



**Calhoun: The NPS Institutional Archive**  
**DSpace Repository**

---

Faculty and Researchers

Faculty and Researchers' Publications

---

2010-01-00

## Resilience: The Grand Strategy

Palin, Philip J.

Monterey, California. Naval Postgraduate School

---

Homeland Security Affairs (January 2010), v.6 no.1  
<http://hdl.handle.net/10945/25057>

---

The copyright of all articles published in Homeland Security Affairs rests with the author[s] of the articles. Any commercial use of Homeland Security Affairs or the articles published herein is expressly prohibited without the written consent of the copyright holder. Anyone can copy, distribute, or reuse these articles as long as the author and original source are properly cited.

*Downloaded from NPS Archive: Calhoun*



Calhoun is the Naval Postgraduate School's public access digital repository for research materials and institutional publications created by the NPS community. Calhoun is named for Professor of Mathematics Guy K. Calhoun, NPS's first appointed -- and published -- scholarly author.

**Dudley Knox Library / Naval Postgraduate School**  
**411 Dyer Road / 1 University Circle**  
**Monterey, California USA 93943**

<http://www.nps.edu/library>

# Resilience: The Grand Strategy

Philip J. Palin

Homeland security does not have a Grand Strategy. There have been national strategies. There are a plethora of operational strategies. In *The Edge of Disaster*, Steve Flynn recommends resiliency as an over-arching goal.<sup>1</sup> Many have murmured agreement and the word is increasingly common in speeches and other pronouncements. But as an official with responsibility for resilience recently asked in private, “What does it mean?”

The military historian and theorist B.H. Liddell Hart argued, “While the horizon of strategy is bounded by the war, grand strategy looks beyond the war to the subsequent peace.”<sup>2</sup> The grand strategy of the United States during the Cold War was captured in a single word: *containment*. The meaning of containment prompted considerable contentiousness, even while the insight the term provided is widely credited with strategic success.

There is no serious dispute that George Kennan’s 1946 *Long Telegram* is the origin of containment as the touch-stone of our Cold War strategy. Recently, I authored a *Long Blog*<sup>3</sup> trying to make strategic sense of resilience. Kennan eventually reworked his original, which *Foreign Affairs* published as “Sources of Soviet Conduct.”<sup>4</sup> I appreciate the invitation from *Homeland Security Affairs* to offer a similar reworking of the *Long Blog*.

In his *Long Telegram*,<sup>5</sup> George Kennan outlines five related understandings. He observes reality, gives context to his observations, projects these findings on official policy, acknowledges the role of unofficial policy, and offers practical deductions... or what I would call strategy. I will follow the same organizational schema:

- (1) *Basic features of ~~post-war Soviet outlook~~ risks to the United States;*
- (2) *Background of this ~~outlook~~ perspective on risk;*
- (3) *Its projection in practical policy on official level;*
- (4) *Its projection on unofficial level;*
- (5) *Practical deductions from standpoint of U.S. policy.*

Kennan urges readers to recognize a Soviet take on reality. Kennan’s argument aims to engage, manage, manipulate — choose your verb — the orientation of our adversary. Sixty-plus years later, the most serious risks facing the United States are where a range of threats, some traditional and some novel, interact with several vulnerabilities Kennan did not face. Where Kennan focuses intently on the Soviet threat, our threats are more numerous and nuanced. The recent *National Intelligence Strategy* (NIS) is helpful in

scanning the horizon.<sup>6</sup> Can we derive the same sort of logical policy premises that Kennan found?

## **PART ONE: Basic Features of the Principal Risks to the United States**

The principal risks are as follows:

- a) According to the NIS there are four nation-states that present a “challenge to U.S. interests.” These are Iran, North Korea, China, and Russia. None present the near-peer level of competition offered by the Soviet Union immediately after WWII. Individually or in concert these competitors can constrain the U.S. But even in unlikely combination these nation-states do not present the clear-and-present danger the Stalinist superpower seemed to threaten. (This shift, more a matter of human will than fewer warheads, also demonstrates the importance of keeping the nuclear genie contained.)
- b) Violent extremist groups, insurgents, and transnational criminal organizations “increasingly impact our national security” according to the NIS. But the capacity of these groups to threaten the U.S. with catastrophic harm is modest. We should not discount the potential terrorist or even criminal use of WMD.<sup>7</sup> But a reasonable and sustained application of the precautionary principle should suffice to manage this risk (see Cass Sunstein).<sup>8</sup> A debate regarding the specific meaning of reasonable and sustained could be entirely worthwhile.
- c) The global economic crisis has been identified by Dennis Blair, director of national intelligence, as the “primary near-term security concern” for the United States.<sup>9</sup> The dependence of the United States on foreign holders of debt (especially China), efforts to replace the dollar as the principal international reserve currency, the prospect of U.S. hyper-inflation, and a growing sense of financial limitation all increase the nation’s strategic vulnerability.
- d) Failed states and ungoverned spaces nurture possibilities available to violent extremists, insurgents, and transnational criminal organizations, according to the NIS. Unconnectedness, *ala* Thomas P.M. Barnett, breeds all sorts of ugliness.<sup>10</sup>
- e) Climate change<sup>11</sup> and energy competition will present new *casus belli* and heart-wrenching humanitarian crises. The NIS treats the two as one significant source of instability.
- f) “Rapid technological change and dissemination of information continue to alter social, economic, and political forces, providing new means for our adversaries and competitors to challenge us” is how the NIS describes the threat. The report goes on

to note, “While also providing the United States with new opportunities to preserve or gain competitive advantage.”

- g) Pandemic disease is listed by the NIS as “a persistent challenge to global health, commerce, and economic well-being.”

Kennan also listed his “basic features” as running from (a) to (g). From seven basic features Kennan derived – or at least argued – four fundamental deductions. Kennan’s deductions de-mystify the strategic perspective of the Soviet leadership. It is a reality warped by ideology. But precisely because Soviet perception is so ideologically blinkered, it is predictable. Kennan argued the U.S. could best advance its interests when it acted with this predictable worldview as a principal target.

Kennan could focus on threat analysis. Today the NIS outlines a much more complicated mix of threats and vulnerabilities. By any measure the U.S. is much stronger than it was in 1946. But we are also more vulnerable. Insight regarding external threat is no longer sufficient. We also require a self-awareness of vulnerability. (*Threat x Vulnerability*) x *Consequences* = *Risk*.

If the assessment of our context provided above – and by the *National Intelligence Strategy* – is reasonably accurate, the other-awareness advocated by Kennan is no longer sufficient. Many threats confronting the United States today are beyond the scope of accurate analysis or, even, consensus judgment. The unpredictability of the H1N1 pandemic is good evidence. The potential implications of climate change, resource shortages, and the range of weapons and targets available to our adversaries challenge the imagination and arguably exceed our analytical capacity.

A colleague who served for many years in the intelligence community has critiqued the *National Intelligence Strategy* as fatally flawed because it is so far-reaching. In his view it is undisciplined in target-selection and thereby condemns the intelligence community to almost certain failure. Limited assets will be stretched too thin. His operational concern is undeniable. Yet I perceive the greater flaw is too narrowly defining threats as externalities. In 1946 the Soviet threat was clearly *primus inter pares*. In 2009 choosing among threats can seem a game of musical chairs. A deep knowledge of *an* other is helpful, but no longer sufficient. Other-awareness must be complemented with self-awareness. Risk emerges from threat *and* vulnerability. Threats are often beyond our reach, vulnerabilities are usually self-generated. We require a deep understanding of our self.

Kennan found four action principles flowing reasonably from his seven perceptual premises. For a Soviet leader who has confidence in his perception of reality, the prescriptions for action are self-evident. Kennan encourages his Foggy Bottom masters to recognize the internal logic of the adversary’s worldview. Broadly accepting the worldview set out by the *National Intelligence Strategy*, I propose four action principles:

**1. The United States is, by far, the most powerful single player on the planet.** More than most, we are masters of our own fate. We have the resources, systems, and culture to actively participate in shaping the future. Yet some perceive the best days are behind us. Certainly many would say 1946 was golden compared to our reduced current condition. That could be a self-fulfilling prophecy, but here are three reassuring factoids:

GDP compared to principal putative adversary:

1950: U.S.: \$1.45 trillion v. Soviet Union: \$510 billion (1991 dollars)<sup>12</sup>

2007: U.S.: \$14.2 trillion v. China: \$4.4 trillion<sup>13</sup>

U.S. federal deficit as a percentage of GDP:<sup>14</sup>

1946: 121.7 percent

2009: 66.2 percent (projected)

U.S. median household income (constant 2007 dollars):<sup>15</sup>

1947: \$25,260

2007: \$46,207

**2. Despite our great power, the United States confronts a strategic context with even greater potential for instability than 1946.** Today there are many more nodes of significant influence than in the immediate post-war period. The interactions — social, intellectual, economic, and political — between the various nodes constitute a rich web much greater than that of 1946. The spread of H1N1 was much faster than any prior pandemic<sup>16</sup> and going viral is no longer limited to viruses. The pace of change has accelerated. We have much more virtual proximity to — and real dependence on — decisions and actions occurring well outside the direct influence of the United States.

**3. As a result, the contemporary strategic context is much less predictable than 1946.** Kennan's fundamental thesis was that the ideological rigidity of the Soviet regime made it predictable and therefore manageable. There is evidence he was right and during the Cold War U.S. policymakers and strategists often (not always) were guided by this insight. But the range and type of challenges facing the U.S. today are not anywhere as predictable. Rather than a "simple" bi-polar (pun intended) world, we are surrounded by random outbreaks of mass neuroses and peculiar psychoses.

**4. With limited predictability regarding our threats, national policy and strategy should aim to optimize our adaptability to a range of risks.**

In setting out his four deductions Kennan is more concise — perhaps purposefully provocative — than the preceding. But then in Part 2 of the *Long Telegram* he analyzes "certain aspects" of what he has confidently exposed. He posits: "At bottom of Kremlin's

neurotic view of world affairs is traditional and instinctive Russian sense of insecurity.” (Telegraphing, like twittering, tended to dispense with articles.)

## **PART TWO: Background of this Perspective on Risk**

Kennan argues that understanding the sources and symptoms of Soviet neurosis will allow U.S. decision-makers to avoid unnecessarily provoking our adversary and potentially take advantage of the Kremlin’s neurosis. An effective strategy engages perceived reality, even if the reality that matters is neurotic.

Modern psychology has moved away from a mid-twentieth century notion of neurosis. When Kennan wrote, neurosis was understood as an unresolved conflict between unconscious motivations and explicit purpose. One psychologist explains, “Neurosis means poor ability to adapt to one’s environment, an inability to change one’s life patterns, and the inability to develop a richer, more complex, more satisfying personality.”<sup>17</sup>

The environment in which the United States finds itself has changed dramatically since 1946. Since, at least, the mid-1970s the speed of change has been rapid and the direction erratic. We have not adapted gracefully to the change. We resist changing our national life patterns. Similar to the Soviet leadership, so helpfully analyzed by Kennan, we are increasingly neurotic in our effort to justify inconsistencies between our self-image and experience.

The strategic context emerging from this period of rapid change has not, by-and-large, been friendly to the attitudes and habits Americans developed immediately after World War II. We have become more and more dependent on increasingly expensive foreign sources of energy. Other nations, and alliances of nations, have emerged as competent competitors. Our comparative advantage in a wide array of fields has narrowed or we find ourselves at a disadvantage. An industrial economy has been succeeded by a consumer economy with its own precarious tendencies. Our financial indebtedness, both foreign and domestic, has increased dramatically. Our unequalled military prowess has been unable to forestall the first successful foreign attack on the continental U.S. since the War of 1812. Even the “defeat” of our Soviet enemy has not seemed to produce a practical return. We are undoubtedly the most powerful nation on the planet. But it sure doesn’t feel like it.

In *Man and His Symbols*, Carl Gustav Jung offers,

In order to sustain his creed, contemporary man pays the price in a remarkable lack of introspection. He is blind to the fact that, with all his rationality and efficiency, he is possessed by “powers” that are beyond his control. His gods and demons have not disappeared at all; they have merely got new names. They keep him on the run with

restlessness, vague apprehensions, psychological complications, an insatiable need for pills, alcohol, tobacco, food – and, above all, a large array of neuroses...

Mankind is now threatened by self-created and deadly dangers that are growing beyond our control. Our world is, so to speak, dissociated like a neurotic... Western man, becoming aware of the aggressive will to power of the East, sees himself forced to take extraordinary measures of defense, at the same time as he prides himself on his virtue and good intentions.<sup>18</sup>

Jung does not – and certainly I do not – suggest resolving the neurosis by denying our good intentions or presumption to virtue. But neither will any resolution come from a willful denial of our struggle to square what we believe with what we have done or perceive we must do.

We have in the Department of Homeland Security and its various concerns a totem giving form to a wide range of unresolved conflicts: liberty v. security, insider v. outsider, privacy v. transparency, individual v. community, local v. national, good v. evil... the list of dichotomies could continue. Never before has a single government agency served as a repository for so many potential neuroses. It's predisposition to neurosis is especially strong because of its domestic – we could say, self-absorbed – focus.

Nearly a century has passed since Sigmund Freud wrote an essay (later to become *Totem and Taboo*) entitled “On Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics.”<sup>19</sup> In this he offers that totemism is an elaborate, ritualized effort to resolve the deep ambivalence that exists in most fearing what we most love. In creating the totem we attempt to externalize and objectify the ambivalence that is the source of our neurosis. But without great care, the totem can merely institutionalize both ambivalence and neurosis. Something more is required to resolve the tension. Is this why St. Elizabeth's has been selected for the new DHS headquarters?<sup>20</sup>

Kennan's key to defending the United States is to recognize and, when appropriate, exploit Soviet neuroses. To defend the United States and advance our interests in the twenty-first century we must attend effectively to our own neuroses.

President Bush famously asked of the 9/11 terrorists, “Why do they hate us?”<sup>21</sup> He answered the question, “They hate our freedoms: our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other.” The terrorists hate us for our virtues. While the values argument put forth by Mr. Bush should not be dismissed, Osama bin-Laden offers a considerably different rationale.

It should not be hidden from you that the people of Islam had suffered from aggression, iniquity and injustice imposed on them by the Zionist-Crusaders alliance and their collaborators; to the extent that the Muslims' blood became cheap and their wealth became as loot in the hands of the enemies. Their blood was spilled in Palestine and Iraq. The horrifying pictures of the massacre of Qana, in Lebanon, are still fresh in our memory. Massacres in Tajikistan, Burma, Kashmir, Assam, the

Philippines, Fatani, Ogadin, Somalia, Eritria, Chechnya and in Bosnia and Herzegovina took place, massacres that send shivers through the body and shake the conscience. All of this the world watched and heard, yet not only didn't respond to these atrocities, but also, with a clear conspiracy between the USA and its allies and under the cover of the iniquitous United Nations, the dispossessed people were even prevented from obtaining arms to defend themselves.<sup>22</sup>

These massacres are unfamiliar to most Americans. U.S. culpability for these horrific events will strike most as absurd. Yet Osama bin-Laden is not alone in finding Americans complicit in the unjust suffering of Muslim millions. According to recent surveys, most Pakistanis readily agree.<sup>23</sup>

Even in seeking to do good, we can cause suffering. In his assessment of our situation in Afghanistan, Gen. Stanley McChrystal explains:

Preoccupied with protection of our own forces, we have operated in a manner that distances us — physically and psychologically — from the people we seek to protect. In addition, we run the risk of strategic defeat by pursuing tactical wins that cause civilian casualties or unnecessary collateral damage. The insurgents cannot defeat us militarily; but we can defeat ourselves.<sup>24</sup>

A United Nations report found that in the first six months of 2009, three hundred Afghan civilian casualties — roughly 30 percent of the total — were caused by coalition forces.<sup>25</sup> During the same period the U.S./NATO coalition suffered nearly the same number of fatalities.<sup>26</sup> In a September interview with *60 Minutes* Gen. McChrystal said, “Since I’ve been here the last two and a half months, this civilian casualty issue is much more important than I even realized. It is literally how we lose the war or in many ways how we win it.”

In pursuing peace we have killed the innocent. In defending freedom we have imprisoned — and worse — those who have done us no harm. We have betrayed what we love in an effort to protect what we love. Yet it would be a serious error to see this as merely hypocritical or cynical. During the eight years of our current war there have, no doubt, been instances of hypocrisy and cynicism. But it is crucial to acknowledge these seeming contradictions as the *inevitably* tragic consequence of exercising power. Purity of purpose is hard enough. Purity of practice is beyond our capacity. As Reinhold Niebuhr observes,

The tragic element in the human situation is constituted of conscious choices of evil for the sake of good. If men or nations do evil in a good cause, they cover themselves with guilt in order to fulfill some high responsibility; or if they sacrifice some high value for the sake of a higher or equal one, they make a tragic choice.<sup>27</sup>

The powerful cannot avoid tragedy. It is innate to the nature of power. As our national power has multiplied, so has our tragic potential. But the American psyche struggles to



deny this reality. We point to innocent intention. We seek individual scapegoats — Lyncie England or Dick Cheney — for our collective guilt. We propagate neuroses to obscure our role in tragedy.

Our effort to escape tragedy is more threatening to our integrity of purpose — and essential innocence — than any tragic choice we undertake. In refusing to embrace the tragic, we invite a much more insidious condition. Niebuhr continues,

If virtue becomes vice through some hidden fault of virtue; if strength becomes weakness because of the vanity to which strength may prompt the mighty man or nation; if security is transmuted into insecurity because too much reliance is placed upon it; if wisdom becomes folly because it does not know its own limits — in all such cases the situation is ironic... It is differentiated from tragedy because by the fact that the responsibility is related to an unconscious weakness rather than to a conscious resolution. <sup>28</sup>

The United States ought not deny the paradox inherent to power. It is self-deluding to indulge our neuroses in seeking to avoid the tragic. In *Lear* the plot is set when the old King is unwilling to accept Cordelia's honest, if paradoxical, expression of love. From Lear's vanity and denial unfolds catastrophe. (Ponder sea coast construction in hurricane country, urban wildfire, flood plain development, and much more.)

There is plenty of death and disaster in *Oedipus the King*, but Sophocles' masterpiece conforms closer to my own hope for the United States. By most measures Oedipus lives a happy and productive life. The trouble he causes is as unintentional as it is inevitable. And in contrast to *Lear*, the trouble caused by Oedipus emerges from nobility, not vanity. At the close of *Oedipus at Colonus* the Theban king might even be said to transcend the tragic; but only after fully embracing his tragic condition.

### **PART THREE: Its Projection in Practical Policy on Official Level**

In the third element of his five-part *Long Telegram*, Kennan shows how Kremlin neuroses can be used to predict official Soviet policies. I want to remove or reduce the influence of U.S. neuroses on homeland security policy and strategy.

I have prescribed embracing the tragic. How would this untie the knots of our own neuroses? Four preliminary deductions have been offered:

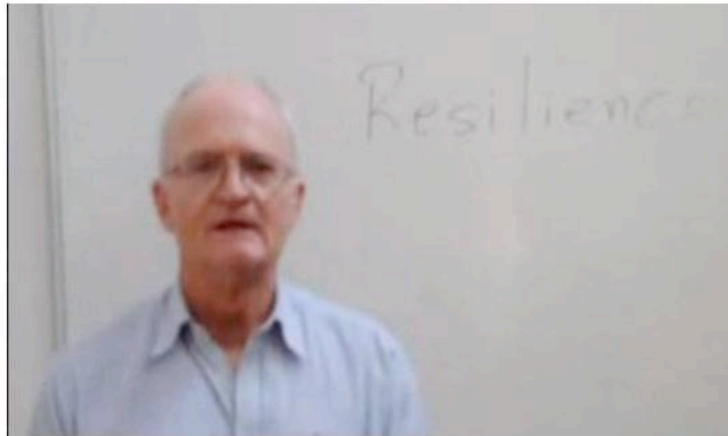
1. The United States is, by far, the most powerful single player on the planet.
2. The United States confronts a strategic context even more unstable than 1946.
3. As a result, the contemporary strategic context is much less predictable than in 1946.
4. With limited predictability regarding our threats, national policy and strategy should aim to optimize our adaptability to a range of risks. In other words, we should adopt a strategy of resilience.

If this strategic analysis is broadly accurate, it describes a situation many will find frustrating. In most cases, this frustration emerges from being unable to sufficiently influence — and certainly not control — our strategic context. Desire for control is closely linked to neurosis. In itself the pursuit of control creates the potential for cognitive dissonance. How does this jibe with our proclaimed national commitment to liberty? But without more control, how can we guarantee safety?

In embracing the tragic we acknowledge very little can be guaranteed. No complex system can be fully controlled. Can goals be cultivated? Certainly. Encouraged? Absolutely. Influenced? Yes. Guaranteed? No — even the effort will amplify tragic consequence. The exercise of power — even when animated by noble purpose — will have surprising and, quite often, ignoble outcomes. Embracing the tragic gives us this foreknowledge. This foreknowledge need not constrain our exercise of power, but it will inform our expectations. It may also inform *how* power is exercised.

Recognizing tragic potential, we accept the probability of surprise and the possibility of failure. In any community — with formal democratic traditions or not — this recognition encourages shared decision making. Key participants may try (and succeed) to manipulate the process, but even at worst the illusion of participation, collaboration, and shared deliberation will be fostered.

Historically, tentative and limited participation in decision-making has often been extended, either through increments or revolution. Societies, cultures, and institutions that foster participation and collaboration in decision-making seem to have a long-term comparative advantage. There is a growing body of evidence that this comparative advantage emerges from how participative networks increase the feedback available to the system, thereby enhancing the ability of the system to maintain rough equilibrium. This is a key aspect of resilience.



Brian Walker, a leading Australian ecologist and board member of Stockholm Resilience Centre, offers a seven-minute explanation of resilience. Please click on image or access <http://www.stockholmresilience.org/newsandmedia/generalnews/centrepresentsstockholmwhiteboardseminars.5.3fb1a3bd1206210367480003006.html>

Systems that maximize feedback spawn learning. This builds knowledge, which can extend the boundaries within which the system maintains its equilibrium. This is not, mostly, a matter of formal learning, but rather the sort of learning by which complex systems adapt to their environment. The results can be chaotic, both figuratively and literally, but the outcome is enhanced resilience.

## Defining Resilience in Action

Consider this working definition of resilience: “(1) the ability of a system to absorb or buffer disturbances and still maintain its core attributes; (2) the ability of the system to self-organize, and (3) the capacity for learning and adaptation in the context of change.”<sup>29</sup> A sense of the tragic tells us (and resilience directs our attention to) “systems experience changes that are unknowable and discontinuous, and involve sudden and dramatic flips.”<sup>30</sup>

The last two quotes are from *Governance and the Commons in a Multi-level World* by Derek Armitage. This is one of hundreds of digital papers available from the International Association for the Study of the Commons. Resilience is a principal concern of this movement, closely related to Elinor Ostrom, the recent Nobel Laureate in Economics.

Ostrom, Armitage, and others are carefully provisional in their conclusions. But several common attributes of the most resilient systems seem to be emerging. Drawing heavily on the Armitage paper, but with edits reflecting my own perspective, these attributes include:

- **Broad based participation, collaboration, and deliberation;**
- **Multilayered and polycentric** organizational structures;
- **Networked** organizational structures with **mutual accountability** built into how the network functions;
- Content-rich and meaningful **interaction** regularly occurring across the network; and
- Facilitative and/or catalytic **leadership** (in sharp contrast with authoritative or control-oriented leadership).
- All the preceding attributes and their activities **produce knowledge** of both the system and its environment.
- All the preceding attributes contribute to **individual and system-wide learning**, which is the application of knowledge to maintaining and/or *potentially extending* the boundaries within which the system maintains its equilibrium.

These are fundamental components of any effective resilience strategy. Only when most of these attributes are reflected in strategy, operations, and tactics will our homeland security effort generate a long-term comparative advantage. (I have purposefully left out one other generally recognized common attribute: trust. This will be dealt with later.) When our attitudes or actions are contrary to these attributes, we contribute to our disadvantage. When our attitudes and actions are consistent with these attributes we enhance the resilience of whole system.

The less a system is characterized by these attributes, the more neurotic it will be; in other words the more dissociated from reality. Kennan recognized the deep neurosis of the Soviet Union's centralizing, controlling, and excluding tendencies. He predicted its collapse.

A bit more than a year after sending the *Long Telegram*, George Kennan reworked his analysis of Soviet neuroses and published "Sources of Soviet Conduct" as an unsigned piece in *Foreign Affairs* magazine. This revised and expanded text included a top contender for the most important single sentence of any strategy document of the Cold War:

In these circumstances it is clear that the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies.<sup>31</sup>

I have been trying to argue that in our current circumstances it is clear that the main element of any United States policy toward the risks we face must be that of long-term, patient but firm and vigilant extension of the boundaries within which we can achieve a kind of equilibrium. If this sounds odd, listen again to Brian Walker's seven-minute explanation of resilience.

This strategy is fully cognizant of our limitations, which I argue can best be approached by embracing the tragic. This is also a strategy that recognizes the potential of complex adaptive systems to preserve core identity in the midst of profound flux. While depending on your mastery of the previous literary analysis and the insights drawn from the study of the commons and complexity, I will take the risk of translating these arcane analogies into a direct – if very wonkish – statement of homeland security strategy.

## **A STRATEGY OF RESILIENCE** (With an Operational Example)

The United States faces a range of natural, accidental, and intentional threats that cannot always be accurately predicted; as a result these threats cannot always be prevented.

Accordingly, the homeland security strategy of the United States seeks to maximize individual, local, regional, and national capacity to:

1. Absorb or buffer disaster while preserving and, if possible, advancing physical, psychological, social, economic, and constitutional integrity.
2. Effectively observe and adapt to change while preserving or advancing physical, psychological, social, economic and constitutional integrity.

3. Learn and increase capacity to adapt to changes experienced at the local, regional, and national level and across social and economic sectors.

The Secretary of Homeland Security, in cooperation with the President and other departments and agencies, shall undertake to:

**Support and facilitate community-based Risk and Resilience Assessments.**

These Risk and Resilience Assessments shall be undertaken on a voluntary basis. The Department of Homeland Security shall provide conferences, training, and expert facilitators to assist in completion of the Risk and Resilience Assessments. Completed Risk and Resilience Assessments shall qualify to compete for up to \$1 billion in federal grants.

**Every level of government, major agencies of government, private sector organizations, and neighborhoods shall be encouraged to undertake Risk and Resilience Assessment.** The Department of Homeland Security shall contract with well-established voluntary, not-for-profit organizations to serve as legal liaison and grant administrators for informal organizations or other parties (e.g., a neighborhood) wishing to participate in the Risk and Resilience Assessment process but not having status to receive federal funding.

The Risk and Resilience Assessment process shall include local, regional, statewide, multi-state, and national workshops, conferences, and related digital resources to encourage **participation, collaboration, deliberation, and interaction** among those undertaking Risk and Resilience Assessments.

The Citizen Corps program of the Department of Homeland Security shall be funded and organized to **provide facilitation** and expertise in the Risk and Resilience Assessment process.

The Risk and Resilience Assessment process, as outlined above, shall be monitored by a team of expert observers/evaluators who will rapidly share lessons learned. A web-based, peer-to-peer network will also serve as a **dynamic and growing knowledge base** for the Risk and Resilience Assessment Process.

The Department of Homeland Security, the Center for Homeland Defense and Security at the Naval Postgraduate School, and the National Academy of Sciences shall cooperate in establishing the National Institute for Risk and Resilience to develop, conduct and encourage others to develop and conduct professional development, educational, and other **learning** programs related to Risk and Resilience.

All parties completing Risk and Resilience Assessments shall be eligible to compete for a total pool of \$1 billion per year in federal grants to address the findings of the Risk and Resilience Assessments. Every three months \$250 million shall be awarded in the following tranches:

- Up to five grants of \$5 million each,

- Up to 25 grants of \$1 million each,
- Up to 50 grants of \$500,000 each,
- Up to 100 grants of \$250,000 each,
- Up to 200 grants of \$125,000 each,
- Up to 1,000 grants of \$40,000 each,
- Up to 2,000 grants of \$20,000 each, and
- Up to 4,500 grants of \$10,000 each.

Recipients shall be chosen by majority vote of 500 electors drawn from nominations submitted by the governors of the states and territories of the United States and apportioned by population. After one year of service, 125 electors shall retire every three months and be replaced by a new class. (So that, of the inaugural class, 125 shall serve one year and nine months.) In this manner, beginning in the second year of operations, the electoral body will receive new members each quarter.

The foregoing is less a proposal than a framing, and is offered primarily to demonstrate how the strategic principles set out might be practically implemented. There are real ways to encourage broad-based participation, collaboration and deliberation. It is possible, even for a large bureaucracy, to offer facilitative leadership and eschew authoritarian tendencies. It is possible to encourage local creativity and accountability. It might even be possible to encourage communities and the system to embrace tragic potential.

I don't expect the Department of Homeland Security, much less the entire homeland security establishment, to suddenly adopt a strategy of resilience. But the example is a doable, potentially powerful means of seeding resilience thinking and behavior. It would probably cost \$1.3 billion per year. But please give more attention to how the attributes of resilience are being seeded. The seeds of the first season should multiply in subsequent seasons. With care – and some fortuitous emergence – we might even be creating a new commons, a widely-shared resource for enhanced understanding of risk *and* resilience.

#### **PART FOUR: Its Projection on Unofficial Level**

In the fourth part of his five-part *Long Telegram*, George Kennan addresses how Soviet neuroses play out in unofficial behavior. I have set out how the U.S. could reduce its neurotic stance on homeland security through official policy and strategy. But the effectiveness of the proposed measures depends on a range of unofficial attitudes and actions. Even if not precisely unofficial, effectiveness depends on serious

engagement with messy, subjective, very human attributes that “official” policy and strategy often seek to exclude.

In considering the example above, I hope readers worried whether sufficiently rigorous standards were established for awarding the proposed federal grants. It would be even more satisfying to be challenged on the competence of the 500 electors to assess the grant requests. (The number is based on the jury that convicted Socrates to death, a rhetorical gift to skeptics.)

These concerns reflect our current official norms. These norms emerged from a salutary process, now more than a century old, to reduce the corrupt influence of personal preference and increase the role of expertise in making official decisions. I perceive these norms and their related processes have reached a stage of rococo decrepitude. Official norms now discourage community-based participation, collaboration, and deliberation. Our official norms now stand in the way of the kind of communication and other behaviors that create resiliency.

Armitage *et al.* have identified key attributes of resilient communities. My previous listing did not include the potentially most important — and admittedly mysterious — attribute: *Trust*. In studying the commons, and in distinguishing between common resources that are over-harvested and those sustainably harvested, trust has been identified as an essential attribute of successful self-organization. In the literature trust is sometimes characterized as requiring two elements: a shared set of preferences and expectations of future interactions.

This notion of trust makes enormous sense to a small town boy. I work best with those who broadly share similar goals and with whom I expect to continue working. I work best with my friends. But our official norms — well beyond homeland security — have become so neurotic that friendship is actively discouraged. No wonder so many feel dissociated from our political culture, the process of governance, and — at worst — from reality itself.

In a paper written last year, Elinor Ostrom explores the foundations of trust. In the monograph, *Building Trust to Solve Common Dilemmas: Taking Small Steps to Test an Evolving Theory of Collective Action*, the Nobel-winning political economist sets out that the following variables seem to be highly correlated with trust and cooperation:

- Information about past actions is made available;
- Repeated interactions occur with the same set of participants;
- Participants can signal one another by sending pre-structured information;
- Prescriptions are adopted and enforced that when followed do lead to higher outcomes;
- Participants are able to engage in full communication (via writing or “chat room” without knowing the identity of the others involved);

- Participants are able to engage in full communication with known others (via face-to-face discussions or other mechanisms);
- In addition to communication, participants can sanction (or reward) each other for the past actions they have taken; and
- Participants can design their own rules related to levels of cooperation and sanctions that are to be assigned to those who do not follow agreed-upon rules.<sup>32</sup>

Dr. Ostrom also reports that three variables seem to be highly correlated with lack of cooperation and the absence of trust:

- One-shot interactions;
- Full anonymity – current actions taken by an individual cannot be attributed to that individual by anyone else; and
- No information is available to one participant about the others involved.

Which set of variables more accurately represents your typical interaction with the Department of Homeland Security or other expressions of government? Perhaps we have the first clues for diagnosing the sources of our political discontent. Have our current norms and processes succeeded in excluding official corruption and cronyism? No, they have not. But in a tragedy-inviting effort to control the bad, we have undermined the good. We have discouraged broad-based participation, collaboration, and deliberation. We have discouraged effective communication. We have become suspicious of friendship.

Our neurosis erupts in surprising ways and places. But we can resolve the neurosis with self-awareness, embracing the tragic, and self-consciously adopting the attitudes and behaviors most conducive to resilience.

## **PART FIVE: Practical Deductions from Standpoint of U.S. Policy**

From the closing paragraphs of the *Long Telegram*:

(3) Much depends on health and vigor of our own society. World communism is like malignant parasite which feeds only on diseased tissue. This is point at which domestic and foreign policies meets Every courageous and incisive measure to solve internal problems of our own society, to improve self-confidence, discipline, morale and community spirit of our own people, is a diplomatic victory over Moscow worth a thousand diplomatic notes and joint communiqués. If we cannot abandon fatalism and indifference in face of deficiencies of our own society, Moscow will profit—Moscow cannot help profiting by them in its foreign policies...

(5) Finally we must have courage and self-confidence to cling to our own methods and conceptions of human society. After Al [*sic*], the greatest danger



that can befall us in coping with this problem of Soviet communism is that we shall allow ourselves to become like those with whom we are coping.

KENNAN

800.00B International Red Day/2 - 2546: Airgram

Fundamental to Kennan's foreign policy is an effective — we might even say, resilient — domestic policy. The stronger and more differentiated our internal condition, the less opportunity we give any external threat. As his later writings confirm — and is inferred by the final paragraph above — Kennan is not much concerned with the strength of domestic security. Rather, the social, political, and economic vitality of the nation is our best defense (and offense, too). The more we solve domestic “deficiencies” the stronger our international position.

Much of our thinking and talking about homeland security is homeostatic. We focus on prevention and protection. We talk about recovery. We seem to seek to minimize change. It sounds like we are aiming to preserve the status quo. But this language obscures — and may actually complicate — achievement of our real goal, which is much more about adaptability, optimization, and growth. We want to solve our deficiencies.

A complex system self-organizes around a point of equilibrium. This is good; we usually don't want the system to lose its core characteristics. But do we really want to always return to the same or very similar point? (The Greek *homoios* = *similar* is the origin of homeo in homeostasis.) This has not been the goal — or historical experience — of the United States. We want the stable sense of being in the same place. But we have also wanted our equilibrium point to move (up) — economically and in regards to justice and freedom. It has been the American tendency to seek a kind of heterostasis, a stability that encompasses a depth and breadth of positive change.

In Brian Walker's seven-minute whiteboard talk, he tells us about the “basin of attraction.” This establishes the boundaries within which any system can self-organize. The narrower and shallower the basin, the more likely turbulence will cause the system to spill over its boundaries and become an entirely different system. Consider a shallow champagne coupe. Just a little turbulence and all is lost.



Better is a champagne flute. The depth of the basin is more suited for containing turbulence. The flute's shape intensifies and directs the internal turbulence — bubbles and fragrance — for our pleasure. Even more conducive to resilience is the depth and breadth of a red wine goblet. The basin generously accommodates the turbulence needed to aerate the wine. The more complicated the vintage, the more vigorous the turbulence, the more satisfying the taste.

Two years ago, at the now traditional World Bank riot, a police commander applied a strategy of resilience to a tactical situation. It was toward the end of a long, hot day. A unit of riot police was being held in reserve outside the principal perimeter. The arrival of a television crew attracted an anarchist flash team intending to charge the police.

Just as the anarchists finished the short war-dance that typically precedes a charge, the police commander barked into his radio, "Disperse!" The line of dark visors turned sharply toward their boss. Again he shouted, "Disperse!" And this time he waved his arms and wiggled his fingers as if to say, anywhere, I don't care. The thin blue line dissolved.

The anarchists, all pumped up from their noisy huddle, no longer had a target. They looked around in confusion. Their shoulders slumped. The television crew drove on. The turbulence had been given the space it needed to reach a new, but recognizable, heterostasis.

Gordon Allport, a leading twentieth century psychologist, argued that human beings are able to transcend homeostatic bias. We can actively and creatively embrace tension as a means for change and personal growth. In choosing how to engage our environment — especially in organizing our choices around values and goals — we can change the set-point for social and psychological equilibrium.<sup>33</sup> Humans and our societies are, or can be, heterostatic.

In developing and implementing a strategy of resilience we seek to deepen and widen the boundaries in which turbulence can occur while maintaining the essential function and form of our current system. Has this been — is this now — the goal of the

Department of Homeland Security? Does this resonate with the goals and objectives of the component agencies of the Department of Homeland Security? Is this a major outcome of our homeland security planning, training, exercising, grant-making, and preparedness programs?

With a few possible exceptions, the answer has to be no. If *any* consistent strategy can be discerned it has much more to do with suppressing the likelihood of turbulence and responding to the messy consequences of turbulence, rather than accommodating the possibility (probability) of turbulence. In homeland security we have been much more focused on resisting change than adopting resilience.

A major impediment to an authentic and meaningful adoption of resilience is the genesis-role of terrorism in spawning homeland security. We have fought – are fighting – a war against terrorists. As Liddell Hart explained, there are certain strategies appropriate for winning wars. There are others focused on securing the peace.<sup>34</sup>

Resilience alone is not sufficient to succeed in the present war. We must go beyond resilience to constrain our adversaries, reduce their capabilities, preempt planned attacks, and protect ourselves. But we are unlikely to be entirely successful. The adversary can be foiled a thousand times. Disaster can unfold from a single failure. As President Obama warned in Oslo, “Terrorism has long been a tactic, but modern technology allows a few small men with outsized rage to murder innocents on a horrific scale.”<sup>35</sup>

Resilience is uniquely suited to preserving our strategic advantage in the midst of such failure or in the case of natural and accidental disasters. Whatever the target of turbulence (physical, psychological, economic, political, cultural, or all-encompassing) a strategy of resilience dissipates the impact.

Resilience opens space for turbulence to swirl. Freedom and diversity extends this space. Resilience is reinforced by participation, collaboration, and shared deliberation in a multi-layered democracy and multi-dimensional civil society. Strong networks of family, friends, and neighbors are the building blocks of resilience.

In physics and mathematics the end-state of resilience is restored equilibrium. In our social context resilience is not so much a matter of maintaining equilibrium as creatively accommodating turbulence to achieve heterostatic outcomes. Returning to the working definition of resilience offered above, our strategic goal is to absorb – even to benefit from – disruption, self-organize in response, and learn to adapt effectively to new conditions. For me that is a good summary of the core attributes of the American national character... and our fundamental comparative advantage.

***Philip J. Palin*** is a risk strategist in private practice. He is the principal author of the *Catastrophe Preparation and Prevention series from McGraw-Hill*. Other publications include *Consequence Management (2008)* and *Threat, Vulnerability, Consequence, Risk (2009)*. Mr. Palin chaired the *General Preparedness Working Group of the Obama presidential campaign’s*

*Homeland Security Advisory Council. He is a former college president, foundation executive, and corporate Chief Executive Officer. Mr. Palin can be contacted at [ppalin@nisp.us](mailto:ppalin@nisp.us).*

In adapting “The Long Blog” for the *Homeland Security Affairs Journal*, Mr. Palin expresses his appreciation for the critique and suggestions of several, including: Derek Armitage, Gary Barker, Christopher Bellavita, Arnold Bogis, Mark Chubb, William Cumming, Alis Gumbiner, Patricia Longstaff, and Robert Winslow. Responsibility for the final draft remains entirely with Philip J. Palin.

---

<sup>1</sup> Stephen Flynn, *The Edge of Disaster* (New York: Random House, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> B.H.L. Hart, *Strategy*, 2nd ed. (1954, reprint New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 335-6.

<sup>3</sup> Philip J. Palin, “The Long Blog,” *Homeland Security Watch* (2009), <http://www.hlswatch.com/>.

<sup>4</sup> “X” (George F. Keenan), “Sources of Soviet Conduct,” *Foreign Affairs* 25, no. 4 (July 1947).

<sup>5</sup> George F. Keenan, “The Long Telegram “ (National Security Archives, George Washington University), <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> Dennis Blair, et al, *National Intelligence Strategy* (Washington, DC: Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> Mimi Hall, “Report: White House neglecting bioterrorism,” *USA Today*, October 21, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Cass Sunstein, *Worst Case Scenarios* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>9</sup> Dennis Blair, Testimony before the Senate Committee on Intelligence, February 12, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas P.M. Barnett, *The Pentagon’s New Map* (Berkeley Books, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> Center for Naval Analysis (CAN), *National Security and the Threat of Climate Change* (2007), <http://securityandclimate.cna.org/report/>.

<sup>12</sup> J.P. Smits, P.J. Woltjer and D. Ma, *A Dataset on Comparative Historical National Accounts, ca. 1870-1950: A Time-Series Perspective*, Groningen Growth and Development Centre Research Memorandum GD-107 (Groningen: University of Groningen, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Comparative Gross Domestic Product* (July 2009), [http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/donstat/econm\\_finnc/conjn\\_econm/compr\\_inter/index\\_an.htm](http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/donstat/econm_finnc/conjn_econm/compr_inter/index_an.htm).

<sup>14</sup> Office of Management and the Budget, Historical Tables, *Federal Debt at the End of the Year 1940-2014* (Washington, DC: 2009).

<sup>15</sup> US Census Bureau, Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division, *Historical Income Data* (Washington, DC: 2009).

<sup>16</sup> World Health Organization, *Changes in reporting requirements for pandemic (H1N1) 2009 virus infection* (July 16, 2009), [http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/notes/h1n1\\_surveillance\\_20090710/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/notes/h1n1_surveillance_20090710/en/index.html).

<sup>17</sup> George C. Boree, *A Bio-Social Theory of Neurosis* (2002), <http://webpace.ship.edu/cgboer/genpsyneurosis.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Carl Gustav Jung, *Man and His Symbols* (New York: Random House, 1968), 71.

<sup>19</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Totem und Tabu* (New York: WW Norton, 1989).

<sup>20</sup> St. Elizabeth’s was the long-time Washington, DC psychiatric hospital and “insane asylum.”

- 
- <sup>21</sup> George W. Bush, *Address to a Joint Session of Congress*, CNN.COM, September 21, 2001, <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/>.
- <sup>22</sup> Osama bin Laden, et al, "Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places," *News Hour*, Public Broadcasting System, [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa\\_1996.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1996.html).
- <sup>23</sup> Pew Research Center, Global Attitudes Project, *Pakistani Public Opinion* (August 13, 2009), <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=265>.
- <sup>24</sup> Gen. Stanley McChrystal, *COMISAF's Initial Assessment*, reported in the *Washington Post*, September 21, 2009.
- <sup>25</sup> United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, *Human Rights Unit, Afghanistan: Mid-Year Bulletin on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 2009* (July 31, 2009). <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/09july31-UNAMA-HUMAN-RIGHTS-CIVILIAN-CASUALTIES-Mid-Year-2009-Bulletin.pdf>.
- <sup>26</sup> Alexandra Topping, "Four US soldiers killed, making 2009 deadliest year for NATO in Afghanistan," *Guardian*, August 25, 2009.
- <sup>27</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), xxiii.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, xxiv
- <sup>29</sup> Derek Armitage, "Governance and the commons in a multi-level world," *International Journal of the Commons* 2, no. 1 (January 2008): 7-32.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>31</sup> Keenan, "Sources of Soviet Conduct."
- <sup>32</sup> Elinor Ostrom, *Building Trust to Solve Common Dilemmas: Taking Small Steps to Test an Evolving Theory of Collective Action* (Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, Indiana University; Center for the Study of Institutional Diversity, Arizona State University, 2008), [http://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc/bitstream/handle/10535/4200/Wo8-23\\_Ostrom\\_DLC.pdf?sequence=1](http://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc/bitstream/handle/10535/4200/Wo8-23_Ostrom_DLC.pdf?sequence=1).
- <sup>33</sup> Gordon W. Allport, *Becoming: Basic Considerations for a Psychology of Personality* (Princeton: Yale University Press, 1955).
- <sup>34</sup> Hart, *Strategy*.
- <sup>35</sup> Barack Obama, *Nobel Peace Prize Lecture* (Washington, DC: The White House, December 8, 2009).