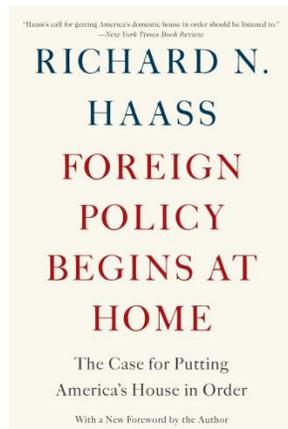


# COUNCIL *on* FOREIGN RELATIONS

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## Teaching Notes

*Foreign Policy Begins at Home*

By Richard N. Haass  
President, Council on Foreign Relations

Basic Books  
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195 pages  
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The biggest threat to the national interests of the United States comes not from abroad but from within. This is the provocative, timely, and unexpected message of *Foreign Policy Begins at Home*, the most recent book by Council on Foreign Relations President Richard N. Haass.

A rising China, climate change, terrorism, a nuclear Iran, a turbulent Middle East, an assertive Russia, and a reckless North Korea all present serious challenges. But U.S. national security is even more imperiled by America's consistent under-performance at home. A burgeoning deficit and debt, crumbling infrastructure, second-class schools, an outdated immigration system – these and other critical shortcomings directly threaten America's ability to project power and exert influence overseas, to compete in the global marketplace, to generate the resources needed to promote the full range of U.S. interests abroad, and to set a compelling example that will influence the thinking and behavior of others.

Dr. Haass argues for a new American foreign policy: Restoration. At home, the new doctrine would have the country concentrate on restoring the economic foundations of American power. Overseas, the United States would better recognize that limits to both its resources and its influence require setting more exacting strategic priorities. In practice, a doctrine of Restoration would eschew the over-reaching that has characterized much of U.S. foreign policy over the last decade and stop trying to remake the Middle East with military force, instead emphasizing maintaining the balance of power in Asia, promoting economic integration and energy self-sufficiency in North America, and working to promote collective responses to global challenges.

In a new foreword to the paperback edition, Dr. Haass warns of a third concern, one different than both over-reach abroad and under-performance at home. He terms it “under-reach”: a lack of understanding of the close relationship between the state of the world and the state of the United States, which is contributing to a dangerous growth in isolationism. The United States, he writes,

cannot thrive at home in a world of turmoil – and the world will move in the direction of turmoil absent consistent American leadership. American foreign policy needs to begin at home, but it cannot end there.

*Foreign Policy Begins at Home* describes a twenty-first century in which power is widely diffused. Globalization, revolutionary technologies, and the rise and decline of new and old powers have created a “nonpolar” world of American primacy but not domination. So far, it has been a relatively forgiving world, with no great rival threatening America directly. How long this strategic respite lasts, Dr. Haass writes, will depend largely on whether the United States puts its own house in order.

The book lays out a grand strategy for restoring America’s power, influence, and ability to lead the world. It is appropriate for both undergraduate and graduate classes in U.S. foreign policy, strategy, and national security; international relations; and U.S. government and politics.

## **Discussion and/or Essay Questions**

### **Courses on U.S. Foreign Policy, Strategy, and National Security**

1. What is grand strategy? How does it differ from national security and/or foreign policy? Why is it important?
2. What do you think should constitute U.S. grand strategy?
3. Do you believe that American leadership is essential for global order?
4. What is the significance for U.S. foreign policy of the “strategic respite”? Does it even exist?
5. What is, or what ought to be, U.S. policy towards the Middle East? What principles or interests should drive policy?
6. What is, or what ought to be, U.S. policy towards China?
7. What role or roles might exist for traditional allies and partners in modern American foreign policy?
8. Is it necessary for U.S. foreign policy to be guided by a doctrine?
9. Discuss the doctrines introduced in Part II (“Restoration Abroad”). What are their pros and cons? What would constitute your ideal U.S. foreign policy doctrine?
10. What are the consequences for American foreign policy of the dramatic expansion of domestic sources of energy in the United States?

### **Courses on International Relations**

1. What are the primary features of the contemporary international system? What are the consequences of those features for the United States?
2. Describe the shifts of power and influence that have taken place since the end of the Cold War.

3. Do you agree that there is a “global gap” between what the international community promises and what it delivers? What, if anything, can the international community do to narrow the gap or ameliorate its consequences?
4. What are the sources of and challenges to U.S. primacy?
5. What are some of the challenges China is likely to face in the coming decades? How might they affect China’s interactions with its neighbors and the rest of the world?
6. Is China — or any other country — likely to become a great power rival to the United States? Why or why not?
7. Assess the causes and consequences of Europe’s changing role in international relations, especially since the Second World War.
8. How might recent political movements or upheavals in the Middle East affect the foreign policies of the countries in the region? Give specific examples.
9. What is your understanding of the phrase “global order”?
10. Is there an “international community”? Explain your reasoning.

#### **Courses on U.S. Government and Politics**

1. What are the primary challenges to U.S. economic strength?
2. What is the relationship between U.S. domestic policy and America’s role in the world?
3. How might the present political gridlock interfere with America’s ability to resolve domestic problems? What can be done to fix the U.S. system?
4. Part III of the book (Restoration at Home) outlines seven policy areas that contribute to U.S. strength abroad. Do you agree with those choices? Are there others that might be appropriate? Why?

## Further Projects

### Policy Memorandum

Ask students to write a detailed memorandum that develops a specific set of policies to address one of the seven issue areas laid out in Part III of the book. The memo should consider existing policies and legislation, budget issues, and political conditions.

### Class Debate

Assign students to different political parties or ideological standpoints (e.g., Democrat/Republican, liberal/conservative/libertarian). Organize a simulation in which students debate possible policy approaches to any of the issue areas outlined in Part III.

### Analytical Essay

Ask students to choose one of the central questions laid out in the book and write a paper analyzing the surrounding arguments. Sample topics include:

- Whether a strategic respite exists and what it means for the U.S.
- Whether there is a need for a foreign policy doctrine and, if so, what it should be
- The value of Restoration as an appropriate doctrine for this moment in time
- Whether there is a “global gap” and how it should be addressed
- Whether an “international community” exists

## Supplementary Materials

Bacevich, Andrew. *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism*. New York: Henry Holt and Company: 2008.

Bremmer, Ian. *Every Nation for Itself: Winners and Losers in a G-Zero World*. London: Penguin Group, 2012.

Brzezinski, Zbigniew. *Strategic Vision; America and the Crisis of Global Power*. New York: Basic Books, 2012.

Friedman, George. *The Next 100 Years: A Forecast for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Anchor Books: New York, 2010.

Kagan, Robert. *The World America Made*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013.

Kaplan, Robert. *The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate*. New York: Random House, 2012.

Kupchan, Charles. *No One's World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Nye, Joseph. *The Future of Power*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2011.

Zakaria, Fareed. *The Post American World and the Rise of the Rest*. London: Penguin Group, 2009.