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Q. There are those who assert that the world “changed” after 9/11; that the international system of the 21st century is defined less by nation-states and increasingly by new elements—substate actors, transnational movements, and so on— the implication being that the U.S. experience of the Cold War era is increasingly becoming irrelevant as a guide for formulating foreign policy today. What would be your assessment?

A. It is true that entirely new elements have entered into international affairs, but the first question one has to answer is whether there are there general principles of foreign policy that you can apply capable of being applied all over the world, simultaneously and in the same manner. And I would question that. I think Different parts of the world are at different stages in their internal development and at different stages in the structure of the units that are composing it.

These new elements are more dominant in some areas of the world than others. So the worst mistake we could make is to say that there is one set of principles that we could apply everywhere in the same manner.

Let me make another distinction. Our convictions about what we are trying to achieve can should be universal and constant, but their application has to be adjusted to specific conditions in different regions.

Q. What would be your response to those who argue that the domestic nature of any given regime is now the most relevant factor in assessing its relationship with the United States?

The domestic nature of a regime is a benchmark factor that has to be considered. I think I would question, however, whether this can be the sole benchmark. The proposition also implies that we have an unlimited ability to affect the internal structure of regimes. And I would have my doubts about that, too.

The difference between the realist and the theoretical or idealistic school is usually not over objectives. The objectives are usually fairly parallel. The difference is in what you can get be done and in what a specific period of time; and what you can meaningfully attempt to accomplish. That is a significant difference. Whether a concept is its own legitimacy or whether practical limits should be adapted to culture and circumstances.
Q. One of the issues of concern is whether a rising China will “buy into” the existing international system, as opposed to overturning it, as its power increases.

A. The question is how do we define the international system. What does it mean to “buy into” the international system; what aspects do we want them to buy into?

I question the wisdom of basing our policy toward China on the assumption that China is determined to overthrow the international system by the use of military force. A more accurate assumption is that China will seek to play a larger role within the international system, because of its rapid growth. And that is a challenge—of competition—to which we should pay attention.

In assessing the ultimate evolution of China, I think it is a mistake to look at China by the frequently made analogy of China to Imperial Germany is wrong. Imperial Germany provoked a war because, in a ten-year period prior to 1914, it challenged Britain’s command of the seas with its naval buildup, and its diplomatic strategy was to humiliate most of the countries of Europe, France and Russia, in order to demonstrate to them that they were too weak to coalesce against Germany. And as a result they drove them closer together into an alliance eventually joined by Britain.

I have seen no indication that For the foreseeable future, China intends to use its military forces as the principal element of its foreign policy. And I don’t see why any theory it would be rational to expect that a China that is surrounded by major countries with significant military budgets would challenge the United States militarily in any way in the foreseeable future, over the next fifteen years. And exhaust itself in a military rivalry while it is doing so well economically.

China will insist on playing a greater role, politically and economically, because of its rapid growth. And that is a challenge—of competition—to which we should pay attention.

Q. What should the United States be doing to enhance its global leadership?

A. I would mute claims of hegemony.

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Q. Is there a danger that other major powers, including China and Russia, may decide to work more closely together to frustrate U.S. interests?

A. In purely military terms, it is very hard to construct a counterbalancing coalition to the United States. At the same time, the number of issues susceptible to military solutions in military terms is also shrinking.

The existence or nonexistence of a balance Equilibrium has to be seen in terms of who lines up with whom on international issues. Looking at the Iran negotiations we certainly cannot say that we have had an easy time achieving unanimity—from our point of view consensus. There is a sort of counterbalancing—not in direct confrontation—but in mitigating toning down what we are proposing.

Russia may be tempted to pursue tactical rapprochement with China. For China, there can even be situations of strategic rapprochement. But any meaningful strategic rapprochement with China would be to move Russia further away from the United States and to give up the option of close ties with the United States. And if Russia moved itself into a position of long-term dependence on Chinese support. This would run counter to the strategic realities Russia faces on its Far Eastern border given the decline in its population and negative demographic trends.

We cannot be fixated by things that are in the power of Russia and China to do. The right wise American policy is to establish close relations with both Russia and China. And we should conduct it on the basis that whenever possible, there should always be at least equal—if not greater—incentives or prospect of risks to cooperate with the United States than with each other. I think that should be relatively doable.

Therefore I do not see any sense in speculating how we should keep these two countries from working with each other. That should not be our concern. Our concern should be, what is our relationship with these countries.

Q. What is your assessment of the new U.S. approach to India?

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same time, if as India gets stronger it will become a more important factor in the balance—that's a fact of life not as a favor to the United States but in pursuit of its own interests. But, the purpose strategic goal of any U.S.-India rapprochement, and how it is carried out, should not be aimed against China. We cannot sign up India on an anti-Chinese course; we have many important other shared purposes.

I imagine that India will try to have close relations with China and Russia. That is also a fact of life. Our option challenge is whether at any one point the advantages of cooperating with us on what matters to us outweighs other temptations. That is, after all, the meaning of foreign policy. And we are making good progress on that.

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FYI

-----Original Message-----
From: gvosdev@nationalinterest.org
Sent: Sunday, April 23, 2006 10:44 PM
To: Jessee LePorin
Subject: RE: Revised text

Many thanks—confirming receipt and successful download.

Nick

Quoting Jessee LePorin <jleporin@kmaglobal.com>:

> Attached are Dr. Kissinger’s edits to the interview conducted last week. Please let us know if you prefer a clean copy (a version without the visible changes).
> 
> Best,
> Jessee LePorin
> 
> Jessica P. LePorin
> Office of Henry A. Kissinger
> Kissinger Associates, Inc.
> 350 Park Avenue, 26th Floor
> New York, NY 10022
> TF (212) 759-7919
> Fax (212) 759-0042
> 
> -----Original Message-----
> From: Nikolas Gvosdev [mailto:gvosdev@nationalinterest.org]
> Sent: Tuesday, April 18, 2006 2:08 PM
> To: jleporin@kmaglobal.com
> Cc: Dimitri Simes
> Subject: Revised text
> 

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We cannot be fixated by things that are in the power of Russia and China to do. The right wise American policy is to establish close relations with both Russia and China. And we should conduct it on the basis that whenever possible, there should always be at least equal—if not greater—incentives or prospect of risks to cooperate with the United States than with each other. I think that should be relatively doable.

Therefore, I do not see any sense in speculating how we should keep these two countries from working with each other. The two countries who have the power to do so and who believe it is in their benefit to do so. That should not be our concern. Our concern should be, what is our relationship with these countries.

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[We moved the following aside you made later in the interview to this section to close out this discussion.]

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Dear Jessica:

Enclosed is the revised text. Questions have been italicized and designated by a Q.; answers are in regular font and preceded by an A. This is our standard interview format (use of q and a, italic text for questions, regular text for answers).

The heading in the magazine will clearly designate this as an interview and can include the date and location if that is desired (e.g. Dr. Kissinger took questions from the publisher and editor of TNI). That will be done as part of the page proofs process.

At your request I have re-broken down several of the questions (the first into two, the third into three, the fourth into two).

Dr. Kissinger’s replies are taken directly from the tape recording. We have edited out repeats, clarifications and extraneous material, at the beginning and end such as greetings. Bold text represents suggested clarifications when the transcript alone would be confusing, and in one case we have moved intact an aside on realistic versus idealistic policy upward.

If you could confirm receipt, I would appreciate it,

Regards,

Nick
Dear Jessica:

Enclosed is the text of Dr. Kissinger's interview with The National Interest (from last Thursday).

We are very grateful for his time and his candor and for giving us this interview, and I'd appreciate it if you could convey to him the magazine's gratitude.

The text that is enclosed is based on the transcript; italicized text are our questions. Bold text is suggested text that has been added to clarify and is not original language.

We would be happy to accommodate any changes or additions Dr. Kissinger would like to make.

In addition, we did have a follow-up question, if Dr. Kissinger would be interested in providing his thoughts.

Q. What motivates the loose coalition grouped under the rubric of "radical Islam"? Is it hatred of Western values and freedoms, a desire to reduce U.S. Geopolitical influence, anger at American support for Israel, or a combination of all three? Is radical Islam "containable" in the same way as Communism?

So as to stay on schedule, Monday, April 24th would be the last day we could accommodate any major changes to the text.

With kind regards,
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