Council-sponsored independent task forces, Council Policy Initiatives (CPIs), and the Congress and U.S. Foreign Policy Program have over the years become major tools with which the Council has influenced policymakers and advanced the foreign policy debate around the world and in the halls of Congress. The Center for Preventive Action, a major institutional priority, will drive the much-needed search for concrete methods to prevent civil and ethnic conflict in the complicated post–Cold War era.

Task Forces

The Council sponsors an independent task force when (1) an issue of current and critical importance to U.S. foreign policy arises, and (2) it seems that a group diverse in backgrounds and perspectives may, nonetheless, be able to reach a meaningful consensus on a policy through private and nonpartisan deliberations. Once formed, task forces are independent of the Council on Foreign Relations and solely responsible for their reports.

Through its independent task forces, the Council demonstrates time and again its unique ability to convene high-level groups to help resolve or manage international problems on a nonpartisan basis. Written simply and clearly and addressed to the experts as well as the interested public, these reports make a difference. This year, a number of task forces have had a particularly strong impact.

The Independent Task Force on Cuba, chaired by Bernard W. Aronson and William D. Rogers, issued a follow-on report that garnered as much interest as its first influential report of 1999. The new report recommended...
that the United States move quickly to prepare for the next stage in U.S.-Cuban relations, setting out a number of useful steps—short of lifting general economic sanctions—that can and should be taken to prepare for the transitions in bilateral relations and in Cuba. The report calls for new initiatives beyond recent congressional actions, such as the sale of agricultural and medical products and allowing all Americans to travel to Cuba.

The Independent Task Force on Brazil issued a letter and a memorandum to the president on U.S. policy toward Brazil, urging that the United States initiate without delay a thoroughgoing review of policy. The report recommends that the United States examine where it and Brazil can work together on vital matters such as trade, drug trafficking, and regional security and move toward high-level sustained strategic dialogue with Brazilian leaders. Chaired by Stephen Robert, this task force was extremely well received both in Brazil and in the United States and continues to generate massive interest among the press and policymakers. The task force will continue in a standby capacity, meeting at the call of the chair in the event of significant developments as a result of the report's impact in Brazil. The task force report was also translated into Portuguese.

Frank C. Carlucci chaired a task force on State Department reform that garnered intense interest at the highest
levels. Cosponsored with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the task force presented a plan of action to reform and revitalize the Department of State, the forward edge of American national security policy that, more than ten years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, finds itself in a profound state of disrepair. This task force did not attempt to reinvent the many findings and recommendations of other blue-ribbon commissions but instead set out to synthesize the other reports into two brief memos for the president and the secretary of state that articulate a “resources-for-reform” strategy to redress the department’s shortcomings.

The task force on U.S. policy toward North Korea, co-chaired by James T. Laney and Morton I. Abramowitz, issued an important letter to President Bush following the group’s fact-finding trip to South Korea and Japan. The letter urges full support for South Korea’s efforts at reconciliation with the North and recommends that the administration pursue a verifiable elimination of North Korea’s long-range missiles, conduct a careful review of the 1994 nuclear accord with Pyongyang, enhance U.S.–South Korea defense cooperation, and continue robust trilateral coordination with Seoul and Tokyo. This is the fourth set of recommendations by this task force in as many years.

The central statement of the energy task force report, Strategic Energy Policy: Challenges for the 21st Century, chaired by Edward L. Morse and cosponsored with the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy of Rice University, is that we can no longer deny that we are in the throes of an energy crisis. The report recommends that the president tell the American people about this situation and make clear there are no easy or quick solutions. For many decades the United States has avoided adopting a comprehensive energy security policy, but today it faces the prospect of unprecedented price volatility and shortages. The report balances world energy requirements, infrastructure constraints, environmental concerns, and domestic energy use challenges and discusses in detail options and trade-offs for near- and long-term policy actions.

Chaired by former Senator J. Robert Kerrey, the task force on Southeast Asia was formed out of concern that the untended problems in that
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region may erupt into developments of global proportion and threaten U.S. vital interests, as evidenced by some of the worst crises we have had to face since World War II—the Vietnam War, the Asian financial crisis, and Indonesian unrest, to name a few. U.S. engagement in Southeast Asia, and particularly with Indonesia, is a precondition for stability and a necessary safeguard to minimize further potential damage to fledgling democracies in the region.

The Japan economic task force, chaired by Laura D’Andrea Tyson, met over a two-year period to examine structural reforms under way in the Japanese economy to determine whether they were fundamentally changing the way business was being done in Japan. It issued a report in October, coming to three broad conclusions: First, the reforms that have already occurred within Japan’s financial system are in keeping with the interests and goals of U.S. businesses; second, the United States could do an even better job in fostering market liberalization in Japan by shifting its priorities from traditional and controversial bilateral trade targets to more multilateral processes; and third, the United States should adopt a fresh approach in its economic negotiations with Japan to match the changes in the economic environment worldwide.

Frank G. Wisner II and Nicholas Platt are co-chairing a task force on India and South Asia cosponsored with the Asia Society on the premise that a broadened engagement between the United States and India is desirable. The task force will explore topics important to the interests of both India and the United States in the region. Ongoing troubles in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka, for example, have a direct and continuing impact on India as well as on the U.S.-India relationship.

The China and Russia economic task forces have extended their work and will be issuing reports in the next few months and in the next program year, respectively.

Council Policy Initiatives

The Council undertakes a Council Policy Initiative (CPI) when a foreign policy issue is of current and critical importance but it seems highly unlikely that clashing views can be reconciled in a meaningful consensus by a task force. The goal of a CPI is to spark debate among interested Americans on key foreign policy choices in ways that can be easily understood by informed non-experts. CPI authors try to make the best case for each alternative. To this end, the Council will publish a concise text containing the choices, written usually as speeches that a U.S. president could give, with a cover memo as if written by a key presidential adviser, summarizing the choices and giving the necessary historical and political background.

Project Director Alton Frye led a CPI on “Humanitarian Intervention: Crafting a Workable Doctrine,” which
addressed the dilemmas of humanitarian intervention through three different arguments, emphasizing the moral imperative to intervene, the strategic case to refrain from intervention, and the political prerequisite to balance moral and strategic claims. The authors of the report were Holly J. Burkhalter, Dov S. Zakheim, Stanley A. McChrystal, and Arnold Kanter.

**Congress and U.S. Foreign Policy Program**

*An informed Congress is essential to an effective American foreign policy, and an informed congressional staff is essential to an effective Congress. Reaching across party lines, the Council’s congressional staff roundtables provide a forum to discuss major international issues under the Council’s tradition of nonattribution.*

Co-chaired by Thomas E. Donilon and Kenneth M. Duberstein, the Congress and U.S. Foreign Policy Program held more than 70 meetings on Capitol Hill, providing a neutral setting for key congressional staffers from both houses of Congress to engage in nonpartisan discussion of various policy matters. This year, the program hosted meetings on State Department reform, foreign policy priorities, how to deal with Beijing, free trade, relations with Europe, and changing Arab attitudes toward Iraq, among others. Alton Frye directed the program.

**Center for Preventive Action**

The Council founded the Center for Preventive Action convinced that preventive action is a desirable and attainable instrument of U.S. foreign policy. Using expert knowledge, established networks, and the Council’s proven ability to run task forces and studies, the center will examine civil and ethnic crises around the world and promote strategies and actions to preempt or mitigate deadly conflict. The objective is to harmonize the contacts and influence of business, nongovernmental organizations, and international organizations with the power of governments in order to enable official actors to mobilize the political will and forge the effective programs needed to avert or alleviate crises.

The center is being relaunched with William L. Nash as acting director, with an advisory committee chaired by John W. Vessey, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.