Foreword

The American experience in international affairs, especially by comparative standards, has generally been a happy one. Beginning with an astonishingly successful eighteenth-century alliance with the French (who did not have much luck against the British on their own) during the War of Independence, the United States has come to view success as a routine outcome of differences and conflicts with other nations. America also has achieved a continuous increase in its importance and influence in world affairs, and it has more or less done so on its own terms. Its early dominance of the North American continent provided a large measure of insulation from the sorts of pressures generated by threatening neighbors or scarce resources. Its consistent success in terms of economic progress provided an underpinning of material well-being and war-making potential that made it both an enormously important market and extremely valuable ally. In other words, if it seems that the United States has been able, as it were, to be unusually “true to itself” in matters international, it may well be because the nation simply has had a number of advantages that made such a course possible. All this may seem obvious, but, surprisingly, it is often overlooked when explaining what are undoubtedly the exceptional characteristics of American foreign policy.

In *At Home Abroad*, Henry Nau provides an analysis of American foreign policy that is theoretically innovative and intellectually provocative, emphasizing the role of American identity in the practice of diplomacy and statecraft in the post–Cold War era. In positing national identity as a necessary part, along with power, of a cohesive model of state behavior, Nau transcends the narrow and increasingly tedious debates between realists and idealists over the role of power or ideas as determinants of global order. Interests and norms are both essential, Nau argues, as the demise of the militarily powerful but politically bankrupt Soviet Union has demonstrated so compellingly.

Henry R. Nau is professor of political science and international affairs at the Elliott School of International Affairs at the George Washington University. His previous works, including *The Myth of America's Decline* (1990) and, most recently, *Trade and Security: U.S. Policies at Cross-Purposes* (1995), reflect his deep understanding of the issues faced by the United States since the end of the Cold War. His book is part of The Century Foundation's focus on the changing character of global affairs since the Soviet decline and demise, which

already has resulted in the publication of, among others, Richard Ullman's *Securing Europe*, Michael Mandelbaum's *The Dawn of Peace in Europe*, Jonathan Dean's *Ending Europe's Wars*, and David Calleo's *Rethinking Europe's Future*.

In this work, Nau offers a fresh perspective on the theory and practice of conflict, alliance politics, the promotion of democracy, and the management of economic globalization in the twenty-first century. He stresses that traditional models fail to advance the national interest with allies in Europe and Japan, among potential adversaries in Russia and Asia, and among the diverse states of Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa. He describes how a lasting partnership with mature democracies in Europe and Japan can evolve into a sense of shared destiny, which is the basis for the kind of democratic security community that makes for enduring and stable peace. He argues that states that share commitments to open markets, legal institutions, and protecting the rights of citizens will not resort to force to settle their disputes, however much their lesser interests may diverge. In this sense, the give and take of national democracy—divided powers, active debate, and the kind of freedom that allows new ideas to be tested—is replicated internationally.

Looking to the future, Nau argues that it is not enough for America to have a preponderance of traditional military and economic power in the world. The United States also must project a more comfortable self-image that recognizes the spread of American core values and the unprecedented opportunity to assist suffering and democratizing countries around the globe. His caution, however, is that a cyclical predisposition to isolationism, to the false hopes of technical supremacy, or to noble values of international cooperation that lack practicality may not allow this to happen.

Overall, *At Home Abroad* provides the basis for fresh and important ways to think about America's role in the world. On behalf of the Trustees of The Century Foundation, I welcome Nau's contribution to our understanding of American foreign policy.

RICHARD C. LEONE, President

The Century Foundation
August 2001