Q: What prompted you to write this book?
Fettweis: I thought it was important to discuss the implications of the recent trends in international security for the theory and practice of international politics. If it is true that the great powers have essentially put war behind them, and if peace is trickling down to the smaller states, then the world cannot remain unchanged. Sometimes recognition of fundamental change lags behind the reality; this book is an attempt to speed the process along.

Q: What would you say to someone who thought that you are just a starry-eyed idealist?
Fettweis: I would point out that I am looking at the evidence. The predications of dark-eyed pessimists (if that is the opposite of starry-eyed idealists) have been proven wrong for the first few decades since the end of the Cold War. There have been no clashing civilizations, or a return to unstable multipolarity, or runaway proliferation, or resource wars. And conflict is on the decline. So while some people might suspect that these positive trends will not continue, there can be no doubt that the world is a very peaceful, stable place at the moment, even if few seem to notice.

Q: How would you recommend that the U.S. change its military strategy or focus?
Fettweis: The main lesson is that since the world is a safe place, the United States can do much less and still be perfectly secure. The belief that the only thing standing in between civilization and chaos is the U.S. military rests on a shaky foundation, to say the least. Since any rational grand strategy attempts to minimize costs and maximize benefits, the United States would be well served to be far more restrained in its political and military interaction with the world.

Q: Do you really think that smaller wars might also be diminishing?
Fettweis: This is not so much a matter of opinion as fact. Since the end of the Cold War, all kinds of wars—interstate, ethnic conflicts, civil wars, etc.—have been declining in both frequency and intensity. Fewer wars are happening, and fewer people are dying; all at a time when global population is exploding.

Q: What did you find most striking in your research for this book?
Fettweis: The strength of the impression that the world is a dangerous place was striking to me. Many people will not believe that the world has essentially entered a golden age of peace and security, no matter how many facts you present them with. Beliefs are not easily changed. And that has led me to my next project.

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