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## Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War and the fall of communism, it has been common to speak of a changing world. Globalization opens transnational borders, defining an age where commerce and ideas are exchanged freely amongst the world's societies. However, the triumphs of globalization cause many to mistake free exchange for the absence of competition and rivalry between nations. During the 1990s, America remained the sole superpower in the world arena, its ambition being to push the spread of globalization further. This state of affairs reinforced the idea that conflict between nations would cease under a Pax Americana. Today, other powers, such as China, India, the European Union, and a resurgent Russia, are making their presence felt in the world stage. These "rising powers" are gaining momentum thanks to the same globalizing forces that made America the central world actor in the post-Cold War era.

The question is, then, how must we rethink America's stature in a world of rising powers? The question would be null if all that counted in the world stage were military might, for the United States is without argument unmatched in that regard. In a globalized world, though, there is more to power than muscularity. Human capital, culture, and most importantly, economics, are the areas in which rising powers are challenging the United States. China fuels its economic growth through state-directed enterprise; India is a hub for communications technology thanks to the push and innovation of its well-educated and energetic work force; the European Union inspires the world with unprecedented political and economic integration of nations; and the list goes on. America can no longer take its centrality in the world stage for granted.

To commemorate the founding of the School of International and Public Affairs, Florida International University's President Modesto A. Maidique gathered together a group of world renowned scholars in order to tackle the broad theme of "America and the Rising Powers." The Geopolitical Summit featured a unique opportunity for the four Plenary Speakers to reflect on the central theme, and share their ideas with the FIU

community and the city of Miami. A new School of International and Public Affairs, in an International University with students from all corners of the globe, located in Miami, as culturally diverse a setting as any other: this was an ideal setting for the Geopolitical Summit.

Geopolitics is, broadly defined, as the study of power, influence, and competition amongst nations. The broad theme of America and the Rising Powers conceptualizes how America's power and influence is changing in a world where various nations vie for geopolitical stature. This public forum also addresses how the world's nations are themselves reacting to the dynamics of a changing world, where the United States is no longer the unchallenged leader in all key areas of global interest – or, as is often stated, a world where America's power is in decline.

The four Plenary Speakers each offered their own perspectives on America in a world of rising powers, the world's nations' adjustments to an America allegedly in decline, and today's geopolitical dynamics at large. Dr. Francis Fukuyama argues against the unilateral adventurism – exemplified by the Iraq War– of neoconservatives and the George W. Bush presidency, noting that neoconservative policies have delegitimized the United States in global public opinion. He proposes that America will have to regain its legitimacy in the world stage by reengaging in multilateral efforts with democratic powers like the European Union in order to foster growth and stability in failing states.

Dr. Robert Kagan disagrees with the view that the world is undergoing unprecedented changes. Rather, Kagan argues that the emergence of China, India, and Russia marks the return of nineteenth century type great power rivalries. He proposes that liberal democratic powers like the United States and the European Union ought to create a strong sphere of influence in opposition to emerging “autocracies” like China, Russia, and Iran. Leading a democratic sphere of influence, the United States can promote liberal democracy without having to use force. However, Kagan warns that as long as the United States remains the most capable arbiter of force in the world stage, the United States is likely to continue using force when it is deemed to be advantageous, regardless of the rest of the world's disapproval.

Mr. Parag Khana promotes the study of geopolitics and conceptualizes a world where the three pivots of world power are the United States, the European Union, and China. All three contemporary world powers are competing for economic, cultural, and military influence in what Khana calls the “second world.” The second world includes

countries like Brazil, Turkey, Malaysia, and others. Countries of the second world display contradicting qualities, like rising prosperity next to abject poverty, robust development next to underdevelopment. As things stand, we live in a world of three central powers looking to buy influence in second world nations. The United States must adjust to this new global constellation and compete for influence in the second world.

Dr. Fareed Zakaria posits the thesis that we are living in a “post-American world,” where emerging nations like China and India have surpassed the era of American influence and excelled at the game of capitalism – a game that was once modeled by the United States. As the rest of the world mimics American prosperity successfully, America is becoming closed off to the world, unsure of its role in a world where American leadership no longer seems necessary. The United States must exploit its advantages in education and other quality institutions, re-open its borders to global integration, and reemerge as a global leader in economic and cultural innovations. Zakaria believes that America’s resurgence is especially necessary amidst today’s global economic crisis, where an opportunity presents itself to cease the moment and lead the world out of hard times.

After each Plenary Session, a panel of distinguished FIU Professors shared responses, followed by questions from members of the audience. All four sessions welcomed a full capacity crowd of faculty, students, and other member of the community totally more than 2400 attendees. The Geopolitical Summit was preceded by a strong buzz within the FIU community, showing that global affairs pique great interest in Miami. As soon as tickets became available, they were gone in few hours. An eager crowd waited outside before each session began, hoping to obtain a spot in overflow seating. With the founding of the new School of International and Public Affairs, the FIU community looks forward to hosting many more distinguished guests to share ideas in an international and multi-disciplinary setting, in concert with the University’s mission to foster global awareness and understanding.



## **Plenary 1: Dr. Francis Fukuyama, *Reconsidering Democracy and the Neoconservative Legacy***

*Dr. Francis Fukuyama is Bernard Schwartz Professor of International Political Economy at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, and Director of its International Development Program. Few thinkers have so strongly influenced the direction of modern social and political philosophy and public policy as Francis Fukuyama. Professor Fukuyama has written extensively on a wide range of important contemporary issues.*

Dr. Francis Fukuyama is best known for his book *the End of History*. This work presented a thesis that defined debates in world politics and social-political philosophy for subsequent years. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the liberalization of Latin America's economies, and the steady growth and prosperity of East Asian nations, Fukuyama posited that there no longer is an ideological challenge to the progression of capitalism and liberal democracy – or, in other words, to the spread of globalization. Developments in science and technology, combined with the triumph of capitalism and liberal democracy, marked the “end of history.”

The end of history does not connote the cessation of wars and violent struggles, political conflicts and human drama. Rather, the end of history thesis points out that the trajectory of human progress – an idea that originated in the European Enlightenment period – has come to an end. With capitalism and liberal democracy, mankind has reached the end point of its historical development. Though there will certainly be more conflicts that challenge world stability, and nations that do not quite fit the mold of liberal democracy will continue to exist, capitalism and liberal democracy have become the only legitimate aspirations for each and every society.

Fukuyama's thesis continues to be reflected on and rethought in response to twenty-first century challenges. Among these challenges is the conduct of capitalism and liberal democracy's model nation, the United States. After the fall of communism, the United States stood as the sole global superpower, and the rest of the world yielded to its leadership, with few exceptions. Amidst the global atmosphere of liberal triumph and American leadership, America's leaders began to take for granted the United States' stature as the world's lone superpower.

According to Fukuyama, the last two American presidents, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, took American power for granted in different ways. For one, the Clinton administration took the capitalist economic model as the only serious option, promoting the liberalization of markets and global integration. The un-regulated

unleashing of free markets led to political backlash in Latin American countries, where the difficulties of development hit the working classes hardest. Furthermore, a general critique of American-promoted economic liberalism is unfolding today, in response to the global economic crisis. World leaders are rethinking the mantra that states ought to let markets work in an un-fettered fashion, realizing that government oversight is necessary to offset economic shocks.

Fukuyama's central criticism, though, is pointed at America's recent legacy in foreign policy, as practiced by the George W. Bush administration – what Fukuyama refers to as the “neoconservative legacy.” The Bush administration took America's standing as the sole global superpower for granted, and after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, moved to implement foreign policy initiatives promoted by so-called neoconservative intellectuals. The neoconservative worldview is one that advocates the use of force to prevent rogue states from hurting the United States and other liberal democracies. However, preventive war craft is not only meant to offset potential threats. Preventive war connotes the strategic use of force for the promotion of capitalism and liberal democracy. For this reason, Fukuyama has often been labeled a neoconservative, since his end of history thesis tends to read like a celebration of capitalism and liberal democracy that welcomes whatever actions are necessary to advance liberalism's historical progression. However, Fukuyama is not necessarily an advocate of force for democracy promotion, since his original argument proposes that capitalism and liberal democracy are developing throughout the world because of peoples' desire for these social political forms. Fukuyama states that capitalism and liberal democracy do not progress without problems. The presence of weak and failing states poses a challenge to the spread of capitalism and liberal democracy.

According to Fukuyama, the neoconservative legacy presents challenges that stem from three assumptions made by the Bush administration regarding how it could “shape the world” after 11 September of 2001. First, the Bush administration assumed it could use preventive war to offset nuclear weapons proliferation. This assumption was the base argument for invading Iraq. The problem with this outlook is that the use of preventive force requires an accurate prediction of the future. In the case of Iraq, the United States' ability to predict Iraq's nuclear weapons capability was insufficient, no matter how many intelligence estimates were crafted to make the case that Iraq's weapons capability posed a significant threat. The outcome was not only a loss of legitimacy in the eyes of world public opinion. The preventive use of force in Iraq has had the effect of causing other “rogue leaders” to fear the same type of preventive strike in their countries, causing North Korea's and Iran's leadership to accelerate their

respective nuclear weapons programs. The speeding up of nuclear weapons programs by North Korea and Iran is meant to offset the threat of American invasion. By going after a perceived threat in Iraq, the United States has turned Iran and North Korea into world security threats far greater than they would have otherwise been.

Second, the Bush administration took the world's acceptance of American hegemony for granted. The assumption was that, in the twenty-first century, America would lead and others would follow. However, not even some of the United States closest allies, such as France and Germany, went along with the Bush administration's rationale for invading Iraq. Moreover, even as leaders in countries like England joined the United States' coalition for war, the Bush administration was unable to garner United Nations Security Council approval to invade Iraq. In general, world public opinion was overwhelmingly opposed to the war in Iraq. After failing to garner significant international support to invade Iraq, the United States now knows that other nations do not always perceive American intentions as being benevolent.

Third, the United States' brand of democracy promotion under the George W. Bush presidency has been problematic. The neoconservative approach to democracy promotion is predicated on the notion that the American style of liberal democracy is the right model for others to emulate. Fukuyama does not mean to state that liberal democracy is not a noble thing to promote, but rather that the Bush administration conflated the promotion of democratic ideals with the strategic fight against terrorism. Bush's reasoning that there is "no difference between strategic and ideal interests" was used to promote the war in Iraq as a democratizing mission that would spread democracy from Iraq to the rest of the Middle East, thereby creating a Middle East amenable to American strategic interests. However, the conflation of strategic interests with the promotion of democratic ideals created a condition in which democracy promotion became equated with American military intervention. The war on terror became a war for democratic ideals, whereas a prudent approach requires the consideration of both objectives on separate terms. Democracy promotion is normally carried out through diplomatic efforts, not through force.

There is an underlying theme in Fukuyama's analysis of the neoconservative legacy. International relations thinking tends to view the world in terms of great power competition. When the Cold War ended, the United States stood as the sole global superpower. The problem of weak states seemed like something the United States would be able to solve with relative ease, given America's overwhelming advantage in the military sphere. However, the international system is far more complex than what is

taught in the international relations classroom and reapplied in foreign policy making. The power of states, and competition amongst them, is still relevant, and so the problem of weak states, as we have mentioned, looms large in today's world arena.

In weak states, governments do not have the capacity to enforce rule and order within their territories. Non-state actors like terrorist groups can thrive in weak states, organizing their efforts to threaten world stability. World powers like the United States, then, have a strategic interest to strengthen and stabilize weak states in order to offset asymmetric threats and sustain world order. There is no doubt that the George W. Bush administration intended to do this, and yet, as we have already explained, the neoconservatives' unilateral approach has only exacerbated the challenge of weak states. By relying on overwhelming force, and overlooking the strategic advantages of "soft power" practices like principled diplomacy and multilateral institution building, the Bush administration has left behind a neoconservative legacy of weakened states like Pakistan and Afghanistan.

According to Fukuyama, Pakistan and Afghanistan are amongst the Obama presidency's primary security challenges. Heeding the lessons of the neoconservative legacy, the way to go about fighting the non-state groups that flourish in Pakistan and Afghanistan is not through the unbridled use of force. Hard power and force will continue to be necessary piecemeal, but the Obama presidency must meet the challenge of weak states through the use of soft power.

Soft power includes the implementation of social work as foreign policy in developing countries. Social work involves initiatives like food distribution, aid in agriculture, and infrastructure improvements. There are many political struggles in developing countries that hinge on the electorate's perception that political leaders have favorable social agendas. In countries where social inequality is a persistent problem, populist leaders like Venezuela's Hugo Chavez and Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad are successful. In contrast, the American brand of capitalism and liberal democracy tends to appeal to the elites and middle classes. In order to appeal to working classes and the poor, the United States and other leaders who favor an American kind of liberal agenda should ramp up their social work efforts in the developing world. The United States and liberal political leaders the world over should listen to working people and the poor in developing countries in order to win their support and achieve long-term strategic goals. In Pakistan and Afghanistan, social initiatives can improve the peoples' perception of American intentions and offset the local influence of extremist groups.

Soft power goes beyond social work initiatives. It has implications in the realm of ideas. Ideas of economic liberalism, open markets, and loosened governmental oversight flourished after the world economic crisis of the 1970's. Beginning with the so-called "Reagan revolution," the United States dismantled the welfare state and promoted market liberalization in order to structure an open world economy. However, today's economic crisis holds the opposite implications. The time has come for governments to have a heavier hand in economic regulation. The state must come back into the economy. The liberal economic model has lost much of its legitimacy, and so the interaction between state and market must be reevaluated.

Advocating the return of the state in the economic realm is not an easy move for the United States to make, since much of the blame for today's economic meltdown is being placed on America's "Washington consensus" proposals and IMF-directed structural adjustment policies of the 1990s. It is a particularly difficult time for America's stature in the world, diminished and delegitimized in the realms of foreign policy and economic ideas. Is America ready to lead a world in which American leadership is questioned more than ever before?

The United States faces many difficulties in its efforts to renew its global leadership. However, there are several advantages that America can exploit as it reestablishes its position in the world arena. The United States continues to enjoy some of the best academic and research institutions for innovations in technology and science. Furthermore, the United States attracts some of the world's brightest and most talented workers and scientists. Most importantly, the American political system is capable of reinventing itself in times of crisis. Evinced by the decisive majority who voted for President Barack Obama, there is a mandate in America to erase the neoconservative legacy and renew the United States' stature as a world leader.

Fukuyama asserts that America's world leadership can be restored with the influence of soft power. By nurturing alliances and strengthening multilateral institutions, America can face world security challenges, and play an important role in restructuring the global economy. Can the United States live up to today's international challenges? The Barack Obama administration argues that yes, it can. If Fukuyama's original thesis that capitalism and liberal democracy will continue along their historical progression is correct, then even amidst economic setbacks and the persistence of international conflicts, the United States and the rest of the liberal democratic world are likely to be successful in meeting today's geopolitical challenges, despite the aberrations of the neoconservative legacy.

## **Plenary 2: Dr. Robert Kagan, *the Return of History and the End of Dreams***

*Dr. Robert Kagan is a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and Transatlantic Fellow at the German Marshall Fund. He writes a monthly column on world affairs for the Washington Post and is a contributing editor to the Weekly Standard and the New Republic. Robert Kagan is an invaluable voice for audiences that seek to understand the dynamics that are shaping 21st century geopolitics and American foreign and domestic policy. He consistently offers valuable historical context and fresh, often startling, and indispensable insights into the issues that business, industries and nations face today.*

Like Fukuyama, Dr. Robert Kagan is often labeled a neoconservative – and, as Dr. Fukuyama, Dr. Kagan does not care much for the label. Neither Fukuyama or Kagan condone the unconstrained use of force by the United States, both because it delegitimizes America in world public opinion, and because the unconstrained use of force overstretches the United States' military capabilities, despite the immensity of American military power *vis a vis* the rest of the world. What Kagan does concede is that the United States is likely to use force every time it decides to do so. However, today's challenge of emerging autocratic regimes like China and Russia cannot be dealt with by the United States and its preponderant military strength alone. Great power rivalries are reemerging, and so the United States must counter-balance the rise of autocratic regimes by fostering alliances with other liberal democratic powers, namely the European Union. In light of Kagan's analysis, geopolitical calculation is back with a vengeance.

Kagan's analysis highlights the importance of ideas in geopolitical calculation. During the 1990s, foreign policy thinkers and policy makers took for granted the success of liberal democracy and the United States' global hegemony, as America's use of force to contain conflicts – like military intervention in the former Yugoslavia – was hardly challenged. Today, the progression of liberal democracy and the United States' primacy as the sole world superpower are in question, and it is often said that the United States' superpower status is in decline. Kagan holds that despite the currency of the idea that American power is in decline, today's geopolitical configurations must be understood objectively. An objective understanding will reveal that force is still the most important feature for power amongst nations, and therefore, the United States is still the most powerful nation in the world by far. At the same time, Kagan is not a fully impartial observer. On the contrary, Kagan wears liberal democratic idealism on his sleeve. For him, concrete geopolitical observation is meant to serve the strategic

interests of the United States and its fellow liberal democracies. To promote liberal democracy, we must not look at the international system as we would like to see it, but rather as it is. Only by having a realistic picture of the international system can action be taken to best promote American ideals and strategic interests.

If we should not call Kagan a neoconservative, perhaps we are right to recognize his logic as being closely related to the tradition of political realism. Realists tend to view the world stage in terms of competition amongst great powers. When one state obtains overwhelming force, others will try to balance against it. During the nineteenth century, great power competition continuously played out in Europe, with France, Britain, Germany, Austria, Russia, Spain, and others repeatedly balancing and counterbalancing against one another, each harboring ambitions of European influence and colonial reach beyond the continent. Nineteenth century great power rivalry repeated itself during the two World Wars of the twentieth century, with other world powers, including Japan and the United States, joining the concert. After World War II, with European nations and Japan severely weakened, only two superpowers remained: the United States and the Soviet Union. Until the fall of the communist bloc in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the post-World War era of the twentieth century played out as a superpower rivalry between the Americans and the Soviets. With the fall of communism, the superpower rivalry ended. The power and influence of the international system became concentrated in the United States.

The lack of great powers to challenge American dominance during the 1990s created a strange atmosphere for global affairs commentators. In this atmosphere, the world of liberal democracies fell to what Kagan calls two post-Cold War illusions: first, that we have witnessed the end of great power politics; second, that there are no longer any challenges to the spread of capitalism and liberal democracy. This sounds familiar because it is: Kagan is indeed reflecting on aspects of Fukuyama's end of history thesis. The post-Cold War illusions reinforced a general view that the international system was moving towards peaceful integration. Geopolitics – great power rivalry – would be replaced by geo-economics, geo-economics being short for economic interdependence and globalization.

For political realists like Kagan, the post-Cold War worldview is naïve and unrealistic. Though there may be periods of relative peace without great power competition, as in the early post-Cold War era, the international system tends to “normalize” with the eventual resurgence of great power competition. According to Kagan, today the world is becoming normal again, as great powers emerge on the

world stage and challenge America's global hegemony. It is the "return of history" of great power rivalries, and the "end of dreams" for a peacefully integrated international system.

China is the most obvious example of a great power emerging to challenge American hegemony. China's immense economic growth for the last two decades has been nothing short of awe-inspiring. China's immense, hard-working population is committed to making the country a global force to be reckoned with. As its people prosper, China's demand for hot commodities – from foods like meat and wheat to fuels like oil and gas – increases incrementally, creating competition with American firms for primary access to world markets. Furthermore, despite China's rise being peaceful, its government is quietly increasing military spending. Strengthened military force is a key indicator of rising power, and according to Kagan, China fits the profile perfectly.

For as long as China has been opening its economy to free enterprise and external investment – under state supervision, no less – commentators have claimed that it is only a matter of time until China's political system undergoes democratic reforms. However, despite the dominant faction of liberal Communist Party members who pushed for economic liberalization, there is no sure sign that the Communist Party will cede its hold on political power and push to democratize China's political institutions. In fact, it is suggested that China's robust economic growth serves to reinforce the Communist Party's grip on power. The more successful China is, the more the Communist Party can remain legitimate. Even as significant freedoms are obtained in the economic realm, the state has been very effective at suppressing political opposition – for instance, by monitoring and restricting Chinese citizens' use of the internet. Whereas in the 1990s most countries looked at a triumphant America and thought that economic liberalization and democratic reform equaled success, today China offers an alternative – that of significant economic success under an "autocratic" political model.

According to Kagan, China is not the only autocracy successfully challenging the liberal democratic model's exclusive association with prosperity. Russia is another reemerging power, enjoying robust economic growth under two key factors: abundant energy resources, and authoritarian governance under once President, and now Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin. The emergence of successful autocratic regimes in China and Russia throws into question the preponderance of the liberal democratic model and its champions, the United States and Western Europe.

The rising autocratic powers – China and Russia – have some traditional attributes of classic nineteenth century European great powers. Their ambition is not just about economic success. Rather, their moves towards global influence connote very human qualities, such as jealousy, fear, hatred, pride, and other emotions. For instance, China wants very badly to overcome its twentieth century experience, a time in which it suffered humiliation by losing much of its regional power – the prime example being the loss of Taiwan. Much of the Chinese population enthusiastically embraces China's economic rise under the Communist Party, foreseeing a return to regional political preponderance and power.

The Russian people's motivation for accepting autocratic governance and ramping up Russia's military heft in Eastern Europe – as exemplified by Russia's recent invasion of Georgia and their continuous attempts to influence the Ukraine's political institutions in Russia's favor – stems from the embarrassments Russia suffered during the 1990s. After the Soviet Union fell, Russia lost much its global influence, especially its hegemony in Eastern Europe. During the democratic reform period, Russia was weak economically and politically, being told what to do and not to do by Western powers. Furthermore, the 1999 NATO war in Kosovo caused much resentment amongst Russian leaders. The United States and Western Europe's NATO allies overstepped Russia's objections and veto power in the United Nations Security Council. In response to growing resentment over diminished geopolitical stature, Vladimir Putin led Russia in a more assertive direction – an aggressive turn facilitated by strong economic growth during the early twenty-first century.

Other rising powers, though not necessarily classified as autocracies, are also vying for global influence because of the historical resentments they bear. For one, Iranians know that Iran descends from the Persian Empire. The memory of empire inspires Iran's ambition for hegemony in the Middle East, a factor that explains Iran's open rivalry with Israel, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. Comparatively, India's competition with China over the Indian Ocean's trade routes is a sign of India's increasing confidence. At the basis of India's enthusiastic ambition for South Asian hegemony is resentment over its history of British colonial rule, along with the ancient memory of regional dominance in South Asia. However, India is a liberal democracy, and so does not threaten the Western liberal democracies' power and dominance. In contrast, Iran can surely be included in the autocratic bloc led by China and Russia.

The rise of autocratic regimes poses challenges to the world hegemony of the United States and its liberal democratic allies. The international climate favors the

growth of small autocracies in the Chinese and Russian mold. During the 1990s, the global sphere of influence belonged to the United States. Small nations aspired to economic and political reforms in the American mold. Today, the rise of successful autocracies in China and Russia can prop up other autocratic regimes like Iran and Hugo Chavez's Venezuela – countries with elected authoritarian leaders that host democratic institutions. The fact that China and Russia are permanent member of the United Nations Security Council means that they are able to look out for other autocracies, allowing autocracies to flourish in the world stage without having to fear the overwhelming power of liberal democracies.

We have pointed out that great power ambitions are often driven by primitive human emotions. Kagan holds that the United States is no exception. During the early post-Cold War period, America took its global preponderance for granted and fell under the illusion that history was progressing towards a peaceful world integration of liberal democracies. Now, with the reemergence of other great powers and autocratic rivals, the United States has awakened from its stupor and realized that history will not go its way so easily. At this juncture, America is jealously seeking to guard its centrality as the sole global superpower. However, as we have noted, there are emerging world powers challenging America's global preponderance. In fact, it is now common currency to speak of America's decline in the international system.

Kagan claims that reports of America's decline are overblown. Though it is true that there are other world powers – like China and the European Union – challenging America's preponderance in the world economy, Kagan notes that the United States hasn't quite enjoyed overwhelming economic leadership since after the 1960's. Instead, Kagan stresses the centrality of military strength. In the area of military power, the United States is still leaps and bounds ahead of all the world's other nations combined. Admittedly, though, overwhelming advantage in the military sphere does not always equal strategic victory, and so it is true that the rise of autocratic powers – in addition to non-state terrorist groups and rogue states – poses significant challenges to America's standing in the world stage. The question is, then, how does the United States use its military power advantage to counter-balance the emergence of autocratic rivals? How should the geopolitical game be played by the world's liberal democracies in response to the rise of autocratic regimes?

The emerging autocratic powers are well aware of the United States' overwhelming military advantage, and so they have all ramped up their defense spending in order to counter-balance the challenge of American power. The United

States, despite its significant military dominance, cannot counter the autocratic powers single-handedly. If the world's liberal democracies are to seriously offset the powerful convergence of autocratic regimes, then the European Union must act in unison with the United States to foster the cause of liberal democracy. The United States must learn from its European allies that force itself is not sufficient, with prudent diplomacy a powerful way to negotiate with nations and promote gradual democratic reforms in developing countries. However, the European Union must not continue to shy away from the advantages of military strength, lest the autocratic powers continue to act aggressively by taking for granted the Europeans' unwillingness to wield force. The Europeans must realize that NATO can be used to counter Russia's reach for influence in Eastern Europe. NATO can also extend its strategic reach to the Middle East and Africa in order to offset Iran's aggressive moves for regional hegemony. India is already aware that it must continue to ramp up its defense spending if it is to succeed in its twenty-first century rivalry with China over the Indian Ocean. If the liberal democracies reassert their strengths, then the rest of the world will take note. The liberal democratic model can once more be the prime option for developing nations, but only if the world's liberal democracies can show that they are stronger than the rising autocratic powers.

The return of international normalcy in the form of great power conflict and geopolitical balancing does not mean that great powers will inevitably go to war with one another. However, as long as nations harbor ambitions for power in the international system, war is always a possibility. Therefore, the United States and the world's other liberal democracies must avoid falling back on those same post-Cold War illusions that envisioned the spread of liberal values and democracy as an inevitable historical progression. Those dreams and illusions are what made liberal democracies overlook the rise of autocratic regimes after the liberal triumphalism of the 1990s. Now the dreams of inevitable liberal progress are over, history has returned, and geopolitical competition between the world's emerging autocracies and liberal democracies is a fact. According to Kagan, the world's liberal democracies must work together to offset the accruing power of emerging autocracies and promote the cause of liberal democracy.

**Plenary 3: Mr. Parag Khana, *The Second World: Empires and Influence in the New Global Order***

*Mr. Parag Khana is Director of the Global Governance Initiative and Senior Research Fellow at the New America Foundation, one of the nation's most respected think tanks. He is author of The Second World: Empires and Influence in the New Global Order. This book takes a compelling look at the current geopolitical marketplace, exploring America's slip from dominance, the rise of the European Union and China as rival models for global leadership, and the emergence of the strategic 'second world' markets and how they adapt to and shape globalization.*

Mr. Parag Khana does not agree with Dr. Kagan's view that geopolitical realism must always inform the practice of liberal democracies. Instead, Khana argues that geopolitics should be an exclusively "un-sentimental" and detached area of study. He expressed genuine excitement for participating in the Geopolitical Summit, commenting that the gathering is helping revive and legitimate the long-reviled tradition of geopolitics. Mr. Khana remarked that the study of geopolitics is more than international relations with a German accent. Geopolitics is like climatology, a deep science of the world political order. Today, in a changing world, the study of geopolitics is of the utmost importance to understand the shifting dynamics of power in the international system. For Khana, today's world revolves around three centers of power: the United States, the European Union, and China. The contemporary geopolitical climate is measured by looking at how the influence of the three centers of power spreads

throughout the “second world,” that set of developing nations that stand in a tenuous threshold between first world prosperity and third world poverty.

Despite reaffirming the importance of geopolitics, Khana does not propose that we go about studying geopolitics the traditional, dry and scholarly way. Khana completed his book, *the Second World*, by employing an unorthodox methodology, which consisted of visiting various countries and “measuring the climate” of power around the world. His inspiration for choosing this offbeat method was the late historian Arnold J. Toynbee (1189-1975), who after retiring, set off to travel the world and test his knowledge on the way empires rise and fall in different countries. Though Toynbee never used terms like geopolitics, globalization, or geo-economics, Khana affirms that Toynbee’s account of world civilizations is indeed a geopolitical overview, for true geopolitics takes the perspectives of all civilizations, empires, and nations into account, without having to complicate descriptions. In short, geopolitics is like an all-encompassing report of power amongst nations and the real on-the-ground conditions of world civilizations.

The field of geopolitics has long been associated with the idea that “geography is destiny,” meaning that where a civilization, empire, nation, or state is located in the globe often determines its political destiny. However, geopolitical analysis does not just stop at the point in which nation states’ territories are demarcated. The political power of civilizations, empires, nations, and states often goes beyond borders. The ambition and influence exerted by empires provide the right qualitative measures to understand world political power.

As mentioned, the contemporary empires in which world power is centered are the United States, the European Union, and China. Khana looks at the spheres of influence that these three centers of power compete over in order to understand today’s geopolitical configurations. “Second world” nations provide the empirical content by which to measure the global reach of the three centers of power. Whoever influences the second world most, wins the world. Yet, it is not likely that there will be a clear winner, since all three contemporary empires have significant spheres of influence in the second world. However, Khana’s observation regarding the unlikelihood of one powerful empire winning out against the others does not connote a return to a nineteenth century type of great power struggle amongst European nations, as Dr. Kagan proposes. Rather, the contemporary geopolitical configuration of competition amongst the three contemporary empires is global in scope. Today more than ever, geopolitics is truly about the world as a whole, and not just about the great powers.

The contemporary geopolitical shifts marked by emerging powers China and the United Nations, along with the continued persistence of American power and influence, reflect the changing geopolitical map. The Cold War map was one focused on the two superpower poles, the United States and the Soviet Union. The post-Cold War map was one where global influence was concentrated in the United States. The early twenty-first century map is one centered on the three contemporary empires vying for influence in the second world. World maps need to be constantly expanded and rethought in order to glimpse the times' geopolitical trends.

There is much talk of various rising powers vying for world influence, and yet Khana insists that only the aforementioned centers of power are truly competitive in the arena of global influence. For instance, Russia is not in the geopolitical marketplace occupied by the three central world powers, for it does not bear ambitions beyond reestablishing its position as the regional hegemon in the Northeastern half of the Eurasian landmass. India is not in the marketplace for influence truly global in scope either, since its economic growth, however robust, is still decades behind that of China. Finally, Japan, despite its now decades-long economic dominance, is ultimately an insular nation, and its political culture does not inspire global ambitions. Surely, there are many growing, prosperous, powerful actors in the world stage, but only the United States, the European Union, and China are truly competing for influence that is global in scope.

The three contemporary geopolitical centers of power each have different respective approaches to increase the scope of their global influence. The United States employs its tried and true – though perhaps no longer quite as effective – coalitional approach, defined simply as the way in which the United States is able to adopt countries into its security sphere, thereby extending its military reach and influencing the local affairs of coalition nations. The clearest way to measure this influence is by looking at which nations allow for the installation and continuous operation of American military bases, though the American security sphere also extends to military funding and operational involvement without the need for bases in every country. However, the United States' coalitional approach is losing ground, and second world nations are looking elsewhere for assistance.

In contrast to the United States, the European Union employs a consensus approach to expand its influence. Countries must meet specific criteria – agreed to by all member EU nations – in order to qualify for integration into the European Union. Of course, countries which aspire to EU integration are not left to work towards meeting

the specified requirements on their own, but rather receive active consultation from EU officials once it is clear that the country in question is a capable candidate for integration. Khana notes that once a European Union office opens in a country, there can be almost no doubt that the country in question will eventually obtain EU membership, for it is as if the EU member nations have already reached a positive consensus regarding the prospective country's future as a EU member.

Finally, there is China's consultative approach to geopolitical influence. China's economic rise is nothing short of awe-inspiring. The world's nations have mostly accepted the inevitability of China's status as a significant world power. Countries now look to China's boundless economic activity and seek to build partnerships with China on the basis of common interests, without minding much for China's political profile. Hence, China's influence stems from a consultative approach, implying that despite differences, there are many common interests with China that can compel countries to become partners and accept China's growing influence.

Despite the fact that the three centers of world power employ different approaches to expand their geopolitical reach, it is also true that today's second world nations do not generally limit themselves to one sphere of influence. A second world country like India can cater the bulk of its service sector to European consumers, have extensive trade relations with China, and all the while sign a nuclear cooperation agreement with the United States. The forces of globalization allow second world countries to pick and choose the degree of influence they are willing to accept from the three modern geopolitical empires, without having to limit themselves to the influence of one and one only. In this condition, then, competition amongst the three world powers is not a zero-sum, winner-takes-all game. Globalization turns the geopolitical struggle for power amongst the three modern world empires into something more akin to a free market with three dominant firms at the top – a game of relative gains. In turn, second world nations striving for first world prosperity need not be entirely dominated under one sphere of influence to reap the benefits of close partnerships with the dominant world powers.

Second world nations – which are one major crisis away from reverting to third world poverty and one “great leap forward” back from advancing to first world prosperity – are all unique, falling within different constellations of the three central world powers' spheres of influence. Khana identifies a few key factors that today's most notable second world nations share in common. First, second world nations share an element of anti-imperialism directed towards the United States. Today's consensus is

that the United States is no longer running the world. There are other choices for second world nations as they look for favorable partnerships with world powers, China and the European Union being the most obvious candidates. Second, the Cold War and early post-Cold War standard of security alignment with or against the United States is out of date. Countries no longer feel as if they have to align with or against the United States, since multi-alignments with multiple world powers are now the norm. Third, countries' economic relations with other nations are no longer primarily defined by favorable partnership with the United States only. The primary factor is now regionalism, as relationships with close neighbors increasingly define each country's geopolitical position. World leaders ask themselves, how can relations with my neighbors favor my country? South American countries today seek favorable relations with Brazil, the region's growing economic powerhouse. Likewise, Russian leaders are likely to think more of developments in the European Union to the west and China to the south, rather than Russia's power standing *vis a vis* the United States. Lastly, however important each nation's standing is in relation to other countries, second world nations all share the quality of having very small to non-existent middle classes. Second world countries are marked by urban centers of affluence surrounded by rural areas where poverty is the norm. While first world countries enjoy widespread prosperity and third world nations suffer from absolute poverty, there is a glaring gap between the rich and the poor in second world nations. The shared goal for second world nations, then, is to tread a path towards a first world level of prosperity and success.

Second world nations are on varying paths to success, and it is their relations with the world's three centers of power that define second world countries' path to prosperity. For instance, after the Soviet Union fell, many former Warsaw Pact member nations – such as Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Poland – in Eastern Europe were caught in the border between post-communist anarchy and order in Western Europe. These nations willingly worked towards meeting the European Union's eligibility standards for integration in order to work themselves back into the first world. Today, former eastern bloc nations like Serbia, Macedonia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina are striving for European Union eligibility. As Khana notes, in the case of the European Union, empire is expanding not by conquest, but rather by merger.

While much of Eastern Europe's former communist countries have joined, or are seeking integration with, the European Union, Khana sees the geopolitical climate of Central Asia to be much more competitive and favorable to China. Chinese firms have a strong presence building infrastructure and entering commercial relations in countries

like Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. China's Central Asian sphere of influence is exemplified by China's leadership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, an international energy cooperation institution. Furthermore, as China's strategy to expand its sphere of commercial and political influence to Central Asia and the Middle East succeeds, the United States' influence in Central Asia is receding, evinced by recent American base closures in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

While the European Union expands its reach by integrating much of Eastern Europe, and China becomes increasingly influential in Central Asia and the Middle East, Latin America continues to be a pivotal region for American power. Though widely ignored in today's American foreign policy discussions, Khana believes that Latin America may just salvage the United States from becoming the global powerhouse that expands the least in terms of geopolitical influence. After a century of political turmoil and economic instability, Latin American countries largely recognize their potential and want to advance into the first world. Second world Latin American countries like Brazil, Argentina, and Chile, along with the United States, can all benefit from cooperative commercial, cultural, political, and security relations. This way, the United States can sustain its traditional stature of influence and preponderance in the region, and Latin American nations can continue to advance towards a first world level of prosperity. However, the United States must first polish its tarnished image after nearly a decade of unpopular foreign policies under the George W. Bush presidency – a process already underway with new President Barack Obama, who is extremely popular in Latin America and the rest of the world.

The Middle East is where the geopolitical reach of today's three global powers converge. Divided into different zones, each part of the Middle East is veering towards one of the three geopolitical spheres of influence. For instance, the case of North Africa is surprising, for not since the heyday of the Roman Empire have relations between Europe and North Africa been so close. North Africa's economic development is completely dependent on commercial relations with the European Union, and so it is that, without aggressive action, the European Union is expanding its influence in the Middle East. As for Iraq, the chaos that ensued after the United States invasion could have been avoided if the Kurds had been granted independent statehood, which is what the Kurds wanted all along. Now, there is a violent struggle for power between Sunni and Shia, a struggle that the United States cannot control without a large amount of troops. To top it off, it is not American corporations who are getting the most Iraqi oil, but rather European firms, thanks to the Europeans' diplomatic approach to commercial relations in the region. In the Persian Gulf region at large, the United States,

the European Union, and China are all competing on equal footing, exemplified by the way Saudi Arabia's oil is being distributed to all three major powers, not just to the United States. Contrary to previously long-held notions, the Middle East is no longer just a region subject to America's whims.

Khana's study of contemporary geopolitical dynamics supports the thesis that today's world is one of various "centers of gravity" and "spheres of influence." Today's world is hardly one centered solely on the United States. However, contrary to popular belief, that the United States is not the sole global superpower does not mean that American power is in perpetual decline. Rather, today's world is incredibly complex, and there is much to be learned from the study of contemporary geopolitical dynamics. By understanding how global powerhouses like China and the European Union are expanding their spheres of influence in the second world, the United States can adjust its own approach to foreign relations. The days of simply picking out which countries will become part of America's sphere of influence are over. Today, the United States must be smarter about the way its power and influence is exerted. In the grand scheme, smarter American power holds great promise for America and the world.

#### **Plenary 4: Dr. Fareed Zakaria, *the Post-American World***

*Dr. Fareed Zakaria is editor of Newsweek International, columnist and CNN host. He is described by Esquire as "the most influential foreign policy advisor of his generation", and is widely respected for his ability to spot economic and political trends around the world. His new national bestseller, The Post-American World, is about the "rise of the rest" – the growth of China, India, Brazil and many other countries – and what it means for the future.*

A book with the title "the Post-American World" is bound to both scare and anger many. Those who judge Dr. Zakaria's book by its cover have pre-assessed his

work as a doomsday scenario that depicts the United States in decline and disarray. However, those who look more closely and listen to Zakaria's ideas soon realize that the scenario being presented is optimistic and sober all the same. It is true, Zakaria tells us, that America is no longer the uncontested center of power in the world stage. However, this does not mean that, all of a sudden, the world is against the United States. Rather, the United States' twentieth century mission to influence the world and spread the American way of capitalism has proven very successful. Rising powers, like China and India, have gotten good at capitalism, and so no longer need the United States to look over their affairs. Now, the United States is in a state of shock, an identity crisis caused by the realization that it no longer is the world's uncontested champion of success.

In the post-American world, globalization runs its natural course, and the playing field among nations has truly leveled. In order to benefit from a level-playing-field world, the United States must be open to the new context of success without borders, rather than close itself off in a state of shock. If it reacts to new challenges by feeding on its own energies and welcoming the world's best talents into its own workforce, then the United States will continue to be a primary global leader. The United States may no longer be the world's indispensable nation, but it may yet have its moment as the twenty-first century's greatest harvester of success.

Dr. Zakaria came to the Geopolitical Summit knowing very well that recent world economic shocks and financial meltdowns challenge much of his optimistic outlook on global success and opportunity. In this dour world climate, where are things moving politically and economically in the international arena? How have Zakaria's ideas changed in response to the current world economic crisis? Zakaria posits that the present challenge to his vision of the post-American, level-playing-field world is best exemplified by the dilemma President Barack Obama faces. Obama decided to run for President of the United States during a global economic boom. His biggest problem would certainly be finding a way to get out of Iraq. Now in office, President Obama must deal with the worst economy since the Great Depression. At the same time, the War in Iraq is gradually moving along, and yet Afghanistan and Pakistan are spiraling out of control. On top of all this is the United States' tarnished image, caused by the arrogant foreign policies of the George W. Bush administration. Amidst present crises and dangers, the world needs American leadership, and yet much of the world is not quite sure if it should place its trust in the United States.

As is his tendency, Zakaria puts a positive spin on the confusions of the day. He believes that the challenges we face today are the products of success, success that we

do not quite know how to deal with. He points to the year 1979 as the starting point of the twenty-first century, the year when the forces that drove recent global triumphs and, at the same time, today's confusions, took flight. At the time, the United States was in very bad shape. It was the era of stagflation, and the United States was suffering negative repercussions from the Vietnam War after its end. The Soviet Union seemed to be going the opposite route, flush with profits from peak oil prices. Soviet influence was on the march in Central America, Africa, and the Middle East. However, at the point in which it could have taken a turn to even its position of power *vis a vis* the United States, the Soviets dug their own grave by invading Afghanistan. Operations in Afghanistan bled Soviet resources dry, destroying the Soviet empire's global reach and independence as a world superpower.

The Soviet Union was not just the geopolitical rival of the United States, but also a legitimate economic model for growth and political institutions in developing nations. Developing countries were graded within a US-Soviet spectrum, and surprisingly, the majority was graded closer to the Soviet side. Hence, after the Soviet Union collapsed, only one model remained: the American style capitalism and liberal democracy. The political and economic spectrum between the United States and the Soviet Union dissolved, and so developing nations looking to succeed would from now on model themselves after the United States.

The global economic and financial trends of the contemporary world were also set in motion in 1979. England's economy was going through a downturn, exacerbated by an immense and burdensome welfare state. When Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister, she led the enactment of deregulatory economic policies. In theory, the results of economic and financial deregulation would make free enterprise quicker and more profitable for entrepreneurs, setting in motion economic activity which would trickle down to the middle and working classes, creating a healthy cycle of reciprocal prosperity. For this to work, though, the taxing and restriction-inclined forces of government would have to stay out of the way. Margaret Thatcher's revolution was repeated in the United States, as Ronald Reagan's presidency ushered in an era of deregulatory economic reforms. With the simultaneous push of economic liberalization and the United States' world political preponderance, the world was clearly moving in the direction of capitalism and liberal democracy. Globalization, the "celestial force" of economic and political liberalization, was unleashed by the political developments which began in 1979.

Economic and political liberalization were not the only tendencies set in motion in 1979. The end of perpetual inflation facilitated the global trend of economic development, much thanks to Paul Volcker's activism in the Federal Reserve. Political stability came to many countries that never used to be stable, countries that were perpetually beset by political crises because of inflation. As Zakaria notes, inflation is often the precursor to political instability and social revolution. The existence of the Soviet Union as an alternative economic and political model gave discontent social groups in politically unstable countries a seemingly viable vision to found revolutionary institutions. With the failure of the Soviet model and the decline of inflation, social revolutions have been few and far in between for the last couple of decades, ushering in the contemporary era of capitalist success in the form of political stability, economic liberalization, and sped-up globalization.

According to Zakaria, we have been living in an era of unprecedented political stability for the last twenty years, and yet, for of all the television that we watch, we tend to presume otherwise. Every statistical indicator shows that world political violence has greatly decreased, and yet our incessant access to information on world misfortunes gives us a gut intuition that things are worse than they have ever been, and that we tread a path to further deterioration. However, this feeling of doom and gloom is misplaced from the perspective of history, which shows that today's era is stable as none before it. The problem is that, thanks to the revolution of information technologies, we have access to knowledge of what is happening anywhere in the world, any time of day, giving us a close-up of every bad thing that happens throughout the globe. Even if today's misfortunes are fewer than ever before, we have the capacity to know it all, making it easy to be convinced that today's global political conditions are worse than they have ever been.

Despite claims of global collapse, Zakaria argues that today's confusions have much to do with the fact that we are living in an unprecedented period of global peace and prosperity. Today's global economic system has never before existed. The natives of the non-Western world, in countries like India and China, have gotten very good at capitalism. Americans never expected so many countries to practice capitalism and liberal democracy so successfully. Americans did not expect that the rest of the world would become independent from the United States' leadership.

Today's number of growing, robust capitalist economies has created a context in which no one knows how to handle the ebbs and flows of a truly globalized economy occupied by so many prosperous countries. Where does all the new money generated in

today's newly prosperous nations go? The new money tends to be transformed into American debt, since it is Americans who have a desire and capability to consume goods and services like no other peoples. In recent decades, the United States has gone through an unprecedented boom in consumption, with a concomitant rise in Americans' household debt, which totals about \$14 trillion today. In recent times, the American people have over-consumed more than any economy ever has in the history of the world. Therefore, it is easy to conclude that today's economic crisis and financial meltdown has much to do with too much money flowing into American debt. As the bubble of American consumption burst, a global decline in production and trade followed. Hence, the United States is often blamed for the current global economic crisis.

However much today's economic woes are linked to American debt and over-consumption, the new global economic playing field is still something that one knows how to deal with. The United States was very active in promoting the spread of capitalism and liberal democracy for many decades, and yet American leaders are unsure of how to drive this new car that they have created. The world has moved on from American preponderance and leadership, and now the United States is not quite sure how the world works without America at the top.

Parallel to today's global economic shifts, there is a world political process that has recently played out. After the Cold War and the collapse of communism, there were no counter-balancing restraints on the scope of American power. Despite the tendency for world hegemony to use their power recklessly, the period of Bill Clinton's presidency was mostly filled with foreign policy ventures largely acceptable to public opinion throughout the developed world. Then, amidst an early George W. Bush presidency with promises of little to no foreign adventurism, came the 11 September 2001 attacks. In response, the United States proclaimed a new strategic framework in which "preventive strike" would be the norm. The Bush administration went to war in Iraq unilaterally, without regard for the approval of world leaders and global public opinion. The world witnessed a \$60 billion increase in the United States' defense budget one month after 11 September 2001, the most extraordinary increase in deployment of military capabilities ever.

During the Bush Jr. presidency, the United States had a hostile, dismissive attitude towards other countries. Even without being able to counter-balance America's overwhelming military dominance, other countries have opposed, in different ways, what they see as American over-exuberance on the world stage. It matters very much to

other countries whether or not the United States plays by international rules and norms. However powerful the United States may be, the military and political power of the United States has been delegitimized. New President Barack Obama has the unenviable task of repairing America's standing abroad – a task that, thankfully, is facilitated by Obama's international stardom.

As if America's falling stature as a trustworthy stalwart of international relations under fair rules were not enough, today's economic crisis has eroded the United States' financial and economic power. The American custom of un-fettered capitalism has come under fire, discredited by world leaders who blame the American model for current economic maladies. What should the United States do at this juncture? Can the United States renew its status as a world leader – albeit in a new, twenty-first century manner, more fitting to today's level-playing-field world?

Today's economic crisis does not reveal a multi-polar world, but a more equal one. In this level-playing-field world, the United States has more restraints on what it can and cannot do to shape the international system. However, this does not mean that the United States cannot lead. America must learn how to navigate in the post-American world. The first step towards restoring American leadership – being the restoration of positive cooperation with other world leaders – is already underway under the Obama presidency. With a restored multilateral approach to foreign affairs, the United States can regain its legitimacy in world public opinion.

The main factor to consider is America's confidence. With far less international legitimacy in military, political, and economic affairs, the United States could fall into a trap of disbelief, fearing that the world is in shambles and there is nothing America can do about it. Fear leads to isolation and protectionism. America must consider multilateral approaches that treat the new world economy as a single system to which the world's nations react in unison, rather than follow the path of frightened protectionism. If the United States is afraid of the new, level-playing-field world, then it will continue to close its borders from the world's talents, and fall behind in key areas like engineering, creative technologies, science and mathematics. However, the United States is host to the world's best higher learning and research institutions. In order to exploit this advantage, the United States must stop sending talented foreign students back to their home countries after they complete their advanced degrees.

If America continues to close its borders amidst uncertainty and fear of the new global system, then hopes of America's renewal as a confident and legitimate world

leader will not be fulfilled. If the United States embraces the new global dynamics and welcomes, invests in, and retains the world's most talented professionals in science, mathematics, and innovative technologies, the cultural fabric of the United States will continue to flourish and enrich itself as a global hub where different peoples gather, making America a natural leader and success story for the new diverse, level-playing-field world. However, if the United States follows the tendency of closing itself off to global developments, the period of American greatness will surely be over, for in a post-American world, nations know how to succeed on their own, and so the world will go on – without American leadership.

## Conclusion

Geopolitics is the study of the great powers' behavior in the world stage. Today's world is certainly one of rising powers like China, India, and the European Union, with Russia ushering in a period of revival, and other powers like Iran and Brazil rising, looking to assert themselves and influence the world within their regions and beyond. With regards to the United States, today's world of rising powers is interpreted in several ways: American power in decline, American power being seriously challenged after a long period of unrivaled predominance, America still the most powerful nation despite geopolitical changes, and so on. In the United States, intellectuals and people in power wish to know the present geopolitical constellations in order to implement actions that ensure America sustains a position of significant stature in the world stage. However, there is no one way to make sense of the present, and so no clear course of action for the future.

The Plenary Speakers at the Geopolitical Summit each presented their own respective interpretations of today's geopolitical realities. Each speaker presented his views on what the United States must do in a world of rising powers, a world in which America is no longer the sole center of power and influence. Dr. Francis Fukuyama sees America's current standing as one of diminished legitimacy in light of the neoconservatives' disastrous legacy in foreign policy. He proposes that the United States offset the neoconservative legacy by embracing multilateral partnerships to deal with the problem of failed states. Dr. Robert Kagan sees today's world as a normalized one of great power rivalries, with the emergence of autocratic powers like China and Russia challenging the dominance of liberal democratic nations. To confront the rise of autocratic rivals, the world's liberal democracies must act in unison to offset the viability of autocracy as a political model. Mr. Parag Khanna conceptualizes the current geopolitical condition as one in which three central world powers – the United States, the European Union, and China – vie for influence in the second world, that group of countries developing in the threshold between third world poverty and first world prosperity. The United States must understand that, though there are other world powers vying for global influence, it can learn much from its competitors and exploit its own advantages in order to project power and influence amidst changing geopolitical constellations. Dr. Fareed Zakaria notes that we are living in a post-American world, where countries like India and China have become very good at American-style capitalism, leaving the United States in a state of uncertainty regarding its role in the world stage. What the United States must do is embrace the twenty-first century level-playing-field world, rather than close itself off in fear. If it integrates itself into the new

global system of success without borders, then the United States can reinstate its position of leadership in the world stage, albeit in a new and unique manner, within a changing order of global prosperity and interdependence amongst nations.

That each of the Plenary Speakers presented different points of view and promoted varying prescriptions for America's actions in a changing world does not mean that there can be no unity of purpose for Americans as they come to grips with an unfamiliar global climate. Rather, the debates taking place at the Geopolitical Summit and at other public forums show that there is indeed much clarity of purpose regarding America's standing in the world.

Not long ago, the idea that the United States could be challenged on the world stage seemed delusional. Yet today's reality of rising powers that present significant challenges and opportunities for American leadership is being taken seriously by scholars and policy makers on both sides of the political spectrum. We may not all adopt the same explanations and conceptualizations of present geopolitical conditions, nor all agree on how the United States must act in today's global arena. However, the Geopolitical Summit is proof that we all agree that present geopolitical challenges must be addressed, and that today's global opportunities must be sought. The essence of democracy is open society and public debate, and the Geopolitical Summit is a prime example of democracy's essence put into practice for the reinforcement and betterment of our democratic society. The world is changing and so is the United States, but America's tradition of public debate, open discussion, and the flow of ideas must continue to flourish if today's challenges are to be met, today's lessons learned, today's opportunities sought, and tomorrow's world bettered.