

Epilogue:

A New (Shorter) Long Telegram —Strategy for a New Century

Our effort to understand the challenge of crafting strategy for a long war took its inspiration from George Kennan's Long Telegram of 1946. As a final measure of analysis we have chosen to put it to the test of brevity. Thus, we provide here a summary of the ideas we have presented in *Winning the Long War*. We hope it serves as another reminder of the power of Kennan's brilliant strategic analysis presented over a half-century ago and its enduring relevance to the world we face today.

In view of recent events the following might be of interest.

Knowing the enemy and knowing yourself is the acme of strategy. Strategy is the secret to winning the long war. George F. Kennan understood that well as he scribbled the Long Telegram in his apartments at the Moscow Embassy. And so he wrote. He explained who the enemy was, who we are, and how we would win the long war.

We have tried to do the same.

Describing the enemy is perhaps a more formidable task than the one faced by Kennan. It is not that our enemy is inscrutable. In fact, the opposite is true. They are all too predictable. We know them. We know them well. They are old terrors with new

names. They are those who will accept no dominion over men and women other than their own. Their message is the same old lie: Somehow the slaughter of innocents will redress social, political, cultural, or economic ills. They use the same old tools. They clothe lies in a veneer of religion, creed, or ideology. They pervert the instruments of the everyday world and turn them against us. Yet describing them is difficult because they wear no uniforms; they use the benefits of an open society to hide their faces; and they can rise up against us with little or no warning.

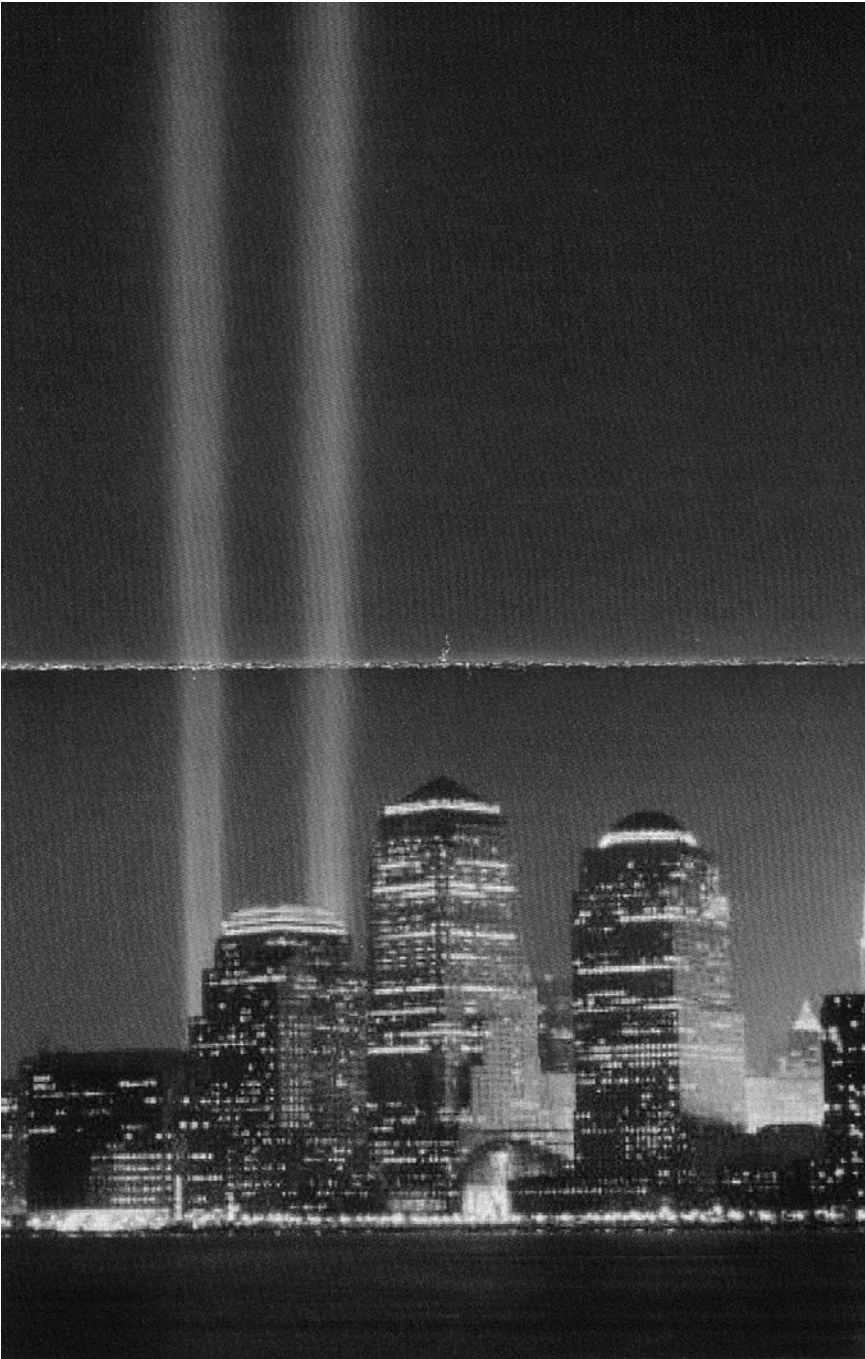
The world has always had to bear the burden of evil, yet this evil—the threat of transnational terrorism—merits special attention. Today our planet is united by networks that freely carry goods, services, peoples, and ideas. It is the source of our prosperity and the hope for ramping up the economies of the developing world. It must be preserved, even though it also provides the means for terrorists to turn themselves into world-class dangers. As long as we live in a globalized world, we will live with the potential for global terror.

We must also remember that we no longer live in a time in which only great powers can bring great powers to their knees. There are weapons that virtually any enemy can get hold of and, under the right circumstances, threaten tens of thousands of lives and cause hundreds of billions of dollars in damages.

Finally, we must take terrorists seriously because they are an enemy that will never leave us alone. They can't. They are our enemy not because we have attacked them, but because we exist—and our continued existence is the obstacle to their empires.

For these reasons, this is an enemy that cannot be ignored. We will always have to be vigilant; the sad truth is that such enemies are endemic to the modern world.

However, we also know that our enemy is not invincible. In fact, as long as we do not lose courage and confidence in ourselves, terrorists cannot win. They have limited resources. They cannot threaten us everywhere, all the time. They have few friends. The United States is



Two banks of lights pierce the New York City skyline in tribute to the fallen, March 14, 2002. (PHOTO BY KENN MANN COURTESY OF THE U.S. AIR FORCE)

far from alone in the war against terrorism. Other countries may disapprove of our methods and our foreign policy, but with few exceptions, nations recognize that transnational terrorism is a threat to them as well. Some may lack the capacity or will to engage the enemy with as much vigor as the United States, but the era when terrorists could freely transit the world without fear of interference or establish sanctuaries without threat of attack is over.

Because they are scattered among the nations of the earth, because they may be difficult to find, because others may come to take their place, this will likely be a long war. And winning the long war requires a long-war strategy—one that provides for security, economic growth, the protection of civil society, and the struggle of ideas.

Our advocacy for a long-war strategy is animated by the same reasoning by which Kennan argued we must approach the Cold War. This is a war that cannot be won on the battlefield. It can only be won by prevailing. Victory is occasioned by just being there. Long-war strategies are designed to sustain a nation for the long fight. Indeed, the goal is to grow and prosper, even as the enemy drifts into memory.

Long-war strategies begin with a good offense. The goal of the offense is to destroy that which makes the enemy formidable—its capacity to reach out across distances and mobilize people and resources. In short, victory means taking the “transnational” out of transnational terrorism. That will require destroying sanctuaries, incapacitating leaders, and crippling networks. We have argued that there are three critical enablers for long-war offense: good strategic intelligence, a solid base of military might, and the means for harnessing all the instruments of national power in the campaign to root out the terrorists’ centers of gravity.

Strategies for the long war also require defense. In a world linked by global lifelines, some enemy will inevitably find a gap to slip through. There is no silver-bullet solution to stopping every terrorist threat. Simply throwing money at the problem is not the

answer either. It did not work during the Cold War and it will not work here. A layered defense in which governments, the private sector, and citizens each fulfill their responsibilities is the only prudent course. There is still much work to be done in establishing these appropriate roles and linking them together into a true national homeland security system. That must be our primary effort.

Preserving both liberty and order is equally important to winning the long war. A strong civil society is all that sustains the will of a democratic people in a protracted conflict. We must fight hard and be free. Debates that frame our choices between civil liberties or security are offering us the wrong options. In a long war you need both. We must provide better tools for finding and stopping the terrorists among us; ones that do not endanger the foundations of a healthy civil society. We believe the Patriot Act is an example of the kind of instrument that successfully accomplishes this goal. The scrutiny given to this law, however, needs to be extended to *all* our domestic counterterrorism instruments. They must be efficient, effective, and appropriately applied.

Economic growth is equally vital for success. In this we face perhaps our greatest challenge. Sustaining long-term growth will depend on restraining both non-security-related mandatory *and* discretionary spending and using tax reform to unleash the full potential of the American economy. At the same time, we must aggressively pursue a free-trade agenda, ending our own protectionist practices and pushing others to follow suit. These are perhaps the toughest of tasks, but if we fail to undertake them, America may not have the stamina to sustain itself for the long fight.

Finally, we must be prepared to engage on the battlefield of ideas. Terrorists win when they can walk into any community (in nations rich and poor) and, unchallenged, seek out the downtrodden and disaffected, the poor and the poor in spirit. We have to break the nexus between the preachers of hate and

their potential victims. In part, this must be done by drying up funding and prosecuting agitators. In other cases, the answer will be education reform and public diplomacy. Either way, the objective will be the same—to discredit the ideologies that feed terrorism. At the same time, the United States must continually make the case that democracy and free markets offer a credible alternative to extremism and repression. Finally, the United States must make clear that it will never retrench or retreat. The idea offensive must destroy any glimmer of hope among the terrorists that we will ever let them prevail in their fascist schemes.

Foremost, however, we must heed Kennan's most critical warning: "The greatest danger that can befall us...is that we shall allow ourselves to become like those with whom we are coping." We must retain the courage and confidence to remain true to what has made this nation great, to the values that make the idea of America worth defending. The banner that we must carry into every battle in the long war must read: "Freedom."