global stability. Hosts of international relations scholars think that a world with a stable hegemon is much safer than a world of multiple competing countries. The decline in US hegemony risks warfare, instability, and an inability to solve the problems facing the world at the dawn of the 21st century.

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# Isolationism DA Shell (1/2)

## A. Uniqueness: Obama has restored hard and soft power now:

Joseph S. Nye, 2010 (Professor of International Affairs @ Harvard), April 14, 2010. Online. Internet. Accessed April 25, 2010 at <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/04/14/george_hw_obama?page=full>.

The Obama administration has referred to a smart-power strategy that combines hard and soft power. A smart-power strategy requires that the old distinction between realists and liberals needs to give way to a new synthesis that might call liberal realism. It starts with an understanding of the strength and limits of American power. Preponderance is not empire or hegemony. As I argue in my forthcoming book, The Future of Power in the 21st Century, the United States can influence but not control other parts of the world. Power always depends upon context, and in the context of transnational relations (such as climate change, illegal drugs, pandemics, and terrorism) power is diffuse and chaotically distributed. Military power is a small part of the solution in responding to these new threats. They require cooperation among governments and international institutions. Obama seems to understand this well. He focused first on avoiding a global depression and made good use of the G-20. He has reached out to others with a series of adept speeches and symbolic gestures that restored American soft power. He has now made progress on his nuclear agenda, both with Russia and on countering proliferation. I think he deserves good marks for liberal realism, rather than being pigeonholed into one category of the other.

## B. Link: Pulling back from overseas defense commitments is a signal to our allies that America is retreating into isolationism—this guts American soft power with allies around the globe.

Robert **Kagan, 2009** (senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), February 3, 2009, “No Time to Cut Defense.” Online. Internet. Accessed April 25, 2010 at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/02/AR 2009020202618.html

· A reduction in defense spending this year would unnerve American allies and undercut efforts to gain greater cooperation. There is already a sense around the world, fed by irresponsible pundits here at home, that the United States is in terminal decline. Many fear that the economic crisis will cause the United States to pull back from overseas commitments. The announcement of a defense cutback would be taken by the world as evidence that the American retreat has begun. This would make it harder to press allies to do more. The Obama administration rightly plans to encourage European allies to increase defense capabilities so they can more equitably share the burden of global commitments. This will be a tough sell if the United States is cutting its own defense budget. In Afghanistan, there are already concerns that the United States may be "short of breath." In Pakistan, the military may be tempted to wait out what its members perceive as America's flagging commitment to the region. A reduction in defense funding would feed these perceptions and make it harder for Obama's newly appointed special envoy, Richard Holbrooke, to press for necessary changes in both countries.

## 2. Abandoning military commitments undermines other US commitments—our word will no longer be believed:

David Gordon, 2008 (senior fellow of the Mises Institute), Online. Internet. Accessed April 26, 2010 at <http://mises.org/misesreview_detail.aspx?control=334>.

Against abandoning our military commitment to Taiwan there is an obvious argument, but I do not think it can be sustained. If the United States renounces its military commitment, then we will lose credibility. Should we find it necessary to make such a commitment in the future, we will find it difficult or impossible to do so. Our guarantees will not be believed.

# Isolationism DA Shell (2/2)

## C. Impact: A perception of US withdrawal from the world creates a devastating power vacuum, risking international anarchy and multiple scenarios for nuclear war.

Niall Ferguson, 2004 (professor of history at Harvard University). Online. Internet. Accessed April 26, 2010 at <http://www.hoover.org/publications/digest/3009996.html>.

The defining characteristic of our age is not a shift of power upward, to supranational institutions, but downward. With the end of states’ monopoly on the means of violence and the collapse of their control over channels of communication, humanity has entered an era characterized as much by disintegration as by integration. If free flows of information and of means of production empower multinational corporations and nongovernmental organizations (as well as evangelistic religious cults of all denominations), the free flow of destructive technology empowers both criminal organizations and terrorist cells. These groups can operate, it seems, wherever they choose, from Hamburg to Gaza. By contrast, the writ of the international community is not global at all. It is, in fact, increasingly confined to a few strategic cities such as Kabul and Pristina. In short, it is the nonstate actors who truly wield global power—including both the monks and the Vikings of our time. So what is left? Waning empires. Religious revivals. Incipient anarchy. A coming retreat into fortified cities. These are the Dark Age experiences that a world without a hyperpower might quickly find itself reliving. The trouble is, of course, that this Dark Age would be an altogether more dangerous one than the Dark Age of the ninth century. For the world is much more populous—roughly 20 times more—meaning that friction between the world’s disparate “tribes” is bound to be more frequent. Technology has transformed production; now human societies depend not merely on fresh water and the harvest but also on supplies of fossil fuels that are known to be finite. Technology has upgraded destruction, too; it is now possible not just to sack a city but to obliterate it. For more than two decades, globalization—the integration of world markets for commodities, labor, and capital—has raised living standards throughout the world, except where countries have shut themselves off from the process through tyranny or civil war. The reversal of globalization—which a new Dark Age would produce—would certainly lead to economic stagnation and even depression. As the United States sought to protect itself after a second September 11 devastates, say, Houston or Chicago, it would inevitably become a less open society, less hospitable for foreigners seeking to work, visit, or do business. Meanwhile, as Europe’s Muslim enclaves grew, Islamist extremists’ infiltration of the E.U. would become irreversible, increasing transatlantic tensions over the Middle East to the breaking point. An economic meltdown in China would plunge the communist system into crisis, unleashing the centrifugal forces that undermined previous Chinese empires. Western investors would lose out and conclude that lower returns at home were preferable to the risks of default abroad. The worst effects of the new Dark Age would be felt on the edges of the waning great powers. The wealthiest ports of the global economy—from New York to Rotterdam to Shanghai—would become the targets of plunderers and pirates. With ease, terrorists could disrupt the freedom of the seas, targeting oil tankers, aircraft carriers, and cruise liners, while Western nations frantically concentrated on making their airports secure. Meanwhile, limited nuclear wars could devastate numerous regions, beginning in the Korean peninsula and Kashmir, perhaps ending catastrophically in the Middle East. In Latin America, wretchedly poor citizens would seek solace in evangelical Christianity imported by U.S. religious orders. In Africa, the great plagues of AIDS and malaria would continue their deadly work. The few remaining solvent airlines would simply suspend services to many cities in these continents; who would wish to leave their privately guarded safe havens to go there? For all these reasons, the prospect of an apolar world should frighten us today a great deal more than it frightened the heirs of Charlemagne. If the United States retreats from global hegemony—its fragile self-image dented by minor setbacks on the imperial frontier—its critics at home and abroad must not pretend that they are ushering in a new era of multipolar harmony or even a return to the good old balance of power. Be careful what you wish for. The alternative to unipolarity would not be multipolarity at all. It would be apolarity—a global vacuum of power. And far more dangerous forces than rival great powers would benefit from such a not-so-new world disorder.

# Uniqueness Extensions: Soft Power High Now

## The US image abroad has recovered under the Obama administration.

Bruce Stokes, 2010 (international columnist for the National Journal), “The World Still Loves Obama.” YaleGlobal Online, June 17, 2010. Accessed from: <http://www.policyinnovations.org/ideas/briefings/data/000170>

Obama is broadly popular. Majorities or pluralities in 16 of the 22 countries Pew surveyed expressed at least some confidence in the U.S. president to do the right thing regarding world affairs. This includes 90 percent of Germans, 76 percent of Japanese, and 84 percent of Nigerians. Only 14 percent of Germans, 25 percent of Japanese, and 55 percent of Nigerians expressed confidence in Bush during his last year in office. After a spike in anti-Americanism during the Bush administration, the U.S. image abroad has recovered. America's favorability is now on par with that found at the end of President Bill Clinton's time in office, 1993 to 2001. Responders in 17 of the 21 foreign countries had a positive view of the United States, and favorability improved markedly in Russia, China, and Japan, all key players on the world stage.

## Obama is effectively wielding soft power now.

Charles Kupchan, 2010 (Senior fellow for European studies, The Council on Foreign Relations), April 14, 2010. Online. Internet. Accessed April 25, 2010 at <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/04/14/george_hw_obama?page=full>.

During his first year in office, Obama seemed inclined to govern at home and abroad primarily through his oratory talents and powers of persuasion. With few results to show for his efforts, Obama has switched tracks, and is now in the political and diplomatic trenches, twisting arms, making bargains, fashioning personal bonds with foreign counterparts -- all good news in terms of closing deals and securing deliverables.

## US influence in the world has rebounded despite alternate causes.

Bruce Stokes, 2010 (international columnist for the National Journal), “The World Still Loves Obama.” YaleGlobal Online, June 17, 2010. Accessed from: <http://www.policyinnovations.org/ideas/briefings/data/000170>

Eighteen months into the Obama administration, America's stature in the world has rebounded. The economic crisis, escalation of the war in Afghanistan, failure to act on climate change, and tensions in the Middle East have not undermined that support to any significant extent. Obamamania and pro-Americanism may have more legs than many cynics thought possible. This wellspring of global good will is a resource that the Obama White House can draw on in support of American foreign policy.

## Other alternate causes have not reduced American soft power.

Bruce Stokes, 2010 (international columnist for the National Journal), “The World Still Loves Obama.” YaleGlobal Online, June 17, 2010. Accessed from: <http://www.policyinnovations.org/ideas/briefings/data/000170>

Obama's status defies widespread assumptions that the overwhelming international public approval of America's first African-American chief executive was bound to crash once the afterglow of his historic election faded. American soft power, eroding through much of the last decade, has rebounded despite the American roots of the recent economic crisis, escalation of the war in Afghanistan, and failure to take steps against climate change.

## The world is increasingly viewing the US in a positive light.

Brian Montopoli, 2010. “The ‘Obama Effect’? Perceptions of U.S. Improve Abroad.” April 19, 2010. Online. Internet. Accessed April 26, 2010 at <http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-20002840-503544.html>

In what one pollster described as evidence of the "Obama Effect," a new BBC World Service poll finds that America is now viewed as a positive force in the world by more people than view the country as a negative force. This is the first time America has been seen more as a positive than negative influence since the poll began five years ago. The survey found that the U.S. is seen as having a positive influence in 20 of 28 countries; an average of 46 percent view the country as a positive influence, while 34 percent see it as a negative influence. Negative views of the United States have dropped nine points on average compared to last year, while positive views have increase four points.

## America’s influence in the world is growing now.

BBC News, 2010. “World warming to US under Obama.” April 19, 2010. Online. Internet. Accessed April 26, 2010 at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8626041.stm>

Views of the US around the world have improved sharply over the past year, a BBC World Service poll suggests. For the first time since the annual poll began in 2005, America's influence in the world is now seen as more positive than negative. The improved scores for the US coincided with Barack Obama becoming president, a BBC correspondent notes.

## America is rapidly improving its soft power now:

BBC News, 2010. “World warming to US under Obama.” April 19, 2010. Online. Internet. Accessed April 26, 2010 at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8626041.stm>

"Its influence on people's views worldwide, though, is to soften the negative aspects of the United States' image, while positive aspects are not yet coming into strong focus." He added: "While China's image is stuck in neutral, America has motored past it in the global soft-power competition."

## The international community increasingly views the United States favorably:

Jon Bershad, 2010. “Poll Shows That the World May Like the US Again Thanks to Obama.” Online. Internet. Accessed April 26, 2010 at <http://www.mediaite.com/online/poll-shows-that-the-world-may-like-the-us-again-thanks-to-obama/>

He may be a divisive figure here at home, but has President Obama greatly increased the opinion the rest of the world has of America? That’s what a new poll seems to be saying. The BBC is reporting that the poll, which asked people around the world to rate the influence of different countries as either “positive” or “negative” has found America finally breaking into the positive side. This is the first time the country has scored highly since the poll’s inception in 2005. Analysts were quick to speculate that the global community must share Russian President Dmitry Medvedev’s views that America has benefited from the election of a “thinker”.

# Uniqueness Extensions: Soft Power High Now

## The standing of the US around the world is improving now.

BBC News, 2010. “World warming to US under Obama.” April 19, 2010. Online. Internet. Accessed April 26, 2010 at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8626041.stm>

"People around the world today view the United States more positively than at any time since the second Iraq war," said Doug Miller, chairman of international polling firm GlobeScan, which carried out the poll with the Program on International Policy Attitudes (Pipa) at the University of Maryland. "While still well below that of countries like Germany and the UK, the global standing of the US is clearly on the rise again."

## Obama is increasingly softening the negative aspects of the US image:

Jon Bershad, 2010. “Poll Shows That the World May Like the US Again Thanks to Obama.” Online. Internet. Accessed April 26, 2010 at <http://www.mediaite.com/online/poll-shows-that-the-world-may-like-the-us-again-thanks-to-obama/>

The rest of the results weren’t particularly surprising. Iran and Pakistan were considered the most negative while China continued the slow downward trend its been making the past few years. Germany, a country who has had to overcome a much larger PR problem than an unpopular Bush administration, remains the highest viewed country. But the enormous upswing for America is the real story here and Steve Krup, the director of one of the groups who conducted the poll, gives all the credit to the new president. “‘After a year, it appears the ‘Obama effect’ is real. Its influence on people’s views worldwide, though, is to soften the negative aspects of the United States’ image, while positive aspects are not yet coming into strong focus.’

# Link Extensions

## Reneging on US military commitments undermines US leadership and the global economy.

Matthew Continetti, 2008 (associate editor at the Weekly Standard). Los Angeles Times, March 4, 2008. “Choosing wars.” Online. Internet. Accessed April 26, 2010. [http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-op-antle-continetti4mar04,0,1193839.story](http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-op-antle-continetti4mar04%2C0%2C1193839.story)

They won't. Truth is, if the United States were to renege on its commitments and allow the international order that it has maintained for 60 years to fall apart, another order would take its place. The transition from one to another would be characterized by conflict. And the new order, once it was born, would not be pleasant. It would be less free, less prosperous and less peaceful than the world we know today. You can see what happens when Americans turn inward by reading the history of the 1970s. It is not a pretty sight. U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam marked the beginning of a period of global catastrophe, as the Soviet Union expanded its influence in Central Asia, Africa and Central America and the Iranian revolution provided the first state vehicle for jihadism's war on the West. These crises engendered others in the U.S. government and the global economy. Going back even earlier in our history, when you look at America's failure to maintain the post-Versailles Treaty order that it had helped build following the World War I, you see the same pattern. Illiberalism was allowed to expand, the world economy tanked and more war followed. We know what happens when the United States decides to reject "interventionism." Let's not make the same mistakes again.

## Withdrawing troops from Iraq risks a retreat to isolationism.

Niall Ferguson, 2004 (professor of history at Harvard University). Online. Internet. Accessed April 26, 2010 at <http://www.hoover.org/publications/digest/3009996.html>.

Suppose, in a worst-case scenario, that U.S. neoconservative hubris meets its nemesis in Iraq and that the Bush administration’s project to democratize the Middle East at gunpoint ends in ignominious withdrawal, going from empire to decolonization in less than two years. Suppose also that no aspiring rival power shows interest in filling the resulting vacuums—not only in Iraq but conceivably also Afghanistan, the Balkans, and Haiti. What would an apolar future look like? The answer is not easy, as there have been very few periods in world history with no contenders for the role of global, or at least regional, hegemon. The nearest approximation in modern times could be the 1920s, when the United States walked away from President Woodrow Wilson’s project of global democracy and collective security centered on the League of Nations. There was certainly a power vacuum in Central and Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Romanov, Habsburg, Hohenzollern, and Ottoman Empires, but it did not last long. The old West European empires were quick to snap up the choice leftovers of Ottoman rule in the Middle East. The Bolsheviks had reassembled the tsarist empire by 1922. And by 1936, German revanche was already far advanced.

# Impacts: Declining US Power is Disastrous

## Declines in hegemonic power risk conflict.

Robert A. Pape, 2009 (professor of political science at the University of Chicago). “Empire Falls.” Online. Internet. Accessed April 26, 2010 at <http://www.nationalinterest.org/Article.aspx?id=20484>

Clearly, major shifts in the balance of power in the international system often lead to instability and conflict. And America’s current predicament is far more severe. This time, our relative decline of 32 percent is accompanied, not by an even-steeper decline of our near-peer competitor, but rather by a 144 percent increase in China’s relative position. Further, the rapid spread of technology and technological breakthroughs means that one great discovery does not buoy an already-strong state to decades-long predominance. And with a rising China—with raw resources of population, landmass and increasing adoption of leading technology—a true peer competitor is looming. America’s current, rapid domestic economic decline is merely accelerating our own downfall. The distinct quality of a system with only one superpower is that no other single state is powerful enough to balance against it. A true global hegemon is more powerful still—stronger than all second-ranked powers acting as members of a counterbalancing coalition seeking to contain the unipolar leader. By these standards, America’s relative decline is fundamentally changing international politics, and is fundamentally different from Russia circa 1850 and Great Britain circa 1910.

## Historically, nations in decline launch wars.

Robert A. Pape, 2009 (professor of political science at the University of Chicago). “Empire Falls.” Online. Internet. Accessed April 26, 2010 at <http://www.nationalinterest.org/Article.aspx?id=20484>

THE UNITED States has always prided itself on exceptionalism, and the U.S. downfall is indeed extraordinary. Something fundamental has changed. America’s relative decline since 2000 of some 30 percent represents a far greater loss of relative power in a shorter time than any power shift among European great powers from roughly the end of the Napoleonic Wars to World War II. It is one of the largest relative declines in modern history. Indeed, in size, it is clearly surpassed by only one other great-power decline, the unexpected internal collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Most disturbing, whenever there are major changes in the balance of power, conflict routinely ensues. Examining the historical record reveals an important pattern: the states facing the largest declines in power compared to other major powers were apt to be the target of opportunistic aggression. And this is surely not the only possible danger from relative decline; states on the power wane also have a history of launching preventive wars to strengthen their positions. All of this suggests that major relative declines are often accompanied by highly dangerous international environments. So, these declines matter not just in terms of economics, but also because of their destabilizing consequences.

## Declines in leadership almost always lead to warfare.

Robert A. Pape, 2009 (professor of political science at the University of Chicago). “Empire Falls.” Online. Internet. Accessed April 26, 2010 at <http://www.nationalinterest.org/Article.aspx?id=20484>

Clearly, the United States is not the first great power to suffer long-term decline—we should learn from history. Great powers in decline seem to almost instinctively spend more on military forces in order to shore up their disintegrating strategic positions, and some like Germany go even further, shoring up their security by adopting preventive military strategies, beyond defensive alliances, to actively stop a rising competitor from becoming dominant. For declining great powers, the allure of preventive war—or lesser measures to “merely” firmly contain a rising power—has a more compelling logic than many might assume. Since Thucydides, scholars of international politics have famously argued that a declining hegemon and rising challenger must necessarily face such intense security competition that hegemonic war to retain dominance over the international system is almost a foregone conclusion. Robert Gilpin, one of the deans of realism who taught for decades at Princeton, believed that “the first and most attractive response to a society’s decline is to eliminate the source of the problem . . . [by] what we shall call a hegemonic war.”

## Soft power is key to solve terrorism, warming, the economy, proliferation and disease.

Nina Hachigian, 2010. (senior fellow at the Center for American Progress, January 21, 2010. Online. Internet. Accessed April 26, 2010 at <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2010/01/american_primacy.html>

Kagan writes as if the Obama administration is engaging with re-emerging powers to prove an ideological point that great power strife is a relic of history. Yet no staffer that I have ever spoken with would suggest that these relationships are beyond rivalry. More importantly, Kagan does not reveal the Obama administration’s reasons for pursuing strategic collaborations with China, Russia, India, and other pivotal powers. In fact, these partnerships are necessary to protect Americans from common threats in terrorists, global warming, economic crises, nuclear proliferation, and pandemics such as swine flu—the forces of disorder that can and do affect Americans right here at home.

Julian Borger, 2008 (Diplomatic editor). The Guardian, November 6, 2008. Online. Internet. Accessed May 1, 2009).

The core idea essentially turns the Bush doctrine on its head. It argues that the main problems facing America in the 21st century - terrorism, nuclear proliferation, climate change and dependence on fossil fuels - cannot by addressed by one country acting alone or even in concert with traditional allies. As Obama said in his first major foreign policy address, in Chicago last year: "The threats we face at the dawn of the 21st century can no longer be contained by borders and boundaries." The aim would be to restore America's global leadership in a world that is no longer unipolar. It would be achieved not primarily through military force (although the Obama team are at pains to stress they are not traditional liberal doves), but through soft power, exemplary action and networking among governments, inside and outside formal international organisations, to address specific problems. Nuclear and climate change An Obama White House would seek to take the initiative on the two existential issues facing the planet: nuclear proliferation and climate change. It would seek to negotiate deep cuts in the US and Russian arsenals, to restore the integrity of the non-proliferation treaty before it comes up for review in 2010 and before a nuclear arms race breaks out in the Middle East.

# Impacts: Declining US Power is Disastrous

## Soft power is key to solve Iranian proliferation which causes widespread proliferation

Frank Shatz, 2010 (staff writer). Online. Internet. Accessed April 26, 2010 at <http://www.lakeplacidnews.com/page/content.detail/id/502233/WORLD-FOCUS--Straight-talk--diplomacy.html?nav=5001>

An increasing number of foreign policy experts are saying that the United States and the Middle East would have great difficulty in living with the consequences of a nuclear-armed Iran. Former Ambassador James Bullington, a career diplomat who served as dean of the Senior Seminar, the State Department’s highest level of training program, in a recent interview with the Lake Placid News and The Virginia Gazette, said that beneath a nuclear-armed Iran, “much of the Middle East could fall under the strategic domination of a radical Islamist regime that supports global terrorism. Nuclear proliferation would be accelerated, with unforeseeable consequences, and vital energy supplies would be permanently threatened,” He posited that in coming years the United States will need to rely more and more on diplomacy, broadly understood. “We have to recognize that ‘soft power’ has to be combined with ‘hard power’ in order to constitute the ‘smart power’ that is required to protect our interest in an increasingly dangerous world,” he said.

## Nuclear proliferation creates nuclear arms races which risk nuclear war.

Christopher Ford, 2007 (United States Special Representative for Nuclear Nonproliferation, April 24, 2007. Online. Internet. Accessed, May 11, 2007. http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO0704/S00411.htm)

First and most obviously, such failure directly undermines the most important benefit the NPT brings: assurance against the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and thus also against the emergence or resurgence of nuclear arms races which raise the specter of nuclear warfare. By undercutting these core nonproliferation assurances, nonproliferation noncompliance imperils the peace and security of all nations. Perhaps quickly, perhaps more slowly, failure to deal with noncompliance could lead to a loss of faith in the Treaty as a means of constraining proliferation. Would-be violators would feel more free to embark upon nuclear weapons programs, and even peaceful and law-abiding states might come to feel it necessary -- in light of this -- to hedge their bets, perhaps themselves ultimately going down such a path. The world faced enormous danger and uncertainty during the nuclear arms race of the Cold War. A radically-proliferated world would be much more dangerous still, with each new participant and each new regional arms competition introducing vastly greater risks of miscalculation, mistake, or reckless over-reaching.

## The alternative to US hegemony will not be peaceful multi-polarity—it will be a dangerous power vacuum.

Niall Ferguson, 2004 (professor of history at Harvard University). Online. Internet. Accessed April 26, 2010 at <http://www.hoover.org/publications/digest/3009996.html>.

Critics of U.S. global dominance should pause and consider the alternative. If the United States retreats from its hegemonic role, who would supplant it? Not Europe, not China, not the Muslim world—and certainly not the United Nations. Unfortunately, the alternative to a single superpower is not a multilateral utopia but the anarchic nightmare of a new Dark Age. We tend to assume that power, like nature, abhors a vacuum. In the history of world politics, it seems, someone is always the hegemon or bidding to become it. Today, it is the United States; a century ago, it was the United Kingdom. Before that, it was France, Spain, and so on. The famed nineteenth-century German historian Leopold von Ranke, doyen of the study of statecraft, portrayed modern European history as an incessant struggle for mastery, in which a balance of power was possible only through recurrent conflict.

## The alternative to US power is apolarity—risking economic stagnation.

Niall Ferguson, 2004 (professor of history at Harvard University). Online. Internet. Accessed April 26, 2010 at <http://www.hoover.org/publications/digest/3009996.html>.

Unfortunately, the world’s experience with power vacuums (eras of “apolarity,” if you will) is hardly encouraging. Anyone who dislikes U.S. hegemony should bear in mind that, rather than a multipolar world of competing great powers, a world with no hegemon at all may be the real alternative to U.S. primacy. Apolarity could turn out to mean an anarchic new Dark Age—an era of waning empires and religious fanaticism; of endemic plunder and pillage in the world’s forgotten regions; of economic stagnation and civilization’s retreat into a few fortified enclaves.

## Economic Decline Causes Nuke War:

Walter Mead, 1992 NPQ's Board of Advisors, New Perspectives Quarterly, Summer 1992, p.30

What if the global economy stagnates-or even shrinks? In the case, we will face a new period of international conflict: South against North, rich against poor, Russia, China, India-these countries with their billions of people and their nuclear weapons will pose a much greater danger to world order than Germany and Japan did in the '30s.

# \*\*\*\*\*Isolationism Disadvantage Answers\*\*\*\*\*

## (--) Obama hasn’t restored US international leadership—his popularity abroad has little to do with our actual improved leadership standing:

Helle C. Dale, 2010 (senior fellow for Public Diplomacy @ Heritage Foundation). June 20, 2010. Online, accessed from:

<http://blog.heritage.org/2010/06/20/just-wild-about-obama/>

You can’t argue with success – or can you? Newly released international opinion polls of the image of the United States bring the good news that global publics continue to view the American president and United States as a country in a favorable light. The question that has to be asked, though, is whether this improved image is a result of a perceived new direction in American foreign policy – the Obama Doctrine –which could end up weakening American leadership as the sole remaining superpower and American national security. According to the Pew Global Attitudes Survey, Mr. Obama himself remains popular to the point of adulation among West Europeans. As many as 90 percent of Germans, 87 percent of Frenchmen, 84 percent of Brits expressed a faith in Mr. Obama to do the right thing as an international leader. It is worth noting, however that in every case, except two countries, some slippage from last years’ numbers were in evidence, suggesting that reality checks are setting in. The two exceptions were Kenya, Obama’s paternal homeland, where his approval rating is up to 94 percent, and interestingly Russia, where, following the START treaty negotiations, 41 percent now express a favorable view of the United States, up by 4 points from last year. As the Russian government came out of the negotiations with significant concessions from the American side on Missile Defense, this is maybe not so strange. Not surprisingly, Americans were less enthusiastic. Like president’s domestic approval ratings, there was a significant downward trend. Last year, 74 percent and this year to 65 percent expressed confidence in the president when it comes to foreign affairs. The one exception to these glowing attitudes is the Middle East, the centerpiece of the Obama foreign policy thrust when the president came into office. In major foreign policy addresses, such as the Cairo and the Ghana speeches, Mr. Obama presented much “hope and change,” but has so far failed to produce any measurable results. As a result, publics of largely Muslim countries continue to look at the United States in negative light. In both Turkey and Pakistan, two U.S. allies, only 17 percent hold a positive opinion. In Egypt, America’s favorability rating dropped from 27 percent to 17 percent – the lowest percentage since 2006 when the surveys were first done. What is it about the Obama Doctrine that has such foreign appeal? Based on the set of strategy documents from the Obama administration released this spring, the National Security Strategy, the Nuclear Posture Review, the National Communications Strategy, and others, it is a strategy to manage the decline of the United States as a global actor. It emphasizes soft power over hard power, as declining defense budgets and increasing aid budgets suggest. It increases U.S. reliance on international institutions, as in the new rather tame new U.N. sanctions on Iran. And it seeks to reign in American power to present a more humble international presence, as the president’s numerous acknowledgements of American short-comings regularly remind international audiences. (It should be noted that the Obama administration does not always adhere to its own doctrinaire pronouncements. In Afghanistan, for instance, U.S. hard power has been increased for now, not diminished. When it comes to trade, the administration seems to have no use at all for international institutions like the WTO or the Doha round of free trade negotiations. And humility flies out the window when the administration is dealing with U.S. allies, like Britain and Israel, who have been getting pretty high-handed treatment.) For those around the world, particularly in Europe, who believe that the United States needs to be taken down a peg and even presented the severest threat to international peace under President George Bush, the Obama Doctrine is hailed with much approval. Unfortunately, the renewed popularity of the United States and its president is coming at the expense American global leadership, which will take years to recover.

## (--) No link: no reason the South Korean commitment is perceived as crucial on the international stage.

## (--) Non-unique: Obama’s multiple blunders on the international stage have undercut US international influence.

Thomas **Sowell, 2010** (nationally syndicated writer) June 16, 2010. “ BP's oil and Obama's snake oil.” Accessed from: http://www.redding.com/news/2010/jun/16/thomas-sowell-bps-oil-and-obamas-snake-oil/

However impressed the media and the Obama cult might be with the President’s image, rhetoric and style, leaders of other countries — allies and enemies alike — are interested in results. Even our domestic policies can affect foreign leaders, as Ronald Reagan’s breaking of the air traffic controllers’ strike impressed the Russians with what kind of man they were going to have to deal with, as former Soviet officials said publicly many years later. By the same token, domestic bungling by Barack Obama sends a dangerous signal to countries hostile to us, in addition to the signal sent by his displays of amateurism on the world stage. President Obama had barely settled into the White House before he began demonstrating his willingness to sell out this country’s friends to appease our enemies. His trip to Moscow to try to make a deal with the Russians, based on reneging on the pre-existing American commitment to put a missile shield in Eastern Europe, was the kind of short-sighted betrayal whose consequences can come back to haunt a nation for years. Obama spoke grandly about “pressing the reset button” on international relations, as if all the international commitments of the past were his to disregard.

# Isolationism Disadvantage Answers

**(--) No threshold: No reason one commitment is crucial to the overall US image of international leadership.**

## Non-Unique: Obama’s failures to close GITMO and pass climate change undermine US influence abroad:

Peter **Beinart, 2010** (staff writer). “How the Financial Crisis Has Undermined U.S. Power.” June 21, 2010. Online. Accessed at: [http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1995884,00.html?xid=rss-topstories](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0%2C9171%2C1995884%2C00.html?xid=rss-topstories)

The Obama Administration's charm offensive hasn't been a complete failure. Personally, Obama is far more popular overseas than was George W. Bush, and that popularity has brought the nastiness of adversaries like Mahmoud Ahmadinejad into sharper relief. But the very nastiness of those adversaries means that they don't get rattled by low favorability ratings. What's more, Obama's efforts to change America's image have been constrained by his inability to change certain U.S. policies at home. The best way for America to promote its values is "by living them," declares the National Security Strategy, but when it comes to closing Guantánamo Bay or dramatically reducing U.S. carbon emissions, Congress has shown little interest in making Washington a shining city on a hill.

## Non-Unique: Financial crisis has undermined America’s soft power:

Peter **Beinart, 2010** (associate professor of journalism and political science at the City University of New York). “How the Financial Crisis Has Undermined U.S. Power.” June 21, 2010. Online. Accessed at: [http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1995884,00.html?xid=rss-topstories](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0%2C9171%2C1995884%2C00.html?xid=rss-topstories)

These problems, however, pale before the overarching one: despite Obama's personal popularity, American soft power isn't going up; it's going down. The reason is the financial crisis. America's international allure has always been based less on the appeal of the man in the Oval Office than on the appeal of the American political and economic model. Regardless of what foreigners thought of Bill Clinton, in the 1990s America's brand of deregulated democracy seemed the only true path to prosperity. American economists, investment bankers and political consultants fanned out across the globe to preach the gospel of free elections and free markets. America represented, in Francis Fukuyama's famous words, "The End of History." (See pictures of Obama in Russia.) Now it is much less clear that history is marching our way. The financial crisis has undermined the prestige of America's economic model at the very moment that China's authoritarian capitalism is rising. A decade ago, poor governments hungry for trade and aid had no choice but to show up in Washington, where they received lectures about how to make their economies resemble America's. Now they can get twice the money and half the moralizing in Beijing. From Iran to Burma to Sudan, the Obama Administration's charm offensive has been undermined by China's cash offensive.

## Obama hasn’t abandoned hard power solutions: he is continuing the militarization of US foreign policy.

Marwan Bishara, 2010 (staff writer). May 30, 2010. “Obama doctrine rehabilitates empire.” Accessed from: <http://blogs.aljazeera.net/imperium/2010/05/30/obama-doctrine-rehabilitates-empire>

A president can speak eloquently and convincingly of change he, Americans or many around the world could believe in - and of which the US is in dire need - but when it comes to a shift in strategy, a superpower's turnabout resembles a tanker not a speedboat. To give him the benefit of the doubt, Obama admitted that he was "humbled" by the vastness and complexity of the US establishment after a few months in office. A quick learner, he adapted rather quickly to the realities of running a superpower - mostly at the expense of real change that makes a difference in peoples' lives in the US but also around the world. In fact, the continued militarisation of US foreign policy - including this month's appointment of a new cyber general - signals setbacks in the president's original promise of change. US militarising of cyberspace - and rejection of a ban on the militarisation of outer space - can hardly be conceived by the rest of the world as a serious shift. Today, the US military budget is the highest ever with an estimated 52 cents of every tax payer dollar going to military and war expenses of sort; hardly the best way to re-jumpstart the US economy - a central instrument of Obama's NSS. The same goes for areas where Obama has distinguished himself from his predecessor. While Obama's NSS foresees no 'war on terror', he does underline a "war" on al-Qaeda and its affiliates around the world. But Obama acts no less aggressively than his predecessors in various countries around the Middle East and the world, as recently revealed by the US media.

# Isolationism Disadvantage Answers

## Personal approval of Obama does not spill over to support for US foreign policy.

Bruce Stokes, 2010 (international columnist for the National Journal), “The World Still Loves Obama.” YaleGlobal Online, June 17, 2010. Accessed from: <http://www.policyinnovations.org/ideas/briefings/data/000170>

Approval of Obama and the United States does not prevent publics around the globe from disagreeing with U.S. foreign policy. The continuing war in Afghanistan gets a decidedly mixed review among U.S. NATO allies. The British and the French were evenly split on whether their troops should be kept in Afghanistan until the country is stabilized or should be withdrawn now. In Germany, 58 percent favored immediate withdrawal. By comparison, only 45 percent of Americans wanted U.S. troops in Afghanistan removed. If Afghanistan is the current irritant in U.S. relations with the world, Iran could be the next one. The Pew poll found widespread opposition to Iran acquiring nuclear weapons. The notable exception was Pakistan, the only nation surveyed in which a majority favored Iran's nuclear-weapons program. And there was considerable support for tougher economic sanctions against the Islamic Republic—the survey was taken before the recent UN Security Council vote backing sanctions. Many people were willing to consider using military force to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear capabilities, including, surprisingly, roughly three in five people in France and about half of those who oppose Iran's program in Germany, Spain, and Britain. Still, the Pew Global Attitudes survey foreshadows potential tension between the United States and other leading powers over what to do about the Iranian nuclear program. Americans were more likely than the Europeans, Japanese, Chinese, Indians, or Russians to approve of economic sanctions against Tehran or to support taking military action to stop the Islamic Republic from acquiring nuclear arms. Americans were among the least likely willing to live with a nuclear-armed Iran.

## Obama’s smart power strategy is failing to bolster US influence abroad:

J.C. Arenas, 2010 (staff writer, The American Thinker). June 21, 2010. “The Back Nine.” Online. Accessed from: http://www.americanthinker.com/blog/2010/06/the\_back\_nine.html.

Abroad, his so-called smart power and diplomacy has appeared to be more along the lines of incompetence and lunacy, as the nation's trusted allies and reliable adversaries have engaged in complete role reversal and a predictable world-wide catastrophe looms in the horizon. The president's "boot on the throat" approach has severely harmed relations with Britain and Israel, and his "pretty please" approach hasn't prevented Iran and North Korea from becoming increasingly dangerous regional superpowers. Meanwhile, Russia and China have remained in the background, continuously siding with both nations, and advancing their own national interests by completing business deals and establishing treaties with nations all over the world.