

*Excerpt from No Apologies by Mitt Romney*

## Chapter 1

### *The Pursuit of the Difficult*

I HATE TO WEED. I have hated it ever since my father put me to work weeding the ivy bank at our home in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. It was enormous, or so it seemed to me—about forty feet long and ten feet wide—and I could not have been more than four feet tall at the time. The bank was planted with Boston ivy and pachysandra, neither of which seemed to grow as heartily as the weeds. After what seemed like hours of work, I never could see much progress, and I would complain to my dad. “Mitt,” he would reply, “the pursuit of the difficult makes men strong.” It seems now like an awfully grandiose response for such a pedestrian task. I complained about the weeding often enough that I heard his homily regularly, and I am sure that is why it sticks with me to this day.

The pursuit of the difficult was something with which my father was familiar. He was born in Mexico, where his Mormon grandparents had moved to escape what they believed was religious persecution by the American government. At five years old, Dad and his family were finally living pretty well. They had a nice home, a small farm, and he even had his own pony, called Monty. But in 1910, Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa threatened the expatriate community, so Dad’s parents bundled up their seven kids, got on a train, and headed back to the United States.

Their furniture, china, his mother's sewing machine—everything they had worked hard to accumulate—had to be left behind, and, once back in the States, they struggled. They moved time and again, and work was always hard to find. My grandfather established a construction business, but he went bankrupt more than once, and I remember Dad explaining that one year in Idaho his family lived on nothing but potatoes—for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Dad began to contribute to the family's income early on, and during his high school years he worked long hours as a lath-and-plaster man, finishing the interior walls of new houses.

By the time I was weeding that ivy bank three decades later, my father had become a successful businessman. I know he worried that because my brother, sisters, and I had grown up in a prosperous family, we would not understand the lessons of hard work. And that is why he put us to work shoveling snow, raking leaves, mowing the lawn, planting the garden, and, of course, weeding—always reminding us that work would make us strong.

About this time, Dad faced a difficult pursuit of his own. Only a few months after he became vice-president of American Motors, the company's president, George Mason, died and the board of directors selected my father to succeed him. With the news of Mason's death, the company's stock collapsed from thirty dollars a share to seven. The banks did not have much more confidence in the company at that moment than its stockholders did, and I remember hearing my parents discussing the certainty that if the banks pulled out, the company would not survive.

My parents had recently sold our home—we were living in a rented house while they prepared to build a new one. With my mother's blessing, Dad took the

money they had put aside from the sale of their house and used it to buy AMC stock. He even used the savings bonds he had given me for Christmases and birthdays to buy stock. He believed in himself, and he believed in hard work and what it could achieve.

Dad spent long days at the office and, when he was home, the work continued. He met with the company's bankers, explaining his vision for the company's future—focusing on the new compact car he called the Rambler, closing the company's Kelvinator appliance division, replacing the management with a dynamic new team, and closing the company's Michigan plants to consolidate production in Wisconsin. He agonized over that decision but concluded in the end that “to save a patient this sick, surgery is necessary.”

A year later, AMC's stock was selling for more than ninety dollars a share and Dad was on the cover of *Time* and *Newsweek*. He and mom soon built their dream home, and we kids, now even more prosperous, were given still more chores.

What Dad accomplished at American Motors prepared him for the challenges that would follow. He served as leader of Michigan's Constitutional Convention, three-term governor of Michigan, secretary of Housing and Urban Development in the Nixon administration, and founded of the National Center for Voluntary Action. And I have to admit that the weeding and chores probably did not hurt me either—something I understood a few years later when it was time to dig in and study hard for the bar exam.

Over the years, I have come to believe that the value of “pursuing the difficult” applies much more broadly than only to individuals. When I met Tom Stemberg in

1985, he had come up with an idea for a new business, one he believed would revolutionize the retail industry, and in particular the business of selling and distributing office supplies. Tom's vision was to create the world's first big-box office superstore chain, one with hundreds of stores, tens of thousands of employees, and billions in revenues. Most people I spoke with thought it would never work, believing that businesspeople, individuals, and families would not go out and shop for office supplies, no matter how great the savings. But they were wrong, and today Staples is what Tom dreamed it would be.

Yet reaching the company's goal was difficult. In the beginning, the manufacturers did not want to sell to him because his plan threatened their traditional methods of distribution. A warehouse with multi-store capacity would have to be built and financed; good locations for stores were tough to find, and copycat competitors sprang up everywhere. But in the end, Staples succeeded, and the Staples team became very strong indeed specifically because the company had faced so many difficulties along the way.

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Today, the United States faces daunting challenges, and I am similarly convinced that if we face them, fight them, and overcome them, we will remain a strong and leading nation. Just like individuals, companies, and human enterprises of every kind, nations that are undaunted by the difficult challenges they face become stronger. Those that hide or shrink from arduous tasks become weaker.

Consider our nation's history and the strength we developed as we faced our greatest threats. George Washington's army was in no way comparable to the British

forces he faced; his troops were untrained, unpaid, and outmanned. The British navy boasted 270 vessels, while the Continental navy had only twenty-seven. In April 1775, British warships laid siege on Boston Harbor and successfully took command of the city. But under General Washington's direction, during the following winter Colonel Henry Knox and his men hauled fifty-nine heavy canons by ox-drawn sleds 300 miles from Fort Ticonderoga, New York, where they recently had been captured. Finally positioned on Dorchester Heights, a hill overlooking the harbor that Washington's army had captured, the cannons suddenly threatened the annihilation of the British armada. The British withdrew, Boston remained in American hands, and our ingenuity, can-do attitude, and faith in Providence ultimately helped win our improbable independence from the world's superpower.

I was born after the second world war and can only imagine the confusion, incredulity, and fear that must have overwhelmed the nation when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Yet once again, the United States rose to the occasion. In Detroit, where my father was already working in the auto industry, factories that once made cars were quickly turned into assembly lines for military aircraft. Cars and planes are not very similar, but in only a year, Detroit was making nine thousand bombers, fighters, and transports a day. We ultimately lost 418,000 men and women in World War II, and, its financial costs were great as well. But we also became far stronger. Women joined the workforce—a trend that would wane, then wax again to our economic advantage. Our factories became the most productive in the world; returning GIs went to college in what was the greatest expansion of higher education

in history, and Americans began to recognize that while we comprise much of a continent, we are not an island, alone and isolated from the rest of the world.

I was in high school when Sputnik was launched by the Soviet Union in 1957. Mr. Garlick, my science teacher, hung a model of the small satellite from the tall ceiling of our classroom as a reminder, he said, that America had fallen behind the Russians in science and technology. The future was up to us, he would say, sounding a lot like my dad. Up to that point, our own space program at the time had been a miserable failure. Then, three months after the Soviets' first successful satellite launch, we attempted to enter space. But our Vanguard rocket failed to develop enough power to lift it off the launch pad; it toppled over on its side and exploded into flames. NASA tried—and failed—to launch thirteen more satellites over the next three years, yet in 1960 President Kennedy issued the bold call for us to put a man on the moon during the coming decade. Young people all over the country grew enthusiastic about studying physics, engineering, and the space-sciences. We became a more technically proficient people—and we put a man on the moon.

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### *Facing Our Challenges Head On*

I can remember only one time during my life when most Americans presumed that we did not really face great challenges. It was during the Clinton presidency. George H.W. Bush and Ronald Reagan had pushed the Soviet Union to the wall and won. The Berlin Wall had come down, the Soviet Union had dissolved, and here at home, there was talk of a “new economy” that sent the bulls running on Wall Street.

Columnist Charles Krauthammer called it our “holiday from history;” we believed that peace and prosperity were here to stay—without threat, without sacrifice.

In some ways, we advanced as a nation during these years. The Internet boomed, and the pockets of millions of average Americans grew deeper. But did these years of ease make us a stronger, more free, or secure nation? We shrunk our military by 500,000 troops during the Clinton years, retired seventy-nine ships from the navy and decreased the size of our air force by more than a quarter. More ominously, we gutted our human intelligence capabilities, and never took any real steps to infiltrate the Jihadist groups like al Qaeda that had declared war on America. At home, teenage births rose to their highest levels in decades, as did teenage drug use, and pornography became the Internet’s biggest business. Our dependence on foreign oil rose from forty-two percent of our total consumption in 1990 to fifty-eight percent today.

I do not wish challenges and hard times on this nation, even though I believe they have made us the country and people we are today. But neither do I fear them. My sole concern is that Americans will choose not to act, not to face our challenges head on, or to overcome them—particularly at a time when America is in its most vulnerable position in many years. Our economy has suffered its worst crisis since the Great Depression; Russia is becoming a belligerent player on the global scene once again; we are deeply in debt to the Chinese; tension and violence in the Mid-East is sky-rocketing again, radical Muslims continue to plot our destruction. The consequences we face if we fail to act in response to these perils are unthinkable. Yet because Americans have always risen to meet enormous challenges in our past—although too slowly sometimes—I am confident we will be able to do so again.

We will remain the leading nation in the world if America overcomes our current challenges. We will be strong, free, prosperous, and safe. But if we do not face them, I suspect the United States will become the France of the twenty-first century—still a great country, but no longer the world’s leading nation. What’s chilling to consider is that if America is *not* the superpower, another nation will take that position. What nation would rise, and how would that nation perceive us? This shift in world power could have dire consequences for our safety, freedom, and prosperity. We can expect China, Russia, India, Japan, and the countries of the European Union to make great economic and military strides over the coming decades. But that does not mean that we have to throw our hands up in defeat. Those nations face most of the same very tough challenges we do today, and the question is who among us is best equipped to attack these crises head-on. Will we exercise the will and leadership to solve them? And if we do not, who will?

The world is a safer place when America is strong. In fact, there is no better ally of world peace than a strong America. Ronald Reagan often remarked that he had seen four wars during his lifetime, “and none of them came about because America was too strong.” America’s strength destroyed Hitler’s fascism; it stopped the North Koreans and Chinese at the thirty-eight parallel and allowed South Koreans to claim their freedom. American strength kicked Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait, and later out of his spider hole.

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There are a number of thoughtful people around the world, however, who do not welcome America’s strength. In 2007, several reputable polls asked European



citizens which nation they perceived as the greatest threat to international peace. Their answer: the United States. I was incredulous when I first read this and presumed the respondents must have had Iraq on their minds when they answered. Surely they had not considered what Russia would do in the Ukraine if America were weak; what China would do in Taiwan; what the Taliban would do in Afghanistan; what Castro, Chavez, Kim Jung Il, or Achmedinejad might undertake. The very existence of American power holds tyrants in check and reduces the risk of precipitous war.

Does America make mistakes? Absolutely. We never fully understood the enormously complex political, economic, and military issues we faced in Vietnam; and we were wrong in our assessment of the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. But in every case throughout history in which America has exercised military power, we have acted with good intention—not to colonize, not to subjugate, never to oppress.

During my tenure as governor of Massachusetts, I had the opportunity to join a small group of people in meeting Shimon Peres, Israel's former Prime Minister and current President. In casual conversation, someone asked him what he thought about the ongoing conflict in Iraq. Given his American audience, I expected him to respond diplomatically. Yet because of his liberal party affiliation, I thought he would be critical of the U.S. as well. But what he said caught me very much by surprise. "First, I must put something in context," he began. "America is unique in the history of the world. In the history of the world, whenever there has been war, the nation that is victorious has taken land from the nation that has been defeated—land has always been the basis of wealth on our planet. Only one nation in history, and this during the last century, was willing to lay down hundreds of thousands of lives and take no land

in its victory—no land from Germany, no land from Japan. America. America is unique in the history of the world for its willingness to sacrifice the lives of its precious sons and daughters for liberty, not solely for itself but also for its friends.”

Everyone in the room was silent for a moment, and no one pressed him further on his opinion about Iraq. I was deeply moved and was reminded by his words that the American strategy is one that seeks not just wealth and strength but noble ideals as well. And I remembered former Secretary of State Colin Powell noting that the only land America took after World War II was enough land to bury our dead. The United States is unique, and American strength does not threaten the world. Our strength helps preserve much that is good and peaceful around the globe.

Some argue that the world would be safer if America’s strength were balanced by another superpower, or perhaps by two or three. And others believe that we should simply accept the notion that our power is limited. Nebraska Senator Chuck Hagel recently suggested that it is time “to reintroduce America to the world in order to regain its trust in our purpose as well as our power. . . .The success of [U.S.] policies and efforts will depend not only on the extent of our power, the strength of our purpose and cohesion of regional alliances, but also by an appreciation of great power limits.”

I take a different view. Suppose Russia once again developed superpower capability that was comparable to our own. Wouldn’t both nations tend to weigh policies and potential actions not just on the basis of what was right, but also with an eye toward gaining advantage over the other? Interventions and alliances—in some cases with very unsavory characters—would be countenanced for their competitive

potential. Each nation would fear that its competitor was getting ahead militarily, and the arms race would accelerate.

It is true that the emergence of another superpower is not entirely up to us—several other nations are building economic and military power and we will not stop them from doing so. But we *can* determine, entirely on our own, that we will not fall behind them. The only way I know to stay even, in fact, is to aim squarely at staying ahead.

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### *Four Strategies to Achieve World Power*

A number of nations and groups are currently intent on replacing America as the world's superpower. In fact, there are four major strategies that are currently being pursued to achieve world leadership—politically, economically, and militarily. I use the word “strategy” advisedly. For ten years, I worked as a management “strategy consultant,” first with the Boston Consulting Group and then with Bain & Company. BCG's founder, Bruce Henderson, observed that in order to become a success, a business does not just have to do well, it also has to do better than its competitors. Being number one is not just about bragging rights. Often, it means the difference between prospering and merely hanging on. And under Bruce's guidance, a few hundred of us eventually were hired to help companies develop strategies that would allow them to outperform their competition.

Most people can readily recognize “strategy” as it is applied in the business world. Apple, for example, targets its products to educational and creative users, and the company markets iPods, iPhones, and Macs with a hip image that is reinforced by

product design and advertising. Apple creates products that are specifically designed for their brand of customer, and it is a business strategy that works. A few years ago, many industry observers predicted the demise of Apple, but because the company's overall strategy has proven so successful, they certainly do not anymore.

Countries also have strategies. As in the business world, a national strategy is intended to propel that nation beyond its competitors, and to bring it prosperity and power. When a given strategy does not work, it is normally abandoned and replaced. But in some situations—as is the case with North Korea—the strategy is whipped onward despite the absence of any likelihood for success.

The four national strategies being pursued today each flow to some degree from a political intent to achieve world leadership, superpower status, and perhaps dominance. The first of these is represented most fundamentally by the United States. It is a strategy based on free enterprise and individual freedom, and the two elements are not only harmonious; they actually empower each other. Individual freedom stimulates a spirit of entrepreneurship that, in turn, leads to innovation and enterprise. And the freedom to walk away from a job and create one's own enterprise breeds a sense of independence in a culture that prizes individual freedoms. It is a strategy that has led America to become the most powerful nation in the history of the earth. It has also created economic powerhouses like Japan, Germany, South Korea, each of whose economies had been devastated by war. And it has helped the twenty-seven member nations of the European Union create economies whose combined GDP is thirty percent of the world's total, roughly the same as the combined GDP of the United States and Canada.

While the nations that pursue this “American” strategy are collectively referred to as the West, not all of them pursue it in a uniform manner. Sweden and several other European nations, for example, place a far heavier governmental hand on enterprise and on economic freedom than does the United States. Citizens are highly taxed to provide not only a very substantial social safety net but also a guaranteed lifestyle. Businesses and employment are highly regulated. This strategy of interlinked personal freedom and free enterprise is approached in a variety of ways among the nations of the West, and I will examine the benefits and detriments of each in a later chapter.

The second strategy is currently being pursued by China and is one that mixes free enterprise with authoritarian rule. On its face, the strategy seems contradictory—doesn’t the oppression of an authoritarian regime that severely limits individual freedoms stifle the growth of enterprise? The conflict appears so clear that most Western observers have predicted that as China’s economy and trade develop, the country will trend toward democracy and freedom. But China’s leaders see things quite differently. In a 2003 conversation with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, he insisted to me that it was not communism but democracy that was the more vulnerable form of government in the world. Democracy, he said, is “driven by popular whim.”

I had expected to find the Chinese people frustrated with Communist rule and to encounter many who were agitating for the basic freedoms enjoyed in the West. But when I met with Chinese students at Tsinghua University in Beijing in 2006, they seemed much more interested in pursuing the lessons of American-style free enterprise than they were in promoting American-style freedom. The Chinese I met

during the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games likewise had little apparent discontent with Communist rule. Perhaps they were on their best behavior when I spoke with them, out of fear of government reprisal. But there was another, more open expression of support for the government during the Games. The Opening Ceremonies were attended by over 100,000 people, the vast majority of whom were Chinese. When President Hu Jintao was announced over the National Stadium's loudspeakers, the audience erupted in cheers. And I did not hear a single "boo." I've learned that boos stand out, even in the midst of a much larger number of people who are clapping and cheering, and I made a note to myself when I got into politics—never throw out the first pitch at a Major League baseball game. I remember Massachusetts Senator John Kerry getting drowned out at Boston's Fenway Park by a small tide of Bronx cheers. But there were no boos for Hu Jintao, and instead, loud and exuberant cheers.

What has happened in China to the spirit of Tiananmen Square? It may simply be hidden for now, at least from public view. Every year, there are literally thousands of protests in China, although these are typically directed at the corruption of local bureaucrats and politicians. I am convinced that as the Chinese study abroad, trade with free nations, build enterprises and become increasingly exposed to people and cultures from around the world, they will sue for freedom and democracy. But whether that pursuit could ever reach a critical level, and whether the Communist Party would accede to popular demand is very uncertain. For now, and perhaps for a very long time to come, China's strategy is deeply grounded in authoritarian rule.

It is surprising to many that China's strategy is also based on free enterprise. Communism is, in fact, the opposite of free enterprise—at its core is state-owned

industry and public land. But Chinese leaders watched carefully as the economies of the Soviet Union and its fellow travelers like North Korea and Cuba collapsed. In a head-to-head economic contest, carried out over half a century, Communism was the undisputed loser. Free enterprise won, hands down, and so the Chinese Communist Party adopted free enterprise. The Chinese can be a practical people.

But Chinese free enterprise is not like that of the West, as least not yet. Major industries continue to be state-owned and operated. And the Chinese system is absent the rule of law and regulation that shape free enterprise elsewhere. It has failed to prevent widespread practices that have tainted products from dog food to infant formula, and it quite clearly welcomes the rampant theft of intellectual property from Western businesses. It is free enterprise on steroids—anything goes. China brazenly sells nuclear technology to Iran and buys oil from genocidal Sudan, and it vigorously defends these nations against international sanction.

And there is another way in which Chinese enterprise is distinguished from other economic systems around the world—it is *winning*. China is fast becoming the world's factory, successfully capturing the lion's share of world manufacturing for a growing list of products. The country is no longer content to make only toys and trinkets; it is manufacturing cars, aircraft, televisions, and computers. Foreign companies that have invested in China have certainly smiled as their sales and profits have grown, but their smiles aren't as wide as they once were, now that their Chinese "partners" are opening facilities of their own and appropriating foreign know-how and technology. All this has led to breathtaking growth for China's economy, now predicted to be larger than ours within the next twenty years.

The numerous Chinese leaders with whom I have met have always been very gracious. Typically, these formal meetings are held with a large number of observers. The two principals are seated next to each other, separated by flowers and interpreters, rather than sitting face-to-face and eye-to-eye. As a result, what is said tends to feel much more like a speech for the gathered assembly than like a direct and personal exchange of views. And it can be difficult to discern just what the Chinese are thinking and planning within the boundaries of their relatively closed society. Uniformly, I have been assured by the leaders with whom I have met that China has no ambition for global expansion. It is still a poor country in comparison with nations like ours, they have assured me. That may well be true. But I am certain that China intends to become an immensely powerful nation, and ultimately to become even stronger than the United States. If and when that happens, who knows what intentions China will harbor?

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Russia is now pursuing a third global strategy. Like China, it favors authoritarian rule, but Russia's economic strategy is primarily based on energy, not on free enterprise. By controlling people and energy, Russia aims to reassert itself as a global superpower.

To many of us, it is inconceivable that Russia could ever again compete for world leadership. Didn't the Soviet Union completely collapse? Wasn't its economy a basket case? Russian products were the laughingstock of free economies around the world. Even its military was in shambles, because its feeble economy did not permit it



to maintain its armaments, its bases, or even a large part of its personnel. Hadn't Russia thrown in the towel?

Yes and no. There was indeed a time when Russia sought aid and cooperation from the West, and when democracy was energetically, even heroically pursued. Free enterprise was unleashed, despite concerns. Russia appeared poised to join the family of responsible nations, free nations. But that has changed under Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. He stated in 2005 that the collapse of the Soviet Union “was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the [twentieth] century.” And it appears that he is working hard to reestablish it.

Freedom and democracy have been early victims. Russian journalists critical of Putin have gone missing or have been found dead, and the media is heavily censored; the Russian mafia flourishes, as does an extensive black market; there is rampant political and business corruption; Russian security forces now kill and torture in the name of national security, and there is a shocking rise of violence against women and children—all of which collectively signal the reshaping of Russian “sovereign democracy” into an autocratic state reminiscent of the pre-Gorbachev Soviet Union.

With its invasion of Georgia in August 2008, its promise to supply Venezuela with nuclear technology, and its stated intention to “protect” Russian nationals living in its former satellites states—even as it has encouraged their emigration to these states—Russia's old habits have reappeared in its foreign policy. And its rediscovered ambition for superpower status is fueled by its massive energy reserves.

Russia has the world's largest reserves of both natural gas and coal. It is second in the production of oil, following only Saudi Arabia. In all forms of energy, it is the

largest exporter in the world, actually outpacing Saudi Arabia. In 2008, Russia reached \$400 billion in energy sales. Compare that with the \$486 billion U.S. defense budget in the same year. With its income from today's energy economy, Russia can afford once more to keep up with us militarily. We won the Cold War at the right time. If Russia remained the superpower it was during the Soviet era, our security would be at even greater risk than it is today.

Russia's energy strategy has not crowded out the rest of its economy. Despite rampant corruption, a frightening level of organized crime, and the loss of investment predictability due to Putin's confiscations of private property, Russia has enjoyed the most rapid recent growth of any of the G8 nations. Under Putin, the country's GDP has increased six-fold and Russia's economy has grown from the twenty-second largest economy in the world to the eleventh; and in purchasing power parity, it is now the seventh largest.

Beyond energy and commodities, Russia also relies on the strength of its science and technology sectors. I remember a recent conversation I had with Jim Simms, founder and CEO of a company called Cambridge Technologies. His business concept was to provide research for American companies who increasingly had abandoned their own research efforts. His company would become their various laboratories, in effect, and they would enjoy the benefits of scale and the cross-fertilization of ideas. But as he went about hiring American scientists, he found they were in short supply. He was forced, in the end, to build research laboratories in Russia and populate them with Russian scientists who, he explained, were well-educated, hard-working, and abundant. Russian enterprises take advantage of the

same talent pool to achieve success in such fields as Internet technology, software, space, nuclear engineering, and military weaponry. Combined with its massive energy resources, Russia's broad economy strengthens its ability to compete for superpower status.

Russia's energy plan explains a good part of what Vladimir Putin is directing internationally. Georgia has several thousand oppressed ethnic Russians, yes. But it also has key energy pipelines that Russia intends to firmly control, and the Ukrainians can't help but look at Russia the way Little Red Riding Hood looked at the wolf—Russia is hungry for a direct energy route to the Black Sea. On its surface, Russia's strong current support for Iran does not seem to make sense—after all, if Iran goes nuclear, its missiles will be a lot closer to Russia than they will be to us. But a nuclear Iran would become a Middle East superpower, and if Russia had its hands on the strings of Iranian affairs, it would have even more power over world energy supplies, their cost, and their distribution. The same holds true with Russia's burgeoning relationship with Venezuela, and its increasing presence in South America is a stick in the eye to the United States, something that no doubt pleases Vladimir Putin.

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There is a fourth global strategy. It, too, is calculated to overcome the West and ultimately lead the world. Yet is not embraced by any nation—at least officially. Radical violent Islam—Jihadism—intends to cause the collapse of all competing economies and governments and thereby, in a “last man standing” approach, become the world's leading power—in fact, its sole power.

Not every radical Islamist group is the same, of course. They come in many stripes across a spectrum, from Hamas to Hezbollah, from the Muslim Brotherhood to al Qaeda, and from Lashkar-e Taiba to Jaish-e-Mohammed. Each espouses causes that are unique to its own brand of Islam and to its own geographic region— independence for Chechnya, political dominance in the Sudan, hegemony over Kashmir, and so on. But without question, the Jihadists also share a common overarching goal—violent holy war on America and the West, the destruction of Israel and the Jews, the recapture of all lands once held by Muslims, the elimination of “infidel” leaders in Muslim nations like Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, and, ultimately, the defeat of all non-Muslim nations.

Theirs is a strategy based on conquest and compulsion. Because it has no singular or coordinated leadership—and because its objectives are both grandiose and fragmented—attempts to execute this strategy are pursued by a number of tactical means. Some, like the Wahabis, focus on the virtual brainwashing of young people to help spread radicalism throughout the world of Islam. Others, like Hamas, recruit and train suicide bombers. Some endeavor to mollify and pacify the West, lulling these nations into complacency and inaction; Lebanese American scholar Walid Phares argues in his book *Future Jihad* that the massive Saudi investment in Islamic study centers in Western universities is designed to do precisely that. Al-Qaeda itself continues to plan devastating attacks like those it carried out on September 11, and also targets unstable nations like Sudan and Afghanistan for takeover, with the hope of converting them into training and launching sites for an ongoing series of massive attacks.

Regardless of the choice of tactics, the overarching objectives of the various radical groups are linked by adherence to a few fundamental ideals: the world is to be conquered, a “caliphate,” or Islamic government, is to be established, one ruled by Muslim clerics, and civil law is to be replaced with “sharia,” Islamic religious law. Osama Bin Laden has spoken of the certainty that “the pious caliphate will start from Afghanistan,” one in which, wrote Bin Laden’s chief deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, “history will make a new turn, God willing, in the opposite direction against the empire of the United States and the world’s Jewish government.” Another Al-Qaeda leader, Fazlur Rehman Khalil, has declared, “Due to the blessings of jihad, America’s countdown has begun. It will declare defeat soon.”

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These are the four strategies for world leadership that are in competition today. Only one is founded on freedom. Only one. Think what that means. Solely if America and the West succeed, if our economic and military strength endure, can we be confident that our children and grandchildren will be free. A strong America is good for peace—and it is essential for the spread of freedom. Our superpower status and our leadership in the world are not written in the stars. Three other global strategies are aggressively aimed at surpassing us. The proponents of each are convinced they will succeed. And world history offers us no encouragement: every superpower in history has eventually weakened and fallen behind; most have ultimately collapsed. Given what is at risk, I have come to believe that our *primary* objective as a nation must be to keep America strong. I am convinced that every policy, every political initiative, every new law or regulation should be evaluated in large measure on

whether it makes us stronger or weaker. Our freedom, security, and prosperity are at stake.

Some of us take our many personal freedoms for granted. Others in the world, who have never experienced them, and who have instead only heard their autocrat's malign freedom, hardly understand what it means. But for most Americans, the pulse of freedom beats in our very DNA. My New Hampshire license plate reads "Live Free or Die," reminiscent of patriot Patrick Henry's famous entreaty. There are those who insist that New Hampshire's motto is not politically correct—but I believe it is quintessentially correct.

I have been inspired by the passion of those who have recently won freedom. In 2002, I sat near Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai at a State of the Union address in our nation's capital. As we were filing out of the House chamber, he encountered a serviceman who had lost his arm in the fight to free Afghanistan. He said to the soldier, "I and my people want to thank you for your sacrifice for our freedom. Thank you, thank you so very much." And the young man responded, "It is an honor to serve the cause of freedom."

Afghanistan under the Taliban had assailed freedom. For Jihadists, the very ideas of democracy and freedom are blasphemous; they believe law is given by God, not chosen by man, and that freedom and democracy substitute the rights of the individual and the collective will of the people for the demands of Allah. The result of this belief has been unimaginable oppression administered by religious mullahs.

The oppression inherent in a society without personal freedoms is not always as obvious as it was in Afghanistan. By almost all appearances, China is a very

impressive nation, as the Beijing Olympics were designed to demonstrate. The Chinese government spent an estimated \$40 billion to showcase their Games. In comparison, Atlanta's Games were produced for less than one tenth that amount, even adjusting for inflation. Modern, cosmopolitan Beijing now resembles a typical Western city—bustling commerce in stores and malls, daunting traffic, even plenty of McDonalds restaurants.

During the Games, the people seemed the same as those you would encounter in any modern city—large crowds on the sidewalks, people laughing and talking and engaging in the work and play of the day. But a closer look revealed what it is like to live in a society without a Bill of Rights.

There is no freedom of the press in China. Even in a hotel room, it was obvious that China has no equivalent of our First Amendment protection of free speech. At times, CNN International's coverage would suddenly be blacked out, the dark and silent screen signaling that government censors were blocking a news report they decreed could not be seen. My wife Ann and I wondered whether this censorship actually had the desired effect, and we got our answer during the Olympic Opening Ceremonies. The audience warmly welcomed every national team as it was introduced into the stadium, but the Chinese gave their loudest cheers to the teams from North Korea and Cuba. We wondered how it was possible that nations ruled by tyrants who deprive their citizens not only of freedom but also of economic subsistence could be celebrated. But the explanation, of course, is that the Chinese people do not see media reports of North Korea's population being literally starved to feed the maniacal vision of Kim Jung Il or Castro jailing anyone who dares oppose him. The Chinese people

receive only glowing accounts of conditions in those countries, and their opinions are shaped by the government rather than by free inquiry.

Neither do Chinese citizens enjoy the equivalent of the First Amendment protection of religious freedom we often take for granted in the United States. Ann and I did not bother to check for the location of the nearest Mormon Church—our faith is not on the government’s approved list and it is illegal to practice it. Those who practice religions like Tibetan Buddhism or Falun Gong, which are seen as serious threats to the government, face the very real risks of imprisonment and torture if they defy the ban.

The right to peaceably assemble is absent. Christine Brennan of *USA Today* reported during the Games that she had observed a gathering of Chinese around a store front, watching an Olympic event on a television in the window. The small but enthusiastic crowd was cheering the home team when the police suddenly moved in to disperse them. Any group assembly, even a small, peaceful, and celebratory one, is viewed as a potential threat.

The international media reported that in order to construct the Olympic venues, the government had ejected many thousands of Chinese from their homes. Protests followed, during which the displaced complained that they had received wholly inadequate compensation. But absent a free press, there was no effort to investigate the fairness of the payments or to ensure that those who protested were not subsequently mistreated, and without the equivalent of the Fifth Amendment guarantee of “just compensation,” a fair redress through an independent judiciary was impossible.



China's human rights abuse of dissidents is well documented, but the absence of basic freedoms impacts not only the prominent and the outspoken, but also the lives of ordinary Chinese. As the bleak oppression of Mao's cultural revolution has been largely eliminated, the Chinese have become increasingly prosperous. But personal freedom, as we know it, is still feared by the Communist Party. And I believe neither China nor any other nation can become genuinely great without instituting the human, civil, and legal rights that are fundamental to a free society.

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### *Freedom, Security, And Prosperity*

Without question, freedom for our grandchildren—and for people everywhere—can only be guaranteed by America, a strong America. I believe it's vital for us to express the ideal of freedom and to re-affirm for ourselves, our allies, and our adversaries those ideals we believe our government must protect—freedom, security, and the ability to achieve prosperity, or, in the words of our founders, “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” Experiencing freedom's absence, as I have in Afghanistan and China, renewed my appreciation for it.

In January 1941, at another difficult moment in American history, Franklin Delano Roosevelt affirmed the four fundamental American freedoms: freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. I do not presume he meant his list to be comprehensive. There are other freedoms I would add to my own list of the essential freedoms. One is the right for each of us to pursue a life course of our own choosing, to decide where we want to live, how, what schools and colleges we will attend, what career we will pursue, and how many children we

will have. It is a uniquely Western privilege to be able to make these decisions without governmental interference.

When I was in elementary school, I wanted to be an automobile executive—because that is what my father was. Then, in high school, I considered law enforcement. When I graduated from college, I considered getting an advanced degree in English literature and teaching, but Professor Tate dissuaded me. “Save yourself from the politics of academia!” he strongly advised. Dad insisted that I attend law school, but I countered that business school made more sense. We compromised—I did both. When school was over, I worked in consulting, then in venture capital and private equity; next I led the Salt Lake Organizing Committee in producing and hosting the 2002 Olympic Winter Games, followed by my term as governor of Massachusetts, and most recently my candidacy for president of the United States. That I have been able to take such a journey is a blessing I owe to the values, hard work, and prosperity bestowed on me by my parents, and by my good fortune to have been born in a land of liberty.

This freedom to choose one’s life course is far from common. Ann’s father, Edward Davies, emigrated from Wales in the 1930s. For as far back as anyone could remember, the men of his family had worked in the coal mines. But they moved to America in hopes of creating a far different life for Edward and his brothers and sisters. Once settled in Michigan, the children pooled their earnings to send the sibling to school whom they thought had the best mind for education, and that was Edward. He studied at General Motors Institute of Technology, worked briefly at GM, then

started his own engineering and manufacturing company—employing, of course, his brothers and his sisters and members of their families.

America is unique among nations in that the great majority of our citizens are immigrants or the descendants of immigrants. Virtually all of us are here solely because our forbearers sought the opportunities this country offered. But opportunity did not flow solely from our wealth—Saudi Arabia has wealth, after all. It was also sustained by guaranteed freedoms that allowed individuals to choose the lives they wished to lead. Those immigrants and the freedom they cherished are what have made America a land of opportunity unrivaled in all the world.

A strong America can ensure freedom, and it also preserves our safety and security. When I was in elementary school, we were regularly had “duck and cover” drills, during which we practiced diving under our desks in the event of nuclear attack. And I distinctly remember trying to persuade my father to build a bomb shelter. Those exaggerated fears from my childhood first receded, then disappeared when the Cold War ended. But on September 11, 2001, my past fears became the present reality.

All of us remember where we were when the nation was attacked. I was in our Olympic office in Washington D.C. when Ann called from home. She told me a plane had just flown into the World Trade Center. I turned on an office television and, minutes later, I saw the second attack. Reports followed of a hit in Washington. As colleagues and I evacuated the city, we drove past the Pentagon, now engulfed in black, acrid smoke. Cars had stopped in all but one lane of the freeway, so people could watch the horror. As the smoke poured into the car window, I encountered a

smell I never imagined I would experience in America—the scent of burning steel, concrete and jet fuel—the smell of war and death.

No loss can compare with those suffered by families whose loved ones were murdered that day. Yet we suffered as a nation as well, sinking into a recession that precipitated job losses and financial failures. And there was also a change in perspective. Uncertainty and unpredictability became part of our daily lives. Like millions of other Americans, I could no longer be absolutely sure that my children and grandchildren would be safe. I had worked to provide for my family's future; I believed that it would be bright and fulfilling, that they would live better lives than even Ann and I had enjoyed. But now I wondered whether that would be the case.

The threat has not disappeared. Some people insist that we are safer than we were in the early autumn of 2001. Perhaps. But the avalanche of terrorist attacks around the world, the spreading radicalism among Muslim youth, and the constant expressions of hate and vitriol by Jihadist voices give me cause for continued concern. And they are reminders of just how important it is to keep America strong.

Freedom, safety, and lastly prosperity. Of the three, prosperity may not seem to qualify as an essential duty of government. It is not a right, per se, nor is it the responsibility of government to provide for each citizen's individual prosperity. But we do properly expect our government to establish the conditions that enable our society to be prosperous. There is no question but that American voters regularly expect as much and express themselves in the voting booth. Ronald Reagan skewered Jimmy Carter's re-election hopes by asking, "Are you better off today than you were four years ago?" And as a Republican hoping to succeed a fellow Republican

president, Senator John McCain's prospects in the polls perfectly tracked the Dow Jones Industrial average as the economy collapsed in the fall of 2008.

Prosperity is, of course, an essential source of any nation's strength. A prosperous nation can afford a strong military, which in turn can secure our safety and freedom. In the United States, in fact, all three of these are linked—people must feel safe in order to make the investments that will lead to prosperity. And personal freedom fuels the entrepreneurial drive that enhances prosperity. An ideal government, I believe, should act to strengthen the nation by securing the freedom, safety, and prosperity of its citizens.

There is also a more self-interested reason for us to want our government to facilitate prosperity—we want our families, our neighbors, and our fellow Americans to live as well as possible. We want them to have the best possible education, healthcare, homes, and opportunities to achieve their dreams. Prosperity helps makes these things possible.

When I lived in France in 1966, that nation's per capita GDP was not far below that of the United States. Yet even at relatively similar levels—and far above those for most nations of the world at the time—the differences in everyday life between the two countries were readily apparent. I rented an apartment in Paris at 126 Rue de Chateau—a lower-middle income neighborhood near the Montparnasse train station. My apartment did not have a private bathroom—I shared a standing toilet with the tenants of two other apartments on the same floor. There was no bath or shower in the building—bathing required a weekly visit to a communal bath house. Because very few French homes had a refrigerator at the time, each meal meant a trip to a small

grocery store and bakery. I had a telephone, but long-distance calls required a trip to the PTT—the phone and post office—and a reservation to place the call had to be made much in advance. These inconveniences certainly did not make life unbearable, and some of them, like the need to shop every day, were enjoyable in their own way. But they meant more time, more expense, less convenience, and less choice.

Prosperity does not guarantee happiness—the people I knew in France, for instance, seemed every bit as happy as the folks back home. But prosperity does open the door to favorable opportunities and choices.

If it is valid for a nation to seek prosperity, then the question must be asked: prosperity for whom? We certainly would not measure our national wealth by counting our number of billionaires. The absence of poverty would be one appropriate test, but in a free society, there likely will always be some who are relatively poor. I once heard the story of an American economist who was challenged by a Scandinavian counterpart who bragged that there were no poor in Sweden. The American's retort was this: "There are no poor Swedes in America either." There are indeed poor in America and we cannot be truly prosperous without helping them learn how to escape poverty and without caring for those who cannot care for themselves.

When I consider a nation's prosperity, I look to the wealth of the vast middle of its population, the ninety-five percent or more. There is no economic indicator that reliably measures this sector; perhaps the best we can do is look at GDP per capita, adjusted for purchasing price parity. Today, America is near the top in these world

rankings, but we have recently been passed by Ireland and we have seen our lead shrink relative to a number of other nations.

A great deal of attention is given these days to the income gap between the richest and the rest of society. When European kings of the past lived regally and their subjects barely subsisted, the gap led to uprisings and beheadings. Where vast income gaps exist today, no doubt many harbor similar sentiments. In America, I believe it is most productive for us to focus on the wealth and well being of that middle ninety-five percent rather than to dwell on how well each of us is doing compared to Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, Tiger Woods, or Oprah Winfrey.

There is a growing populist sentiment to adopt “economic justice” as a national objective. I am not sure who would get to name those Americans who unjustly have too much wealth and those who justly deserve more if it. In my view, Bill, Warren, Tiger, and Oprah deserve what they have. And taking from them is not going to make the ninety-five percent of the population in the middle wealthier—in fact, I believe it would ultimately make millions of Americans less well off. But neither do compensation levels in the executive suites of some American companies always make sense to me. They can be far out of proportion to the value created by those executives and highly demotivating to the rest of the enterprise.

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In the pages that follow, I will make the case that personal freedom, prosperity, and security are deeply interconnected. Our national safety is dependent on the relative strength of our military. Our capacity to build a strong military is very dependent on the strength of our economy. And the strength of our economy is

profoundly influenced by our people's deep belief in their freedoms and the lives they can build with them. All three—our safety, economic prosperity, and freedoms—are perilously challenged today. And there are grave lessons for us to learn from the great nations and societies that preceded us and that ultimately failed.

What is ahead of us now is not easy. It will be difficult to deal with our challenges, to maintain America and the West's lead against competition from China, Russia, and the Jihadists. I do not worry about our ability to overcome any problem or threat. But I do wonder whether we will take bold and timely action, and whether we will do so before the correction is massively disruptive.

We have been accustomed to being the world's leading nation for so long, enjoying the freedom, security and prosperity that comes with that leadership for all of our adult lives, that we have tended to avoid the hard work that overcoming challenges requires. When I was about ten, I asked my Dad how he thought his company's Rambler automobile could ever successfully compete with General Motors—they were so far ahead and catching up appeared impossible. He said something that has since been widely attributed to him, "There is nothing as vulnerable as entrenched success." I believe that our many years of success may, in fact, be the greatest obstacle we face. In election after election, candidates have told us that simple measures will solve our challenges, and that their election alone will guarantee a bright future. We have joined in the cheering for this heady prospect, but much more than cheering is going to be required in the years ahead.

It is time for America to pursue the difficult course ahead, to confront the looming problems, to strengthen the foundations of our prosperity, and to secure the



sources of our liberty and safety. The sacrifice and hard work will not sap our national energy; they will restore it. I am one of those who believe America is destined to remain as it been since the birth of the republic—the brightest hope of the world.

## Chapter 2

*Title*

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