

Mr. James Lint stated, “Our driving purpose is to give-back.” The only reason that an American wants to give back to their country is because they love it and what it stands for. To do that means forwarding our values -because a values-neutral foreign policy makes the content of public diplomacy difficult to support, and empty of principle. And America is the only civilization that developed on an idea – of liberty. This is the essence of our ‘exceptionalism.’ When we lose sight of that as our central thrust, we lose our emphasis on individual character as the way to make a good society. Our shared beliefs in personal responsibility as well as freedom, in self-control and truth-telling as well as liberty, are the essential cornerstone of our society. Our shared values are the reason we fight to preserve our way of life. But when society blames evil on forces outside the individual character rather than on those who perpetrate that evil, we are in danger of losing our coveted way of life. America cannot address global challenges without raising issues of governance and legitimacy among foreign governments. We can only do that if we show leadership and strength, the foundations for American greatness.

We are approaching the 9th anniversary of a profound change in our way of life. It has affected the way we see the world and how we deal with other countries, both adversary and ally. There have been eight and a half years of recovery and revamping, of preparation and planning, and of hitting the ‘reset button’ on our foreign policy stance with Moscow, with Tehran, with Pyongyang. But regardless of our ‘reset’ in relations with these countries, our decisions must be rooted in a common knowledge of who we are as a country and what we want to project in the world. Our core must be to embrace the protection of our citizens, with defense of our country as its heartbeat. To do this, we have to understand our adversaries, and understand as well that in national security affairs, strength is a perception as much as a reality. Case in point: the decision not to place long-range missile defenses in Poland and the Czech Republic may not have affected our nuclear deterrent around the world in a significant way, but it nevertheless calls into question our credibility and the durability of our commitments to our allies. And it is proof positive that in all our alliances, what we do vis-à-vis Russia is critical.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, the reasoning went that the international system would become more manageable somehow. But global prosperity only strengthened Russia, giving it the means to resist democratization and pursue aggressive foreign policies, like the invasion of Georgia in 2008. The Putin regime could not countenance democracy in the Caucasus and took advantage of weak-kneed Cold War institutions like the United Nations and NATO, who found themselves mired in policy disagreements. The problem in the world today is that there is no common view of the pressing issues of the day among all the civilized nations and no shared approach on how to deal with them. That leaves the United States of America. We are in a big war and Iran is at the center of it with Russia holding the key. The odds of the U.N. halting Iran’s nuclear ambitions are remote while Russia has a veto in the Security Council. We must seek some leverage against Moscow’s intransigence regarding Iranian sanctions, rather than handing them a *quid* without the *quo*. The defeat of the Communist ‘idea’ in 1991 has not, in fact, seen the defeat of the old USSR’s Cold War rhetoric and stance. This is not the way the post-Cold War world was expected to look, but perhaps it should have been. During the Cold War, the Russians were masters of linkage: they responded not where *they* were weak, but where the West was weak. They are doing the same thing now. It is naïve to think we can persuade Russia to change its domestic politics, so the only course is to change the geopolitical balance. It would likewise be foolhardy to accept deals that divide us in any way from our allies or threaten our common security.

In Resolution 1737, the U.N. Security Council classified Iran's nuclear program as a threat to international peace. As such, P-5+1 partners like Russia should not recognize the legitimacy of Iran's uranium enrichment—there is no peaceful purpose for the neutron initiator. The nuclear threat in the world is not one posed by the established nuclear powers, but rather by those who wish to proliferate. Iran has thus far failed to respond to goodwill gestures. To solve the Iranian problem requires a change in American foreign policy: we should be telegraphing our support for the opposition, restricting Iran's refining capabilities, and stop tolerating Iranian-based attacks on our military in Iraq and Afghanistan. America has vital national security interests in Afghanistan and the role of Iran there as part of an anti-American alliance is substantial. And no matter how well we succeed in Afghanistan, unless we defeat Iran, we will always be fighting them in the next venue. Our national security hangs in the balance.

“I request this Essay to be published on the Lint Center for National Security Studies, Inc. website with my name published.” Jordan L. Harms