After the Super Tuesday primaries in February, a number of the Republican and Democrat candidates will have some time to reflect before they launch their campaigns for 2012 and plan a return to the scenic byways, cafes, meeting halls, and homes of Iowa and New Hampshire. It would be profitable for them and the country if they and the candidates still standing read some of the recent literature on international relations and U.S. strategy. H-Diplo stands ready to assist them with recent and forthcoming roundtables by international relations specialists, political scientists, and even historians who do live in the present and peak at the future. Some recent examples include Tony Smith’s *A Pact With The Devil: Washington’s Bid for World Supremacy and the Betrayal of American Promise* and Michael Hunt’s *The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained & Wielded Global Dominance*.¹ H-Diplo will also have forthcoming roundtables on Ian Shapiro’s *Containment: Rebuilding A Strategy against Global Terror* and Tom Nichols’ *Eve of Destruction: The Coming Age of Preventive War*.

Philip Gordon has good timing with the publication of his study which joins the many critiques of the Bush administration’s “War on Terror” with is preoccupation with the military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq and continuing pacification problems in Iraq. Gordon is critical of the implementation, focus and priorities, and rhetoric of Bush’s policies and offers Cold War containment as an alternative model with a greater promise for enduring success. The reviewers do not challenge Gordon’s assessment of the implementation mistakes by President Bush and his advisers, but they do raise questions about the applicability of the containment strategy and the realism of Gordon’s solutions to a number of problems. Gordon responds to these questions in his response.

1.) An initial question is whether Gordon correctly presents the nature of Bush’s policies and problems in design and implementation. Although most of the reviewers vote “yes” on this question, Tony Smith has reservations as to whether Gordon really believes that the Bush strategy as articulated in the Bush doctrine is flawed or he views just the implementation as inept. In his book Smith critiques the Bush doctrine as fundamentally flawed in its emphasis on the necessity for preemption to address security threats, the necessity for unilateralism to meet challenges, the importance of hegemony to maintain American security, and the related emphasis on democracy as the best long-range solution to the challenges faced by the U.S. Smith also critically identified Republican neoconservatives and Democrat neoliberals who endorsed the war on Iraq and remains concerned that Gordon could shift back to support of the Iraq war if the military and political situation improved in Iraq.

2.) How valuable is containment as an alternative model to the Bush strategy in dealing with the problems of radical Islamism and Islamic terrorism in the Middle East and elsewhere? The reviewers have reservations about Gordon’s recommendation that the Bush strategy be replaced by an updated containment strategy from the Cold War. To the extent that Cold War strategy relied on restraint as opposed to the Bush doctrine and the launching of the Iraq war, rejected a monolithic view of the communist adversaries, and focused on strengthening the U.S traditions as noted by Nicholas Thompson, the reviewers endorse Gordon’s suggestions. However, as Gordon notes and the reviewers agree, there were significant exceptions such as Vietnam, and James Goldgeier points out that the U.S. was “slow to recognize the Sino-Soviet split and failed to understand the nationalist aspirations of leaders assumed to be marching in lockstep with Moscow.” Michael Mazarr also questions the validity of the parallel between Cold War communism and religious radicalism: “communism was a state-bound movement by the Cold War years, something we could deter in conventional ways; it was not trying to implant terrorist agents in our midst, ready to destroy themselves in self-immolating violence. The level of fanaticism in the two movements, the sort of otherworldly visionary aspect seems entirely different.” Tony Smith notes that containment produced “ill-fated American interventions in Guatemala, Iran, and Southeast Asia ..., [and] unless one is careful, that is, containment can morph back into the Bush Doctrine.”

3.) In chapter four, Gordon proposes “A New Deal for Middle East” that would include a withdrawal from Iraq, pacification in Afghanistan against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, negotiations to establish a viable Palestinian state, containment of Iran with negotiations, and general engagement across the Middle East. The reviews raise questions about the realism of Gordon’s agenda and its priorities. As Gordon notes the Bush administration has shifted somewhat in the direction of Gordon’s recommendations with the exodus of leading neoconservatives and under the initiatives of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. As Goldgeier suggests, however, a strategy toward Iran of containment and engagement faces some of the same challenges as the Cold War strategy of détente by Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, which ended up being abandoned by almost everyone but Kissinger. Smith also suggests that the U.S. should consider devoting more attention in the next administration to Russia and China, the domestic economy, and the environment, and less to the Middle East.
4.) Since the Cold War did come to a surprisingly successful end from the U.S. perspective, Gordon suggestively considers “What Victory Will Look Like” in chapter five. Instead of a “big bang” conclusion with the domino-like collapse of the Soviet empire and regime, Gordon suggests a more gradual, less dramatic demise of Al-Qaeda and its leaders with Osama bin Laden’s vision being viewed as a failure, an erosion of support for terrorism, the decline of fundamentalist Islamism, and the emergence of new leaders in the Middle East. Gordon envisions this as a gradual process similar to the impact of containment on the Kremlin’s leaders until the arrival of Mikhail Gorbachev. Goldgeier is less optimistic, noting Cold War crises that could have been even more destructive than they were, and that another September 11th like attack on the U.S. could bring further escalation of U.S. involvement in the Middle East with escalating costs. Mazarr suggests an alternative strategy to ending the preoccupation with terrorism as the “predominant paradigm for U.S. foreign policy.” Mazarr recommends that we keep our intelligence and special forces in hot pursuit of terrorists such as Al-Qaeda but that we move forward to new issues in our speeches, policies, and application of resources.

Participants:


**James Goldgeier** is a professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington University and a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. He previously taught at Cornell University, and he has been a visiting scholar at Stanford University’s Center for International Security and Cooperation, the Brookings Institution, the John W. Kluge Center at the Library of Congress, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. In 1995-96, he was a Council on Foreign Relations International Affairs Fellow serving at the State Department and on the National Security Council staff. From 2001-2005, he directed George Washington University’s Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies. He is the co-author (with Michael McFaul) of *Power and Purpose: U.S. Policy toward Russia after the Cold War*, which received the 2004 Georgetown University Lepgold Book Prize in international relations, and he is the author of *Not Whether But When: The U.S. Decision to Enlarge NATO and Leadership Style and Soviet Foreign Policy*, winner of the 1995 Edgar S. Furniss Book Award in national and international security. His new book, *America between the Wars: From 11/9-9/11* (with Derek Chollet), is scheduled to be released by PublicAffairs in June 2008.
Michael Mazarr holds a Ph.D. in public policy from the University of Maryland, is professor of national security strategy at the U.S. National War College in Washington, D.C., an adjunct professor in the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service, and a nonresident adjunct fellow with the American Security Project. He has authored ten books, edited five anthologies, and published numerous articles, most on various aspects of U.S. defense policy and international security. His most recent book is *Unmodern Men in the Modern World: Radical Islam, Terrorism, and the War on Modernity* (Cambridge, 2007). He has also authored *Information Technology and World Politics* (2002); *North Korea and the Bomb: A Case Study in Nonproliferation* (1997); and *Turning Point: The Gulf War and U.S. Military Strategy* (1995).

Tony Smith earned a B.A. at the University of Texas, an M.A. from The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 1965, received his doctorate in political science from Harvard University in 1971 and has been a Senior Fellow at the Center for European Studies at Harvard since 1979. He is the Cornelia M. Jackson Professor of Political Science at Tufts University where these days he gives courses on U.S. Foreign Policy. He is the author of five books, including *The French Stake in Algeria* (1978), *The Pattern of Imperialism* (1981), *Thinking Like a Communist* (1987), *America's Mission: The U.S. and the Global Struggle for Democracy in the 20th Century* (1994), *Foreign Attachments: The Power of Ethnic Groups in the Making of American Foreign Policy* (2000); and *A Pact With The Devil: Washington's Bid for World Supremacy and the Betrayal of American Promise* (2007). Smith has also published a dozen articles on the history of Wilsonianism, understood as a perspective making the promotion of democratic government abroad a central focus of American foreign policy.

Nicholas Thompson, a fellow at the New America Foundation and a Senior Editor at *Wired*, is writing a book about George Kennan and Paul Nitze.