

era: the U.S.-jihadist war. The jihadis could not win, if by winning we mean the re-creation of the Caliphate, an Islamic empire. Divisions in the Islamic world were too powerful to overcome, and the United States was too powerful to simply be defeated. The chaos could never have congealed into a jihadist victory.

This era is actually less a coherent movement than a regional spasm, the result of a force field being removed. Ethnic and religious divisions in the Islamic world mean that even if the United States is expelled from the region, no stable political base will emerge. The Islamic world has been divided and unstable for over a thousand years, and hardly looks to become more united anytime soon. At the same time, even an American defeat in the region would not undermine basic American global power. Like the Vietnam War, it would be merely a transitory event.

At the moment, the U.S.-jihadist conflict appears so powerful and of such overwhelming importance that it is difficult to imagine it simply fading away. Serious people talk about a century of such conflict dominating the world, but under the twenty-year perspective outlined in the early pages of this book, the prospect of a world still transfixed by a U.S.-jihadist war in 2020 is the least likely outcome. In fact, what is happening in the Islamic world ultimately will not matter a great deal. If we assume that the upward trajectory of U.S. power remains intact, then 2020 should find the United States facing very different challenges.

AMERICAN GRAND STRATEGY AND THE ISLAMIC WARS

There is one more element of the American dynamic that we must cover: the grand strategy that drives American foreign policy. The American response to 9/11 seemed to make no sense, and on the surface it didn't. It looked chaotic and it looked random, but underneath, it was to be expected. When one steps back and takes stock, the seemingly random actions of the United States actually make a good deal of sense.

Grand strategy starts where policy making ends. Let's assume for a moment that Franklin Roosevelt had not run for a third term in 1940. Would

Japan and Germany have behaved differently? Could the United States have succeeded to Japanese domination of the western Pacific? Would the United States have accepted the defeat of Britain and its fleet at German hands? The details might have changed, but it is hard to imagine the United States not getting into the war or the war not ending in an Allied victory. A thousand details might have changed, but the broadest outlines of this conflict as determined by grand strategy would have remained the same.

Could there have been an American strategy during the Cold War other than containment of the Soviet Union? The United States couldn't invade Eastern Europe. The Soviet army was simply too large and too strong. On the other hand, the United States couldn't allow the Soviet Union to seize Western Europe because if the Soviet Union controlled Western Europe's industrial plant, it would overwhelm the United States in the long run. Containment was not an optional policy; it was the only possible American response to the Soviet Union.

All nations have grand strategies, though this does not mean all nations can achieve their strategic goals. Lithuania's goal is to be free of foreign occupation. But its economy, demography, and geography make it unlikely that Lithuania will ever achieve its goal more than occasionally and temporarily. The United States, unlike most other countries in the world, has achieved most of its strategic goals, which I will outline in a moment. Its economy and society are both geared toward this effort.

A country's grand strategy is so deeply embedded in that nation's DNA, and appears so natural and obvious, that politicians and generals are not always aware of it. Their logic is so constrained by it that it is an almost unconscious reality. But from a geopolitical perspective, both the grand strategy of a country and the logic driving a country's leaders become obvious.

Grand strategy is not always about war. It is about all of the processes that constitute national power. But in the case of the United States, perhaps more than for other countries, grand strategy *is* about war, and the interaction between war and economic life. The United States is, historically, a warlike country.

The United States has been at war for about 10 percent of its existence. This statistic includes only major wars—the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War, the Civil War, World Wars I and II, the Korean War, Viet-