

# SEARCHING FOR A STRATEGY

**T**his package has the feel of an intervention—a group attempt to deliver a sobering message to someone in real trouble who refuses to admit it.

Daniel Drezner explains why we are all here. The time has come to face facts. American hegemony is not coming back, at least not in a form recognizable to those who knew it when. (Talleyrand said that only those who came of age before the revolution could understand how sweet life could be.) U.S. hard power is in relative decline, U.S. soft power has taken a huge hit, and from now on, American foreign policy is likely to be a plaything kicked around in the nursery of American domestic politics. So the managers of the empire need to wake up. Things have to change.

Mira Rapp-Hooper and Rebecca Friedman Lissner then offer some tough love. Washington has to abandon its post-Cold War fantasies of liberalism marching inexorably forward to certain global triumph. It should temper its ambitions, lower its sights, and focus on promoting freedom and openness within the international system where it can.

Stephen Walt can't resist gloating. Realists have been warning about overreach for a generation, but nobody listened. Now the warnings seem pre-

scient. And frankly, the loss of hegemony shouldn't be mourned, because it was never the right strategy for the country anyway. Offshore balancing always made more sense than global domination, even when the United States could afford to try the latter. Now it can't, so the choice should be obvious.

Kori Schake closes on a more supportive note. The situation may not be as irreversibly dire as all of this suggests. There's still a chance for the United States to regain its footing, shore up the liberal international order, and get the world back on track. But it's only a chance, and even that has to start with an honest assessment of just how bad things have gotten.

Interventions are never pleasant. But sometimes the message gets through. And the first step is acknowledging the problem.

—Gideon Rose, *Editor*

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