

Refactoring North American Geopolitics

United States grand strategy has been stagnant for nearly 70 years. The last significant conceptual updates occurred in the 1940s and 50s with the invention of nuclear weapons. Subsequent absence of an explicit grand strategy has degraded American strategic coherence. U.S. power in the world has already declined relative to rivals over this time. At the same time, the meaning of “liberal international order” which used to refer to a functional set of institutions, has decayed into simply a totem of dogma and faith, accepted as conventional wisdom, and not given the proper maintenance necessary to ensure its long-term sustainability.

This document is designed to open a much-needed discussion of first-principles geopolitical thinking from the perspective of common, long-term state interest rather than narrow factional or special interests. This concept is not intended as a final answer, but as a single coherent radical proposal to begin discussion on what a refactored grand strategy and geopolitical future for America might entail.

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I. North America as Geopolitical Unit

Consider North America as a whole. North America has approximately 600 million people, the world’s single largest and most self-contained economy, a broad and rich resource base including net food and energy export, unmatched transportation logistics, extensive ecosystem wealth and natural beauty, no significant internal state-level rivalries, and thousands of miles of oceans separating it from any plausible adversary while simultaneously connecting it to any non-landlocked trading partner.

Across the water, with no significant naval choke points that could be blockaded, North America has direct access to Europe, Asia, Oceania, Russia, West Africa, and South America. There are no other geopolitical positions of this quality or security. North America as a whole is a secure fortress-island of superior internal wealth. If a state in control of North America wanted to, it could stay essentially fully independent of world

affairs beyond its near oceans, and without needing to engage in conflict with the rest of the world.

But at the current level of integration and development, North America suffers serious challenges: Mexico is underdeveloped and fraught with internal security problems, which spill north across the border and become U.S. problems. Canada is stagnant and also underdeveloped relative to its economic potential. The United States is losing ground internationally due to political and social dysfunction at home. Key parts of the industrial supply chain are outsourced to rival powers, such as China.

With rising competition from abroad, dysfunction on the North American continent becomes a significant political and even and military vulnerability. It is easy to see a belligerent China gaining power in Canada, Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean, while the United States is distracted by geopolitical developments in Eurasia that are less critical to its own national security. Absent a change in strategic posture, the military and political arms of the U.S. state will continue to spend down U.S. wealth on costly foreign initiatives that have little return on investment for U.S. national power, but do increase risk of catastrophic war. Besides the security issues, enormous potential wealth is left on the table by lack of integration and development.

North America is very compelling as a natural geopolitical bloc, and can be made even stronger and more prosperous through integration and development. Developing the continent as a unified power base is a first-rank interest of the United States, but also one of the entire region. It is also better for the world overall, especially on the risk of catastrophic war, to shift the geopolitical equilibrium from contesting for global dominance to developing regional spheres of influence.

II. A Political Alternative to Managed Decline or Strategic Incoherence

The U.S. and broader Western policymakers are operating on a globalist paradigm; mostly a set of ideological beliefs abstracted from any actual particular state, nation, history, or geography. This identity conception will become increasingly untenable as the material basis for this globalism—namely, U.S. geopolitical and economic hegemony—recedes and other powers, such as China, India, and Russia, but also Europe, become more independent of U.S. power.

The window of viability has closed for U.S.-led global hegemony, which took as given that the U.S. both can sustain and should desire to be the sole global superpower, leading an international order of UN member-states converging on Western-style

liberalism or at least its imitation. If a U.S.-led “one world state” to converge the rest of the world was a goal for the likes of mid century progressives like Franklin Roosevelt, today, it is simply at odds with the reality of the emerging balance of power in the world.

A new strategy is necessary to avoid turning what is already an *inevitable, relative* decline in U.S. geopolitical power into an *absolute rout* of U.S. strength, which will leave the country weak, vulnerable, and less functional than today, and increase risk of catastrophic war through the chaotic transition. Without an alternative positive strategic vision and way for U.S. policymakers to coordinate around such, the United States will continue along this trajectory of strategic incoherence and unmanaged decline.

In an increasingly multipolar world that is unsuitable for a global strategy, a strong core sphere of influence is the best way to keep up and even maintain primacy. Thus a pivot to North America is not a strategy of managing decline. It is a decisive refocusing of energy to a vector of growth that provides compounding returns. Integration and development of a core sphere of influence is a much more appropriate strategy for the 21st century multipolar world order.

III. North American Integration and Development

In the most ambitious form, North American integration could consist of a new North American Continental Authority formed from some kind of greater legal union between the United States, Mexico, and Canada. This new continental union would have internal heterogeneity inherited from its already diverse constituents but would be unified at the top.

A continental state would provide unified border security, internal security hierarchy, and unified military and strategic chain of command. It would thus be able to manage the security of the entire continent as its natural and formal territory. In the ambitious form, this is far from simply a free trade zone. The new continental authority itself would be the core political project.

On the economic front, integration would bring in a unified currency and market, visa-free travel and work, and a unified basic labor policy. This integration would significantly accelerate development even without further assistance, as Canada and Mexico would be opened up to full trade with U.S. industry in ways that trade treaties like NAFTA currently do not include.

In the continental strategy, development of the core North American continental sphere of influence as a base of independent industrial and economic power would become the most important target of investment spending and development aid, as the continental economic base will increasingly become the best source of leverage and security in a chaotic multi-polar world. There would be three major priorities of this development investment.

The first is to drive down the costs of economic growth. This can be done by building up key communications and transport infrastructure; developing and managing mineral resources, energy, water, cropland, ranchland, and forests; and building up energy production like oil and gas, and especially nuclear and solar electricity; and to densify urban areas with new housing development to drive down costs of commuting and renting. The second goal is to improve the well-being and capability of the population and industry using industrial policy and social policy to build up key economic activities and social fabric that will not naturally develop themselves. The third and final development goal is to decrease foreign entanglements that draw our strategic attention away from the core and enrich foreign powers at our expense. Instead, bring home key supply chains to the North American continent, and build up presence and industry in Canada and Mexico.