Sustainable Development as an Organizing Principle for U.S. Foreign Policy: Opportunities and Enduring Constraints

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AS AN ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE FOR U.S. FOREIGN
POLICY: OPPORTUNITIES AND ENDURING CONSTRAINTS
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Victory in our epic struggle with communism, whose features were infinitely worse -- for individuals
and the environment -- than anything our economic system has produced, should give us confidence,
as well as a sense of obligation, to address the changes now before us.

Vice President Al Gore, 1992

The disintegration of the Soviet Union has dramatically changed the international relations. Specifically,
bipolar international relations have given way to a multipolar world wherein the United States is the only true
superpower as gauged by both economic and military might. The decline of the Soviet Union has removed an
important stabilizing force in international politics and a critical organizing principle for American Foreign
Policy, namely, the containment of international communism. On the other hand, without the Soviet threat
more resources are available to expedite economic growth, to preserve natural environments, and to build
democratic institutions in developing nations. This paper investigates the utility of "sustainable development"
as a organizing principle for American foreign policy given common pool, security dilemma, collective goods
and cognitive obstacles. These structural impediments paint a relatively pessimistic picture regarding the
potential success of Sustainable Development policies and programs. However, the use of cooperative
strategies marginally increases the chances that a Sustainable Development foreign policy will be successful.

INTRODUCTION:

The disintegration of the Soviet Union has dramatically changed the international topography. Bipolar international
relations have given way to a multipolar world wherein the United States is the only true superpower as gauged by
both economic and military might. The decline of the Soviet Union has removed an important stabilizing force in
international politics and a critical organizing principle for American Foreign Policy-- namely, the containment of
international communism. The Soviet Union’s dismantlement has created opportunities for both cooperation and
conflict. It means that increasingly cooperative relations between Russia and the United States have reduced the
threat of nuclear war while intensifying regional political instability among present and former allies and former
client states. Without the Soviet threat more resources are available to restore the nation’s transportation,
communications, and industrial infrastructure, clean up the environment, and to develop technologies that promise
to increase U.S. economic competitiveness while minimizing environmental impacts. Internationally, there should
be additional resources to promote international economic growth, to preserve natural environments, and to build
democratic institutions in developing nations.

Ironically, however, a diminished threat has made it more difficult to forge an integrated, consensus-based foreign
policy. The belief that the United States must remain globally engaged to stop the spread of communism has been,
according to some critics, replaced by a neo-isolationism. According to J. Brian Atwood, Administrator of the
Agency for International Development this isolationism is reflected in Congressional resistance to involvement in
UN peacekeeping activities and for Agency for International Development programs tailored to developing the
economies and political institutions of third world countries. While Congress casts an increasingly critical eye
towards funding for international activities, members of the Clinton Administration argue that they are pursuing an
internationalist strategy that will “serve the long term-interests of the American people.”

The nation will struggle to define its proper international role for some time to come in the absence of a clear national security threat. This paper investigates the utility of "sustainable development" as a potential organizing principle for American foreign policy given the following structural obstacles:

- **Tragedy of the Commons**: This class of problems stems from multiple actors simply following their own self-interest. "Tragedy of the Commons" problems occur in cases where there is a common pool resource (e.g., ground water aquifer, off-shore fishery, etc.) that an actor correctly perceives that if he or she unilaterally acts to conserve the resource, this will only be met by increased exploitation by other actors. Consequently, in order to maximize short term benefits, it is in his or her best interest to consume the resource as quickly as possible with little or no regard to sustainability.

- **Security Dilemma**: Sometimes the rational actions of individual nations to increase security actually decrease security by the unintended responses of opponents. For example, efforts to develop better weapons often stimulate arms races that literally work to lower the security of both sides. The security dilemma transcends weapons development. The unilateral action of nations to protect their natural resources from degradation by outsiders also accentuates environmental or resource problems. For example, actions by a sovereign nation to limit access to a particular resource such as a coastal fishery may actually encourage non-compliance (or even piracy) on the part of other nations who depend on the resource. While noncompliance will ultimately hurt both nations— it may be perceived as the only possible action if the excluded nation depends on the resource. Defensive policies, when unilaterally taken and unilaterally enforced, may actually impair a nation's environmental security and ultimately work against sustainable development.

- **Collective Action**: Many environmental problems persist because of the inherent disincentives for groups to take positive actions that are universally beneficial. Attempts to organize a collective response to an environmental problem are often sidetracked by the inability to exclude others from the benefits (i.e., free rider problem). Clean air is a good example of a collective good such that no one can be excluded from its benefits. Consequently, there is a strong incentive not to engage in collective behavior that would lead to clean air. Each rational actor (an individual or a nation) will correctly perceive that his or her investment will either not be recognized or that others will benefit without incurring any costs. The U.S. is appropriately reluctant to invest significant resources to promote sustainable development because often the cost would often be borne by the U.S., while the benefits (political and economic stability, environmental quality, etc.) would be distributed globally.

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2 There are a number of definitions for Sustainable Development. However, most boil down to the concept of long term economic growth that provides new jobs and opportunities while improving and sustaining the natural environment for future generations.

3 Structural obstacles are best viewed as system wide constraints (conditions) which are so powerful that they determine or channel the behavior of individuals, organizations, and nations.


Cognitive Obstacles: Sustainable development represents an effort to integrate both economic and Common pool problems result from the physical distribution of natural resources while security dilemma problems are a function of the anarchic nature of the international political system. Again, collective goods and cognitive barriers can positive actions on the part of individuals and nations to achieve collectively-beneficial outcomes. environmental objectives and ideas. Consequently, sustainable development faces opposition by “sectarian” interests that frequently subscribe to either the environmental protection or economic development paradigms. Policy paradigms are nothing more than sets of core beliefs that define the actions of governmental and non-governmental policy makers. There are two primary ways cognitive barriers can be overcome: 1) through clear examples that illustrate that it is possible to fashion and implement programs that achieve both environmental protection and economic growth goals, and 2) by external crises (e.g., melting ice caps; a significant increase the global transmission of disease due to global warming effects, etc.) that remove any ambiguity concerning for new policies and programs. Cognitive barriers are structural in the sense that they often define appropriate actions for entire coalitions of interests and even society at large. Cognitive obstacles reinforce the other barriers to sustainability identified directly above. Only through “policy learning” can cognitive barriers be overcome.

This paper defines the scope of the Sustainable Development Paradigm, traces the historical (social, political, and scientific) roots of sustainable development, and evaluates the potential for alternative U.S. foreign policy strategies to secure a sustainable future identified above.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM:

Sustainable Development (SD) is nothing more than a rediscovery of the technological, social, economic, and political optimism that drives American culture. It embodies the notion that all problems are solvable, even apparently intractable ones, given political “weal,” sufficient resources, Yankee ingenuity, and a pioneering spirit. The scope and possibilities of Sustainable Development are boundless as reflected in the following “imagine” statements.

• U.S. industry has shifted from waste management to pollution prevention, efficient resource use, and industrial ecology.

• Developing nations leapfrog from polluting technologies to sustainable technologies in many industrial and service sectors.

• Technological incrementalism has been replaced by technological transformation.

• Significant economic growth is created by capturing the world market for clean technologies.

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8 This term simply means that there is no centralized world government that has the legitimate authority to direct the actions of individual nations.
Individual companies are more competitive by lowering energy and resource needs while reducing or eliminating waste cleanup and disposal costs.

An integrated system of social (democratic), economic (free market), and environmental values reinforce each other both at home and abroad.

Decisions made by the present generation fully take into account impacts on future generations.

U.S. foreign policy recognizes that the future of human civilization depends on our stewardship of the environment and -- just as urgently -- our stewardship of freedom.

At its heart, Sustainable Development is an interesting combination of several core American beliefs: technological and economic optimism, social and political liberalism, and environmental reformism. Together they form a late 20th century version of American idealism which has been around in some form since the days of Alexis de Tocqueville. Some would argue that U.S. foreign policy is currently too cynical and the United States too isolationist for such a doctrine to be taken seriously. However, one does not have to go very far back in American history to see the recurring importance of idealistic thinking in U.S. foreign policy. Woodrow Wilson's belief that international order depended on democracy, collective security, and self-determination is an example from the first part of the 20th century. The effort to stop the spread of communism through the development of democracies worldwide in the post World War II period is another illustration. President Jimmy Carter's pursuit of human rights during the late 1970s also exemplifies the desire on the part of U.S. presidents to remake the world to fit an utopian vision of how the world should work. Consequently, the isolationist impetus of the present could easily give way to American interventionism in the future. The possibility grows more likely if and when environmental protection becomes to be seen as a battle of right against wrong or survival versus environmental holocaust.

HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS:

Sustainable development is the synthesis of three major intellectual threads in American culture. A profound faith in the role of science and technology in supporting quality of life; the gradual synthesis of economic and ecological principles and values that started in the mid-1970s and continues today; and the desire to maintain and even enhance America’s economic and political position within the global community.

Science and Sustainable Development

At the heart of sustainable development rests a core belief that science and technology are the keys to economic, social, and environmental well-being. This concept is a function of the tremendous benefits and unequaled successes the United States has enjoyed from its scientific leadership. Science and technology helped to turn the semi-arid midwest and the arid west into an agricultural cornucopia. Science has lengthened our lifespans by wiping out many childhood diseases, and it is the foundation for the high standard of living many of us enjoy. During the Gulf War, technological supremacy allowed us to fight wars in a fashion that minimized the loss of American soldiers. Given the perceived relationship of science and technology to the American way of life, it is not surprising that proponents of Sustainable Development view continued scientific and technological progress as critical to the successful implementation of this policy paradigm. The one-to-one relationship of science and technology to development is reflected in the following White House statement:

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The scientific infrastructure of the U.S. has been highly successful as an engine of creativity and innovation. It is perhaps the most important reservoir of new ideas that firms worldwide have used to develop new products. A major challenge before us is to turn this flow of new ideas into economic advantage.  

While there are many examples how our technological and scientific adeptness have allowed the U.S. to solve national crises, it is equally important to recognize there have been situations that have not responded well or rapidly to technical or scientific solutions. These include the Vietnam War, AIDS, cancer, poverty, air pollution, and radioactive waste disposal. Despite setbacks, the optimal solution promised by scientific progress remains at the core of American thinking on Sustainable Development.

Synthesis of Economic and Environmental Thinking

It was not too long ago that economics and environmentalism were seen as antithetical to each other, and in many areas of society this belief persists. Business leaders viewed environmental protection as costing jobs and promoting an outflow of capital from the protected area to jurisdictions less encumbered by regulations. Preservationists saw economic development as raping the environment, leading to an inevitable loss of species, natural beauty, and quality of life. This has been a centuries-old conflict as reflected in Henry Thoreau’s statement about a farmer “who would carry the landscape, who would carry his god to, the market, if he could get any thing for it.” On the other side of the conflict we have Vice-President Dan Quayle, complaining about Democrats who “put people first, unless there happens to be a spotted owl or a great garter snake that needs to have priority.”

Intellectually and politically, the cognitive distance between economic development and ecology began to shrink in the mid-1970s when a new generation of environmentalists entered politics. Unlike their predecessors, many of these environmentalists were exposed to university-level economic thinking. Moreover, by the time they entered political life it was obvious that the command and control approaches were sufficient to protect critical species and other natural resources. Both factors led environmentalists to seek market solutions for problems of resource depletion. This movement was particularly notable in the water field, where water markets (and the buying and selling of water rights) were proposed as a viable alternative to the development of wild rivers. The synthesis of economics and environmentalism is now evidenced in the air quality arena which has incorporated the buying and selling of pollution credits. The recent willingness of regulatory agencies to look to broad performance standards to meet environmental objectives rather than specific regulations also represents an attempt to harness the strengths of markets to solve critical public policy problems.

Conflicts between economic development and environmental protection continue as exemplified in recent Congressional battles over the Endangered Species Act in the Northwest (e.g., spotted owl, salmon fisheries) and the promulgation of additional environmental regulations. There is also evidence that environmentalism and economics will gradually merge into a distinct paradigm. Paradoxically, environmentalism and economic development have never been intellectually closer or politically further apart.

16 John F. Munro, California Water Politics: Explaining Policy Change in a Cognitively Polarized Subsystem, pp. 111-112.
Environmentalism as Good Business

The gradual use of economic principles to promote environmental goals during the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s gradually joined with the idea that environmentalism was a potential force for technological development and, by extension, economic growth.

This change is a product of three processes: 1) the need to justify accelerating environmental restoration and waste management costs associated with the cleanup of federal facilities, including Department of Energy and Department of Defense sites; 2) the effort to seek a new mission for the defense complex in the wake of the Cold War and inevitable demands to downsize the weapons complex; and 3) the perceived slippage of the United States as the global technology leader. As the 1980s drew to a close, environmental technology development initiatives were justified by the benefits to our global position that could be realized through our investments in innovative cleanup technologies. Environmental technology development is the “have your cake and eat it to” solution in that it would lower cleanup costs, help to mitigate our balance of trade problems, soften the regional economic effects associated with the downsizing, and enhance global environmental quality.

The synthesis of economic and environmental thinking during the 1970s and 1980s solved a critical problem for intellectuals, policy-makers, and business leaders who saw the need for both economic development and environmental protection in order to improve the human condition. They recognized that neglect of either goal -- development or environmental protection -- could impair the other. Environmental degradation diminishes the capacity of the planet to sustain economic development while securing a livable environment for a human population that could double by the mid-21st century requires economic development, including growth and technological change. The twin aspirations of long-term economic and environmental improvement are blended magically and synthesized within the phrase sustainable development.

ALTERNATIVE FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGIES:

While there is general agreement that sustainable development means both environmental and economic improvement, the translation into actual foreign policy could involve distinctly different courses of action (strategies) for the United States. This section proposes several alternative sustainable development foreign policy scenarios and evaluates the benefits of each in overcoming the structural barriers described above. These approaches are ideal types, and in reality actual foreign policies may be a blending of the three strategies.

Technology-based Strategy

The most politically viable course and probably on its face the simplest one to implement -- because in large measure we are already doing it -- is a Sustainable Development policy that focuses on technology development and transfer. There are a number of benefits to an approach that focuses on environmental technology development. To start with, an export driven-technology oriented strategy would take advantage of a potentially massive international market. The global market for environmental technologies (including the domestic U.S. market) amounted to

As U.S. core industries prepare for the next century, it is clear that sustainable development has been embraced as key a theme. For example, Agenda 2020 -- A Technology Vision and Research Agenda for America's Forest, Wood, and Paper Industry (November 1994), stresses that the U.S. forest, wood, and paper industry in 2020 will be the clear global leader in providing safe and essential products in harmony with the environment and will be a sustainable contributor to our nation's economy and to the quality of life of its citizens. (pg. 11).


nearly $300 billion in 1992 and could easily grow to roughly $425 billion annually by the year 1997. The United States would constitute the largest segment of any expanding market, but countries like Japan and Germany would also represent significant markets for U.S. environmental technology exports. Most of this market is in the industrialized West. However, segments of the developing world, especially countries in East Asia, will present potentially significant markets over the mid to long-term.

A well-managed U.S. environmental technology strategy would not only promote environmental quality, it would also help to reduce trade deficits with our major trading partners through international agreements that support the export of American environmental technologies. A technology-driven Sustainable Development strategy would include increased assistance to U.S. environmental firms, many of which are inexperienced in doing business outside the U.S. Over the long term, foreign aid programs would increasingly focus on development assistance that transferred domestic environmental technologies to developing nations. Market potential would be defined by the generosity of developed nations and by economic development in the third world.

The advantage of a technology-based strategy is that it could be employed in a politically neutral manner. This would allay the fear of less developed nations that sustainability was a pretext for imposing western values on its citizens. Nevertheless, an aggressive export-oriented environmental technology strategy runs the risk of promoting protectionist responses from other industrialized nations that seek domestic environmental technology capabilities. Consequently, what appears to be a non-threatening, value-neutral approach to promoting environmental goals, may in fact trigger “insecurities” on the part of key trading partners.

The primary disadvantage of the technology-based strategy is that most environmental issues are not solely technological in nature. They are also a product of particular political and economic conditions that lead to decisions in which environmental values are not given priority. Consequently, technologies alone cannot solve the underlying conditions that give rise to strategies that are unsustainable over the long term.

“Parachuting in” environmental technologies to underdeveloped nations will also not promote sustainability unless the technologies are accompanied by social and institutional changes. Sequencing technology transfers to the developmental stage of a particular nation is a key prerequisite to self sufficiency and, ultimately, to sustainability. If not, “inter-temporal discontinuities” between developer and the partner nation’s values and interests will undermine the process. Newly developing nations with a limited infrastructure will not be able to absorb environmental (or institutional) technologies of a post-industrial nation like the United States.

Coercion-based Strategy

Many global environmental problems can be attributed to the development practices of third world nations and the exploitation of natural resources by industrialized nations. (e.g., Japanese exploitation of international fisheries). The cutting or burning down of rain forests and the unsustainable exploitation of other natural resources, the application of outdated technologies, the unconstrained pursuit of economic development, and laissez faire approach to population control typify the behaviors of many third and second world nations. One possible foreign policy response would be for the United States to use sanctions to force significant changes in domestic policies towards environmental protection.

For developed nations, the United States would attempt to change policies and behaviors through the application of specific sanctions such as embargoes and trade bans. Recent U.S. threats to invoke trade sanctions against Japan

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20 This simply means that the donor nation will supply technologies that are asynchronous with the particular developmental stage of the recipient nation.
unless they stopped the importation of Hawksbill turtle shells is an example of this type of strategy. The advantage of the U.S. employing a coercion-based strategy is that it explicitly links unsustainable activities to the loss of economic benefits. Because the United States is a huge and affluent market, many countries would be unwilling to lose access to it in order to maintain a specific activity that was of marginal economic utility. The downside of this strategy is, of course, the fact that not every polluting country has a significant economic relationship with the U.S. Moreover, threatening coercion to change domestic policies may heighten nationalistic and anti-American feelings, thereby producing political stalemate or a "tit-for-tat" situation in which our embargoes and trade restrictions are met by so-called "targets" imposing equivalent sanctions on the U.S.

The risks and uncertainties of a coercion-based strategy are exemplified by recent events surrounding Canada and the Europe. Canada recently declared a unilateral moratorium on cod fishing within its 200-mile limit and sharply reduced the fishing of ground fish. The Canadian Government is now cutting the fishing nets and impounding trawlers, an act that the European Union Fisheries Commissioner has denounced as piracy. Escalating events are leading to a situation where force may used to protect fishery stocks that are threatened with commercial extinction.

If an environmental threat was serious enough and it could be attributed to the continuing actions of one or more countries, the threat or use of force to ensure compliance could become a viable option. While the United States may have the military capabilities to carry out a strategy of this type, it is generally not considered an option. Most environmental consequences are incremental in nature and occur over relatively long time frames. Consequently, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to gain international support for coercive policies. This strategy is even more remote given the enduring legacy of Vietnam.

Cooperation-based Strategy

A third approach would be the design and implementation of strategies that approach sustainability from a cooperative and integrated perspective. Such a strategy would emphasize the use of incentives and international treaties to promote sustainability. While technology would be a central thrust of this approach, it would be pursued through cooperative ventures with other nations. Financial assistance would be awarded based on the extent to which the programs were environmentally sustainable or that specific actions such as reforestation and soil erosion control were undertaken as part of a repayment package. In much the way the United States currently forgives loan debt, bilateral development assistance loans would be forgiven in turn for actions that protected, remediated, or enhanced the environment.

Rather than respond to events (e.g., depleted cod fisheries off of Newfoundland), the U.S. would seek bilateral and multilateral treaties that provide protections head off situations that reach the dispute stage. The proactive pursuit of treaties to promote sustainable development objectives has several advantages. First, while customary international law moves slowly, treaty negotiations provide opportunities both to clarify the controlling law and to establish the governing procedures. Treaties can flexibly specify which sorts of disputes will lead to a diplomatic response, and which ones will be turned over to arbitrators or to courts for binding third-party disposition. Negotiation works well to overcome "commons" problems when large industrialized nations are willing to provide

21 "Japan Agrees to End Endangered Hawksbill Turtle Imports After '92, (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Times, June 19, 1991), A15
24 Even in cases where serious environmental impacts are attributable to the actions of one nation, it is very rare that the U.S. or some other nation would retaliate. Chernobyl is a recent example.
specific incentives as "side payments" to secure cooperative action. In theory, the U.S. and Japan could agree to provide compensatory payments to nations (e.g., Brazil) in trade for treaties protecting rain forests. In practice, there are many factors that work against the U.S. or Japan providing sufficient funds to make the provision of "side payments" a practical and successful approach. Moreover, it would not help in those situations such as whaling where the potential donors are also the culprits.

A strategy based upon the use of incentives to encourage sustainable development would potentially avoid the security problem where nations simultaneously "defect" to avoid the perceived risk that other nation will get the "jump on it." The security dilemma is illustrated in Canada's decision to unilaterally impose 200-mile limit and to intercept and disable European fishing trawlers. Security dilemmas naturally evolve out of common pool resource problems; however, they must be dealt with through strategies that mitigate insecurities rather than aggravate them.

The advantages of cooperation are obvious. For example, Indonesia is expected to increase its industrial capacity by 500 percent over the next 15 years. Applying the principles of Industrial Ecology to prevent waste and pollution would realize tangible benefits both locally and globally. However, the difficulty of pursuing policies and programs that provide diffuse, long-range benefits should not be underestimated.

Social scientists stress that rarely do large groups or large numbers of nations voluntarily act to promote common interests, particularly if the benefits are diffuse and the overt costs are borne by a few nations or organizations. Recently, the World Resources Institute collaborated with three Japanese research institutes, U.S. and Japanese advisory committees, and with Asian and Latin American expert panel to identify ways to "speed the development, adaptation, and diffusion of environmentally superior technology throughout industrializing countries, where the confluence of rising population, economic growth, and environmental stress is most acute." The proposed solution is to create environmental technology investment corporations, establish sector-specific environmental technology intermediaries, diffuse environmental technology through transnational commercial networks, enhance environmental information disclosure, and build capacity for technological adaptation. The dilemma is that these reforms depend on cooperation inside of networks and associations -- supported and channeled by public activity -- and rely on a common vision of technological change and environmental quality as two sides of the same coin: a better quality of life. Unfortunately, like other well-meaning proposals, self-interested behavior will make this approach dead on arrival.

Self interest will continue to define the scope, direction, and impact of Sustainable Development. Currently, both Japan and the United States -- the world's two largest donors condition their "green aid" on export promotion or direct financial aid to domestic technology producers; consequently, it is difficult to foresee short term conditions that would lead to the redirection of assistance to support the identification, selection, and adaptation of "leapfrogging" technologies to promote sustainable growth and environmental improvement. Nations and their respective domestic firms are driven only by short-term interest. Thus they often act to maximize profits by transferring outdated technologies at the expense of the environment. It is no wonder, therefore, that third world

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26 According to Thomas Gaedel, in his article, "Industrial Ecology: Definition and Implementation," in the R. Socolow, et al, edited book, Industrial Ecology and Global Change (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), Industrial Ecology is an "ensemble concept in which the interactions between human activities and the environment are systematically analyzed. It seeks to optimize the total industrial materials cycle from virgin material to finished product to ultimate disposal of wastes. This systems-oriented approach strongly suggests that industrial design and manufacturing processes are not performed in isolation from their surroundings, but rather are influenced by them and, in turn, influence them (pg. 23)."


28 Ibid, pg. xi
nations are producing motorcycles and automobiles based on outdated designs that lack catalytic converters and other pollution reduction devices.

CONCLUSION:

Common pool problems are best exemplified in the actions of rich and poor nations to implement promises made at the Earth Summit held in Rio De Janeiro in 1992. Rich countries (America, Canada, and the European Union) promised to stabilize Carbon Dioxide levels at the 1990 level by the year 2000. Only Germany and Britain are likely to meet their targets, and this appears to be the result of accident not purposeful behavior. Rather than attempt to meet promised reductions, rich countries are arguing that why should they make any effort against global warming when developing nations have committed themselves to nothing. This argument is based on the fact that in fifty years coal-burning by China and India could make today's emissions by the western, developed world look insignificant. The failure of rich nations to live up to their promises is an classic example of how collective goods problems have and will continue to derail many Sustainable Development initiatives.

Poor nations are holding out for the developing world to pay for both the cost of reducing emissions as well as the free transfer of non-polluting technologies. Unfortunately, there are not nearly enough resources to meet developing nation requirements. The Global Environment Fund -- the body that distributes money to poor nations -- has received industrialized world pledges of only about $2 billion. This may not be enough money for underdeveloped nations to find out what they are emitting. Poor nations seek a free ride while developed nations ponder how to maximize short term profits.

The paradox of sustainable development is two sided. On one side, coercive strategies stimulated by common pool or security dilemma problems are bound to cause defections and non-compliance short of armed conflict. On the other side, collective goods issues represent pernicious barriers to cooperative and technology based strategies. With finite resources and serious opportunity costs, nations will be miserly in their contributions. Hence, the movement towards a Sustainable Future is bound to be outpaced by economic and environmental crises.

There are other possible futures for the U.S. and these have even more serious implications. Louis Hartz observed in his pathbreaking interpretation of American history, The Liberal Tradition in America, that the United States foreign policy is constantly driven by two impulses: isolationism and interventionism. Today these contradictory impulses are in head-to-head conflict, with the President extolling the need and the virtue of a internationally-directed policy agenda, and the Congress arguing that we must turn inward in to rebuild core capabilities and values.

Sustainable development has become the battle cry for those advocating a role for government in promoting economic and social change. However, it is explicitly opposed by those that believe that national interests are best served through a greatly reduced government role in economic and social policy. It is no surprise, therefore, that the Agency of International Development -- which has integrated Sustainable Development into all aspects of its mission -- currently finds itself under direct attack by Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jessie Helms (R-N.C).

29 Unification has closed down antique coal mining in eastern Germany while Britain has closed its coal mines to save the taxpayers money.
Profound differences between the Executive Branch and Congress reduce the likelihood that Sustainable Development will quickly grow into the major organizing tenant of American Foreign policy. Yet, because the idea is a powerful one, it is likely to slowly infiltrate the thinking of policy-makers on both sides of the aisle and society at large. Ultimately, short term defeats for the Sustainable Development paradigm will translate into significant long-term political support, particularly if there is money to be made.

When and if Sustainable Development becomes a core element of U.S. Foreign Policy, the task will be to insure that it does not become a juggernaut to force U.S. values on the rest of the world. Our tendency to want to "transform" the world in our image led to Vietnam; similarly, an ill-conceived Sustainable Development foreign policy could lead to interventionist excesses that are well-intentioned, but ill-fated. Remembering the past -- where democratic ideals turned into foreign policy debacles -- will guard against its improper application under future, potentially more hostile environmental conditions.

33 Through interviews with both federal and international public organizations and with the private sector, it is apparent that the ideas and principles underlying Sustainable Development are finding receptive audiences. For example, the Pulp and Paper and Chemical Industries are incorporating Sustainable Development into their strategic plans for the 21st century.
34 Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America, pg. 286.