

# I. Introduction – What Is American Strategy?

## 1. How American “Strategy” Went Astray

To ensure that America remains the world’s strongest, richest, most powerful, and most successful country for decades to come, our country needs a coherent, focused strategy for how we interact with the world. And to get that right, all Americans need to know what, exactly, it is we are trying to do and why.

A “strategy” is a concrete, realistic plan that explains the *essential connection between ends and means*: it begins from an accurate assessment of what is desired and what tools are available, or can realistically be created, to achieve the desired outcomes.

A strategy must evaluate, sort, and prioritize. Not every country, region, issue, or cause—however worthy—can be the focus of American strategy. The purpose of foreign policy is the protection of core national interests; that is the sole focus of this strategy.

American strategies since the end of the Cold War have fallen short—they have been laundry lists of wishes or desired end states; have not *clearly defined what we want* but instead stated vague platitudes; and have often misjudged what we *should* want.

After the end of the Cold War, American foreign policy elites convinced themselves that permanent American domination of the entire world was in the best interests of our country. Yet the affairs of other countries are our concern only if their activities directly threaten our interests.

Our elites badly miscalculated America’s willingness to shoulder forever global burdens to which the American people saw no connection to the national interest. They overestimated America’s ability to fund, simultaneously, a massive welfare-regulatory-administrative state alongside a massive military, diplomatic, intelligence, and foreign aid complex. They placed hugely misguided and destructive bets on globalism and so-called “free trade” that hollowed out the very middle class and industrial base on which American economic and military preeminence depend. They allowed allies and partners to offload the cost of their defense onto the American people, and sometimes to suck us into conflicts and