NO PEER RIVALS

AMERICAN GRAND STRATEGY IN THE ERA OF GREAT POWER COMPETITION

Ionut Popescu

No Peer Rivals

No Peer Rivals

American Grand Strategy in the Era of Great Power Competition

IONUT POPESCU

University of Michigan Press
Ann Arbor

Published in the United States of America by the
University of Michigan Press
First published April 2025

A CIP catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Popescu, Ionut C., author. | Michigan Publishing (University of Michigan), publisher.
Title: No peer rivals : American grand strategy in the era of great power competition / Ionut Popescu.
Other titles: American grand strategy in the era of great power competition
Description: Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press, [2025] | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2024051371 (print) | LCCN 2024051372 (ebook) | ISBN 9780472057399 (paperback) | ISBN 9780472904990 (ebook other)
Subjects: LCSH: United States—Foreign relations—China. | China—Foreign relations—United States. | United States—Foreign relations—21st century. | Political realism. | World politics—21st century.
Classification: LCC E183.8.C5 P66 2025 (print) | LCC E183.8.C5 (ebook) | DDC 327.73051009/05—dc23/eng/20250102
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2024051371
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2024051372

DOI: https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.12393858

The University of Michigan Press's open access publishing program is made possible thanks to additional funding from the University of Michigan Office of the Provost and the generous support of contributing libraries.

Cover photograph courtesy of Pixabay.com, submitted by user rise-a-mui (2013).

Authorized Representative: Easy Access System Europe, Mustamäe tee 50, 10621 Tallinn, Estonia, gpsr.requests@easproject.com

To my parents, Stelian “Bebe” and Marcela Popescu

Contents

Acknowledgments

The outline of this book project dates back to a long conversation I had with John Mearsheimer a few years ago, and I am very grateful to him for his advice and encouragement to pursue this idea, and for his later feedback on how to sharpen the final product. I also greatly benefited from the feedback of the three anonymous reviewers of my book proposal and of the final manuscript.

I would particularly like to thank my excellent research assistant, Zachary Poston, for all his diligent work with this project, and also express my gratitude to the America in the World Consortium (hosted by Duke University, Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, and the University of Texas at Austin) for providing me with a research grant to pay him for his services. It was a pleasure to work again with Elizabeth Demers and Madison Allums, my editors at the University of Michigan Press, and I would like to thank them and their staff (particularly Delilah McCrea) for shepherding the manuscript from submission to production.

I would also like to thank my colleagues and students in the Department of Political Science at Texas State University for providing me with a wonderful home and for their intellectual support in the process of writing this book.

Last but not least, I am grateful for the love and patience shown to me by my daughter Anna and my girlfriend Violet during the long hours of writing from home.

The book is dedicated to my parents, Marcela and the late Stelian "Bebe" Popescu, who gave up a large part of their lives' time and resources to offer me the kind of educational opportunities they lacked. I owe them a huge amount of gratitude!

Introduction

A Grand Strategy for Great Power Competition

"Beijing Plans a New Training Facility in Cuba, Raising the Prospect of Chinese Troops on America's Doorstep," ran an ominous *Wall Street Journal* headline in the summer of 2023.[1] And later that year a *Washington Post* columnist warned that due to the close economic connections between the two countries, "Americans are unwittingly funding China's military expansion" through their pension funds.[2] On the homeland security front, at the beginning of 2024, FBI director Christopher Wray warned Congress that China's cyberattacks on US infrastructure had now reached an "unprecedented scale" and "pre-positioned malware could be triggered to disrupt critical systems in the U.S."[3] Meanwhile, over in the Middle East, while the US is assisting its ally Israel in fighting the Iran-sponsored Hamas terrorist group and securing the sea lanes of communication against Iran-sponsored Houthi attacks on international trade, Moscow is enhancing its military cooperation with Tehran while Beijing is cynically using the tragic war in Gaza to score geopolitical points against Washington among the countries of the Global South.[4] Lastly, building on a new "unlimited partnership," America's top great power rivals China and Russia are conducting joint military exercises, leading Admiral John Aquilino, the head of the US Indo-Pacific Command, to express great concern over what he described as "far beyond a marriage of convenience at this point in time."[5]

There is hardly a day when international news headlines are not dominated by talk of conflict between Washington, Beijing, and Moscow, whether in geopolitical, military, economic, or technological domains. We have entered what Washington policymakers call the era of Great Power Competition (GPC). In recent years, America's rival great powers China and Russia have flexed their military muscles in their own neighborhoods by intimidating smaller neighbors in the case of Taiwan and the South China Sea, or even invading them in the case of Ukraine. For the first time since the end of the Cold War in 1991, a great power war between the US and China or Russia is now a distinct possibility, despite the disastrous financial and human consequences of such a conflict.[6] The United States must urgently change its grand strategy to re-establish deterrence against its great power adversaries and avoid such a terrible outcome.

China's rise may be reaching its peak shortly due to long-term demographic and economic problems, and therefore a military conflict over Taiwan is likelier in the next few years before Beijing starts declining relative to the US.[7] And if such a conflict were to occur, the US industrial base is ill-prepared for it, as the worrisome depletion of munitions solely from supporting Ukraine's war efforts recently showed.[8] If, on the other hand, China's rise has not peaked and its economy will resume growing at a fast rate, a conflict over Taiwan may not be imminent; however, that would likely mean that the intense geopolitical rivalry and struggle for global hegemony between Washington and Beijing will be *the* dominant feature of great power politics in this new GPC era. There are even good reasons to believe the Chinese Communist Party will present the main military and geopolitical challenge to the US in the coming decades even if Beijing experiences heavy demographic or economic pressures, due to the sizeable military capabilities it has already acquired and its revisionist agenda.[9]

As limited conventional wars once again rage in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, and a looming war over Taiwan increasingly worries top US military leaders, governments around the world are significantly ramping up their military spending.[10] After a brief period (the so-called post–Cold War era) of general international amity and low levels of tension among great powers, it is apparent we are now once more in a new era where realist thinking is dominating world politics. And while some liberal internationalist scholars and politicians may deplore this tragic reality of great power politics and instead call on Washington and Beijing to defuse tensions and cooperate on global governance problems,

this advice is ill-suited for the new GPC reality.[11] Washington needs to adapt to this geopolitical shift toward competition and confrontation by adopting a new grand strategy specifically designed for the emerging dynamics of our dangerous time in history. Not only does United States' military strategy and its diplomatic priorities need to change in light of the new circumstances, but so do its policies that shape international economics, high-end technologies, and energy resources. In this book, I present such a GPC-focused grand strategic framework, an approach I call *No Peer Rivals*, and I explain how it can help secure the most important US national security objectives in this new geopolitical environment.

Former world boxing champion Mike Tyson astutely observed that "everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth."[12] And yet governments and militaries around the world continue to design strategies, grand or otherwise, to guide their decisions and provide coherence to their actions. Every new US administration publishes a *National Security Strategy* (NSS) document to outline the contours of its grand strategy. And at critical times of geopolitical transitions from one strategic era to another, such as the beginning of the Cold War or in the aftermath of 9/11, the choice of grand strategy impacts the success of US foreign policy for decades to come. The United States is now at such an inflexion point, as the War on Terror era gives way to a period of intense great power competition.[13]

In the realm of international relations scholarship, the very term "grand strategy" is a contested concept when it comes to precisely defining what it means. As Nina Silove showed in a survey of this large and diverse literature, some scholars use it to describe a state's long-term strategic plans, others view it as a set of theoretical principles that shape a state's pursuit of its national interests, and yet others regard it as an emerging pattern of policy decisions and actions that converge over time into a strategy.[14] Each of the three elements of the definition (grand design, intellectual framework, and emergent pattern) captures a different aspect of how grand strategy leads to successful foreign policy outcomes, and each of them is valuable in its own way.

Critics of grand strategy often miss the second and third part of the definition, and only focus on the first (and most common) understanding of grand strategy as a plan.[15] For example, the difficulty of articulating and implementing a grand design in today's complex environment has led some scholars to call for abandoning grand strategy altogether. Daniel Drezner, Ronald Krebs, and Randall Schweller provocatively argue that "grand strategy is dead" and should stay that way: "it is time

to operate without one" and instead rely on "decentralization and incrementalism."[16] This kind of advice is not entirely wrong, but it is ultimately unhelpful because it underestimates the benefits of an anchoring grand strategic framework to establish priorities in the face of today's intense geopolitical challenges from China and Russia. As a matter of fact, the emergent strategy approach recommended by those authors is best used as a complement to grand strategy, not as a substitute for it, as was shown at length in my previous book *Emergent Strategy and Grand Strategy: How American Presidents Succeed in Foreign Policy*.[17]

Drezner et al. conceptualize grand strategy narrowly as a "road map for how to match means and ends," and subsequently base their critique on the impossibility of designing and implementing such a grand plan at this point in time. However, our understanding of grand strategy as a concept should be much broader than a specific plan to be implemented. The value of grand strategy mostly comes from setting objectives and prioritizing them, shaping US foreign policy choices in a coherent direction, and providing a useful way to explain Washington's actions to domestic and foreign audiences.[18] Washington's strategic performance is certainly in need of improvement, but abandoning the practice of grand strategy will not help with the adoption and implementation of better foreign policies. Quite likely, it will actually lead to even worse outcomes as policymakers will be constantly reacting to the crisis du jour or the pressures of domestic politics.

Having a grand strategy is not the same as having the right grand strategy, however, and the main question addressed in this book can be summarized as follows: What is the best grand strategic framework for the new era of Great Power Competition? The answer is critical for deciding the best course of US grand strategy in the years, and perhaps decades, to come. With Washington arguably already engaged in a proxy war against Moscow and a cold war against Beijing, while still pursuing counterterrorism efforts in the Middle East and working to address Iran's and North Korea's nuclear weapons programs, a critical reevaluation of American grand strategy is thoroughly needed. The Biden administration's 2022 *National Security Strategy* outlines the administration's framework in the GPC era, but their designs are theoretically incoherent, an uneasy effort to respond to the structural realist pressures of the international system while also advancing their preferred liberal internationalist priorities. At the same time, both the Washington policy debate and the academic scholarly arguments about US grand strategy have entered a new phase over the last few years, with new coalitions forming up and four schools

of thought emerging as distinctive contenders: liberal internationalism, conservative internationalism, defensive realism, and offensive realism.

The differences among these four schools of thought can be found both in their diagnoses of the dynamics of GPC-era international politics and in the grand strategy and policy recommendations made by their advocates. For example, is the world still unipolar, or are we already in a bipolar or multipolar world? International relations scholars surveyed recently by *Foreign Affairs* magazine differed in their assessments, and their differences shape the kind of strategic objectives they believe Washington can and should pursue.[19] Are great powers more prone to competition or cooperation? How powerful is the impact of the "nuclear revolution" on deterring great power conflict? Is dealing with China's ambition the most urgent strategic challenge, or more of a medium- and long-term concern? Is Russia merely a spoiler, or a third great power that is now allying with China against the US? What kind of international order is possible and desirable in today's world—a continuation of the broad US-led liberal order, or a narrower realist one with different norms and constraints? Are transnational challenges like climate change and pandemics now as big of a grand strategic priority as confronting great powers? Is expanding the free flow of goods and services still in the best interest of the United States, as many globalization advocates contend? Lastly, are we in a new grand ideological clash of democracy vs authoritarianism, as the Biden administration argues? And how should US values impact Washington's grand strategy on issues like democracy promotion and human rights? These are the questions I will ask of the four ideal type grand strategic frameworks mentioned above.

In this book, I argue that a No Peer Rivals grand strategy grounded in the theoretical framework of offensive realism is best suited for defending the US national interest in the GPC era. Offensive realism is often presented in the scholarly literature as a social science theory of international relations, most extensively by John Mearsheimer. However, this book will be the first work to apply its principles in order to fully develop a comprehensive and practical grand strategy for the United States. The theory of offensive realism highlights the *struggle for hegemony* between great powers as the main driver of world events.

Arguably the first iteration of this paradigm goes back to the writings of G. Lowes Dickinson during World War I, who observed the following dynamic between great powers operating in an anarchic system with no world government: "While this anarchy continues, the struggle between States will tend to assume a certain stereotyped form. One will

endeavor to acquire supremacy over the others for motives at once of security and domination, the others will combine to defeat it, and history will turn upon the two poles of empire and the balance of power."[20] In the 1950s, another scholar with an early offensive realist worldview, John Herz, wrote about how political realism "always centers around the basic dilemma which arises from the very fact of human competition for security, namely, the vicious circle of competition which never quite achieves full security, but which, in trying to do so, increases the necessity for accumulating power as a means of attaining more security."[21] Even before modern interpretations like John Mearsheimer's pessimistic conclusions about the possibilities of great power peace, therefore, some early scholars sowed the seeds of this school of thought.

Given that the future intensions of great powers are "inscrutable," according to Sebastian Rosato, great power politics are usually dominated by uncertainty and conflict rather than cooperation and amity.[22] Unlike defensive realists who argue that the offense-defense technological balance provides some source for optimism regarding great power relations, offensive realists believe that politics, not technology, dominates great power dynamics, and therefore there is no technologically driven *status quo bias* leading to peaceful relations.[23] In recent years, other scholars further extended the principles of offensive realism to various questions of international relations and US foreign policy, as the GPC era appears to confirm the suitability of this theory to our current strategic environment.[24]

For offensive realists, the anarchic structure of the international system leads great powers to worry about each other's military capabilities, as the possibility of a major war is ever present. Therefore, they historically wanted to become regional hegemons first, to be safe from attack by any neighboring country, and then if possible global hegemons so that they don't have to worry about another regional hegemon interfering in their own sphere of influence or constraining their ability to advance their interests in other parts of the world—"the freedom to roam"—as Mearsheimer wrote in the canonical modern text of offensive realism, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*.[25] Therefore, because global hegemony is very difficult to achieve, in practical terms "the best outcome a great power can hope for is to be a regional hegemon."[26] And once that status is achieved, as it is currently the case for the United States in the Western Hemisphere, the next task is to make sure no other rivals can match it: "states that achieve regional hegemony seek to prevent other great powers in other regions from duplicating their feat."[27] Therefore, this theory

implies, the grand strategy best suited for the United States in the GPC era is one assuring that no peer rivals emerge.

One of the most powerful arguments in favor of adopting an offensive realist grand strategy is that America's rivals in Beijing and Moscow already act much more in line with the predictions of this paradigm than those of any other competing theories. Presidents Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin follow ruthless offensive realist grand strategies, contrary to what other schools of thought predicted that China and Russia would act like in the 21st century. Therefore, Washington needs to adapt as well to these structural imperatives of the GPC era or face grave strategic threats to its geopolitical interests abroad, as well as to its national security and economic prosperity at home.[28] Over the past decade, two geopolitical trends have emerged. First, China is on a quest for regional and eventually global hegemony. Second, Russia's actions are destabilizing European security and the global economy, and siphoning US resources away from the Asia-Pacific theater. Consequently, both as a permissive condition and as a reinforcing consequence of these two developments, the international system has moved toward an era of multipolarity and intense great power competition.

As a great power's economy and its technological sophistication increase significantly relative to its neighbors and other distant rivals, offensive realism expects the leaders of that country to engage in a military buildup and launch a quest for regional hegemony first, and even challenge for global superpower status later if circumstances allow it. This is arguably exactly what China has been doing for the past decade under the leadership of President Xi.[29] China expert Sheena Greitens recently showed in *Foreign Affairs* how Xi has been promoting the concept of Quanqiu Anquan Changyi, or the Global Security Initiative, which he framed as "promoting the common security of the world."[30] She argues that the initial framework was a "regime security concept codified as grand strategy," and that Xi is now "applying that framework to foreign policy, attempting to remake regional and global security order to guard against threats to China's domestic stability and further consolidate the party's grip on power."[31] Similarly, in the most extensive scholarly analysis of China's contemporary strategy (*The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order*), Rush Doshi concludes: "The 'struggle for mastery,' once confined to Asia, is now over the global order and its future. If there are two paths to hegemony—a regional one and a global one—China is now pursuing both."[32] Chinese elites believe that the world is in the midst of "great changes unseen in a century," and that

presents an opportunity for Beijing to displace the United States from its current role as the preeminent power in Asia and beyond.[33] Meanwhile, in Eastern Europe, the war in Ukraine clearly shows Russia's ambition of establishing regional hegemony in its "near abroad."[34] Combined with the close Russian-Chinese military and economic partnership that has emerged in the past couple of years, the contours of an intense era of GPC are clearer than ever.

There is now an intense debate in both Washington's corridors of power and in the halls of academia over the future direction of US grand strategy in this new era of intense geopolitical competition. Particularly when it comes to China, a cooperative liberal internationalist strategic approach dominated in the decades leading up to the Trump presidency, when the pendulum shifted toward a more confrontational realist position. That was not one moment too soon, as the GPC era fits much better with a realist view of great power politics than a liberal internationalist one. Washington is already paying a large price for its post–Cold War era decisions such as allowing China into the World Trade Organization. As Mearsheimer trenchantly reflected on the failed US policy toward China over the past decades, "Engagement may have been the worst strategic blunder any country has made in recent history: there is no comparable example of a great power actively fostering the rise of a peer competitor."[35] Realist thinking must now replace liberal internationalist principles in delineating the contours of the new US grand strategy to counter Beijing and Moscow, and therefore this book recommends a multidimensional framework to achieve that.

Plan of the Book

In the first chapter of the book, I begin by describing the evolution of the theoretical scholarly debates on American grand strategy from the end of the Cold War to the beginning of the new GPC era. Subsequently, I outline the contours of a new framework consisting of seven categories that separate the four schools of thought competing for influence today. I classify them as two idea-focused internationalist approaches that each come in a liberal and a conservative variety, and two power-focused ones based on realist theory that in turn come in a defensive and an offensive variant. I then describe each of these school's principles and recommendations in separate sections, focusing on explaining their differences in both strategic diagnoses and policy prescriptions.

Chapter 2 outlines the recent changes in world politics that have led many scholars and government officials to talk about the arrival of a new strategic age of intense great power competition, and then shows how US grand strategy has slowly been shifting in a realist direction over the past decade. This adaptation to the new geopolitical circumstances has been uneven, however, and there are ongoing vigorous debates inside both academia and in Washington's corridors of power regarding the best grand strategy for defending America's interests in today's GPC world.

Chapter 3 at first discusses the threats to US interests from the two major great power competitors, China and Russia, and makes the case for focusing on Beijing primarily and on Russia only secondarily. In terms of the magnitude of the geopolitical challenge they pose, China is more akin to how some people regard climate change (a long-term problem, very difficult to combat and requiring massive sustained coordinated efforts), while Russia is more like a hurricane (a problem that may cause some intense stress in the short run but will often pass without causing irreversible damage). Lastly, even during the GPC era, threats to the US homeland can also come from actors other than great powers, and this chapter therefore goes on to discuss three important such transnational challenges: drug cartels, international terrorism, and nuclear proliferation. The key offensive realist insight here is that the US should tackle these threats first and foremost in a cost-conscious manner, without getting distracted from the main GPC priorities.

The final three chapters of the book show the ways in which the No Peer Rivals grand strategy must shape various tools of foreign policy and national security. Chapter 4 deals with military force. It outlines strategic planning priorities for the Department of Defense across all areas of warfare, from conventional to nuclear to cyber and artificial intelligence. Chapter 5 addresses the "sinews of power": geoeconomic issues such as international trade and investment, the global technological competition against China, and a realist approach to energy resources and markets. Subsequently, chapter 6 shifts the narrative to diplomacy, alliances, and the emergence of a realist world order replacing the liberal world order of the past few decades. A brief conclusion summarizes the case for adopting a No Peer Rivals grand strategy, refutes potential counterarguments, and issues a call to action.

CHAPTER ONE

International Relations Theories and Great Power Politics

What US grand strategy framework best explains the dynamics of great power politics in today's international security environment? In the new era of Great Power Competition, the answer to this question is critical for deciding the best course for American foreign policy in the years, and perhaps decades, to come. After all, if a grand strategy does not accurately diagnose the nature of the interactions between great powers in today's world, then its prescriptions are unlikely to lead to successful results. International relations theorists and scholars of American grand strategy have been arguing over this question for the three decades since the end of the Cold War. This chapter begins by presenting the evolution of this scholarly debate, and subsequently offers a theoretical conceptual framework to better understand the main schools of thought in today's GPC context. Lastly, I describe in more detail the assumptions, predictions, and policy recommendations of each of the four contenders: liberal internationalism, conservative internationalism, defensive realism, and offensive realism.

Kennan Sweepstakes: The Post–Cold War Debate on US Grand Strategy

After the Cold War ended, the decades-old Containment grand strategy stopped being a useful organizing principle for US policymakers, and

the search for a new "post–Cold War" grand strategy began. Sometimes derided as a "Kennan Sweepstakes," in honor of the famous US diplomat George Kennan and his influence in shaping America's Cold War grand strategy in the 1940s, the debate was arguably first presented in a theoretically rigorous way in a seminal *International Security* article by Barry Posen and Andrew Ross in 1996.[1] They outlined four frameworks competing for influence at the time, three based on versions of realism and one on liberalism. The three realist ones were summarized as follows: "Neo-Isolationism," which adopted a minimal/defensive realist view of the world; "Selective Engagement," which was based on balance-of-power realism; and "Primacy," which relied on maximal realism and unilateralism. On the contrary, an alternative "Cooperative Security" grand strategy adopted a liberal internationalist view of the world.[2]

In the absence of a clear overarching threat such as the Soviet Union, the strategy debates of the post–Cold War era revolved therefore on theoretical and empirical questions about the nature of the international system and the US role in it. Posen and Ross usefully separated the four schools along some conceptual categories (such as how each defines the "Major Problem of International Politics," "Preferred World Order," or "Conception of National Interests"), as well as based on how they address strategic choices deemed as important in the 1990s ("Nuclear Proliferation," "NATO," "Regional Conflicts," "Ethnic Conflicts," or "Humanitarian Intervention"). Lastly, the authors limited their discussion of the tools of the grand strategy to military ones (while acknowledging economic ones are also important), and discussed what each paradigm recommends with regard to "Use of Force" and "Force Structure."[3] While some of these issues (like NATO expansion and the efforts to curtail nuclear proliferation in Iraq and North Korea) proved more relevant than the others to US grand strategic behavior over the following decades, the framework provided by Posen and Ross offered scholars an excellent tool to conceptualize the contours of the debate on America's role in the world.

For example, Eugene Gholz, Daryl Press, and Henry Sapolski published a detailed manifest for a neo-isolationist/defensive realist approach in the same *International Security* journal the following year, while Christopher Layne similarly introduced the idea of *offshore balancing* into the mainstream grand strategy debates. His approach was slightly more forward-engaged than neo-isolationism in that it contended that the US should step back for now, but also be ready to intervene if a regional hegemon rises in a key region of the world. This was more restrained

than the liberal internationalist and primacy approaches, however, in many ways setting the bounds of the defensive-realist *restraint/retrenchment* camp that will become the main alternative to the establishment global leadership strategy in future decades.[4] At the other end of the spectrum, neoconservative commentators William Kristol and Robert Kagan articulated a version of primacy based not on offensive realism but on American exceptionalism and the promotion of US values in an influential *Foreign Affairs* article that same year, a precursor to the conservative internationalist school that was more influential in the Bush years and beyond.[5]

The Clinton administration's *Engagement and Enlargement* framework, to the dismay of Posen and Ross, chose to "mix and match" from these different strategies, thus being guilty of strategic incoherence and leading to unsatisfying results in its foreign policy.[6] The ad-hoc mix of liberal internationalist and multilateralist instincts, combined with the temptations of pursuing unilateral primacy in the new unipolar world of the 1990s, left most scholars unimpressed.[7] Only a serious crisis, they speculated, would focus the minds of policymakers into making hard choices and prioritizing among competing objectives and preferences. The 9/11 terrorist attacks provided just such a shock to the US foreign policy establishment.

The Bush administration's grand strategy after 9/11 revolved primarily around the "Global War on Terror" against al-Qaeda and international terrorism. The 2002 *National Security Strategy* document significantly downplayed the traditional geopolitical threats from great powers, and inflated those from nonstate actors and regional instability: "America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones. We are menaced less by fleets and armies than by catastrophic technologies in the hands of the embittered few."[8] It also judged that that the United States "possesses unprecedented—and unequaled—strength and influence in the world," and vowed to use this extraordinary power to "promote a balance of power that favors freedom."[9] This informed the Bush Doctrine's emphasis on not only aggressively pursuing terrorist networks around the world, a reasonable response in the aftermath of the shock of 9/11, but also attempting to democratize the Middle East by force in the illusory hope that free societies will provide the ultimate antidote to terrorism. The War on Terror thus appeared for a while to provide a new organizing principle for America's post–Cold War grand strategy. However, the failed wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the overall disappointment with Bush's interventionist grand strategy among both the general

public and the experts, led to an intense renewal of the pre-9/11 grand strategy debates between the various schools of thought.

At the end of the Bush presidency, the bipartisan Washington think tank Center for a New American Security (CNAS) invited some of the most preeminent scholarly voices on the topic to outline the contours of their preferred US grand strategy. The resulting collection of articles shows both elements of continuity and change from the initial efforts by Posen and Ross to summarize the debate 20 years before. The liberal internationalist based Cooperative Security approach has been further refined and updated in what John Ikenberry termed a *Liberal Order Building* grand strategy. At the core of this approach is the idea that Washington needs to "lead the way in the creation and operation of a loosely rule-based international order."[10] America's overwhelming power, in Ikenberry's view, needs to be "put in the service of an agreed-upon system of Western-oriented global governance," which will in turn allow this system to "solve problems, create stability, and allow democracy and capitalism to flourish."[11] As he later explained in his book *Liberal Leviathan*, the idea behind this grand strategy is that the United States should use its hegemonic power to pursue liberal internationalist "milieu" goals such as "building the infrastructure of international cooperation, promoting trade and democracy in various regions of the world, and establishing partnerships" rather than realist goals like containing the rise of a specific adversary or maintaining balances of power.[12] In this view, if China were to become a peer superpower, the deep institutional order already in place should significantly protect the security and economic interests of the United States even in a less favorable balance of power.[13]

At the theoretical crossroads of liberal internationalism and realism, one could find an updated version of the grand strategy of *Selective Engagement* outlined by Robert Art.[14] The older version of this framework, as summarized by Posen and Ross, was a defensive realist approach designed to merely prevent unfavorable balances of power in key regions if it can be done at an acceptable cost, while eschewing many of the other ambitions of liberal internationalists. Art's newer version incorporates a much more expansive list of priorities and goals. The six "fundamental national interests" according to him combine three that flow from a realist theoretical understanding of national security (protect the homeland from attack; keep a deep peace among the Eurasian great powers; and preserve assured access to stable supplies of oil) with three that are liberal internationalist ones (preserve an open international economic order; spread democracy and the rule of law, protect human rights and

prevent mass murders in civil wars; and avert severe climate change).[15] Therefore, rather than being grounded purely in defensive realism, Art's adaptation of selective engagement offered a more interventionist strategy more willing to stay deeply enmeshed in alliances around the world, maintain forward deployed troops, and support admittedly *selective* "world-ordering" military interventions in the name of stability, international law, and genocide prevention.

Posen developed his own new grand strategic framework of *Restraint*, a defensive realist paradigm he outlined in more detail in a book a few years later. He formulated this grand strategy by drawing elements from both the Neo-Isolationism and Selective Engagement ideal-types he presented in his earlier article.[16] In the view of Posen as well as that of many other realists like Layne, Stephen Walt, and Mearsheimer, the post–Cold War emergent grand strategy of *Liberal Hegemony* (a combination of Primacy and Cooperative Security) had very poor results: "unnecessary, counterproductive, costly and wasteful," as he scathingly describes it in the preface to his book.[17] Instead, he recommends a realist approach that eschews liberal hegemonic priorities and replaces them with three main goals: "preventing a powerful rival from upending the global balance of power, fighting terrorists, and limiting nuclear proliferation."[18] Fighting terrorism and limiting nuclear proliferation, however, should require less use of direct military force to avoid costly "nation building" wars such as Iraq and Afghanistan. And as far as preventing the rise of a potential regional hegemon in Asia, he argued that regional rivals such as India, Russia, and Japan should be able to balance against Beijing with limited US assistance. Moreover, Washington should avoid actions that might "unnecessarily threaten" China and make the Chinese Communist Party act more aggressively.[19]

Even though this *defensive realist* paradigm of Restraint (sometimes called Retrenchment) soon became the dominant scholarly alternative to the liberal hegemonic grand strategy preferred by the US foreign policy establishment, hints of a more *offensive realist* approach could be found in an important article by Sebastian Rosato and John Schuessler in *Perspectives on Politics* in 2011.[20] They advocated a grand strategy focused on balancing against major powers with the potential to become peer competitors, such as China, while taking a more relaxed view toward other minor powers unless they could aim for regional hegemony of key areas of the world, like Iran in the Middle East, for example.[21] In a key break with both the liberal internationalist view on China and with the defensive realist one, they warned against the danger of a benign view

of Beijing's potential rise to superpower status: "intentions are unknowable, and even if known, are subject to change. This being the case, no state should knowingly put itself in a position of weakness."[22] The US should therefore begin actively balancing and containing China's rise, as opposed to relying on either nuclear deterrence, as defensive realists would suggest, or on the potentially pacifying impact of international law, norms, and institutions, as liberal internationalist preferred.[23]

The Obama administration's grand strategy has been criticized by many scholars for being either entirely nonexistent or at best well-meaning but ineffective.[24] Daniel Drezner argued that Obama's initial grand strategy was one of *multilateral retrenchment*, "designed to curtail the United States' overseas commitments, restore its standing in the world, and shift burdens onto global partners."[25] As such, one could notice a trend toward elements of both defensive realism (the retrenchment part) and liberal internationalism (the multilateralism part). However, later in the administration, Obama's team shifted slightly toward a more assertive realist position by signaling the so-called Pivot to Asia, but they never truly followed through with it partly because their liberal positions on international economics and climate change limited the extent of this shift. The subsequent rise of a much less internationalist strategy with the election of Donald Trump in 2016 narrowed the grand strategy debate into two broad camps. In their book *Open World*, Rebecca Lissner and Mira Rapp Hooper describe the two broad approaches competing for influence in the past decade: a realist *Restraint* focused on retrenchment, and an internationalist *Deep Engagement* approach emphasizing renewed global leadership.[26] Some of the most heated scholarly arguments in the 2010s, and even today, took place between the proponents of these two approaches.

For example, Stephen Brooks, John Ikenberry, and William Wohlforth argued on the pages of *International Security* that US grand strategy since 1945 could in fact be summarized as a Deep Engagement grand strategy focused on three broad goals: "managing the external environment to reduce near- and long-term threats to U.S. national security; promoting a liberal economic order to expand the global economy and maximize domestic prosperity; and creating, sustaining, and revising the global institutional order to secure necessary interstate cooperation on terms favorable to U.S. interests."[27] This description, they claimed, is more accurate than the "Liberal Hegemony" one used by its critics such as Posen or Layne. Crucially, Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth contend that the benefits of this grand strategy continue to outweigh its costs, con-

trary to what its realist critics believe. Their paradigm is mostly grounded in a liberal internationalist understanding of great power politics that expects cooperation more than conflict, although the authors attempt to separate it from a "Deep Engagement Plus" version (described in more detail in Brooks and Wohlforth's later book *America Abroad*) by stipulating that issues such as democracy promotion or humanitarian intervention belong in that latter framework, but not the former. Therefore, the failed wars in Iraq and Afghanistan shouldn't be blamed on their preferred grand strategy.[28] The alternative grand strategy of Restraint, the authors further claim, would risk instability and the outbreak of a major war in a key region of the world due to the lack of US military presence as the ultimate security guarantor. It is important to note that the Restraint grand strategy being criticized by Brooks et al. is a *defensive realist* one; their criticism of the unduly optimistic view of defensive realists regarding the intentions of other great powers is shared by offensive realists as well.[29]

The defensive realist *Restraint* paradigm starts from the premise that "the United States is a very secure country" and therefore should only pursue "narrow policies to address . . . the few things that could jeopardize that security."[30] Excessive international activism and militarism, driven by hegemonic ambitions and an ideological commitment to the spread of American values, has led US leaders down a failed grand strategic path. Some historians of US foreign relations who also favor *Restraint*, such as Andrew Bacevich or Stephen Wertheim, also decried this strategy as imperial or hegemonic, or both: according to this line of criticism, Washington had pursued an overly militarized and self-defeating grand strategy of preeminence that left both America and the world worse off.[31] A "cautious balance-of-power strategy" and less reliance on US military power will properly shift more of the burden of regional stability to US allies and diminish the "free riding" problem, Restrainers argue, thus giving the US more security at less cost, a rare win-win situation in world politics.[32] Equally important, such a restrained approach would avoid antagonizing other great powers such as Russia and China and thus lessen the chances of conflict with them. Many prominent realists have been advocating for such a Restraint approach for close to three decades, but this chorus grew more intense when the rising costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, combined with the economic impact of the 2008 financial crisis, led to a public disillusionment with America's expansive global leadership role advocated by the defenders of the current commitments.[33]

The election of the anti-interventionist Trump administration in 2016, the first president who echoed realist criticisms of the post–Cold War consensus grand strategy, intensified the scholarly debate between critics and defenders of the prevailing "global leadership" (or "liberal hegemony" to some) grand strategy. An illustrative example of this renewed debate took place on the pages of *Foreign Affairs* magazine in a heated exchange between realists Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer (advocating a version of retrenchment they called *Offshore Balancing*) and conservative internationalists Hal Brands and Peter Feaver who defended the current grand strategy.[34] Unlike the *Restraint* approach favored by Posen and Layne, the offshore balancing of Mearsheimer and Walt was grounded in a more offensive realist structural theory of international relations. They start by defining the most important grand strategy goals as preserving US dominance in the Western Hemisphere and countering potential hegemons in Europe, Northeast Asia, and the Persian Gulf.[35] In order to do that, Washington should abandon the expensive and self-defeating liberal hegemonic goal of defending and expanding a US-led liberal world order, and instead adopt a balance of power approach where the US serves as a balancer of last resort when a would-be regional power threatens to establish itself as a regional hegemon in one of the three key geopolitical areas of the world. The authors differentiate this approach not only from liberal and conservative internationalists but also from fellow defensive realists or isolationists who believe that the US has few if any interests worth militarily defending outside the Western Hemisphere, and that pushing for US military primacy is a self-perpetuating problem.[36] Rather, "by husbanding U.S. strength, offshore balancing would preserve U.S. primacy far into the future and safeguard liberty at home."[37]

Brands and Feaver, two of the most persuasive defenders of the post–Cold War US grand strategy, in return argued that US presence *onshore* as opposed to *offshore* in Europe and East Asia maintained the peace there after World War II, and that a return to prewar offshore balancing raises the risk of another devastating conflict. Moreover, they claim the US would have to intervene at a much higher cost than that of maintaining the current expansive network of bases and alliances, and also that our allies would do less balancing, not more, if the US were to pull back.[38] Lastly, they doubt the American people would tolerate the amoral realpolitik of largely abandoning democracy promotion and the push for human rights.[39] Walt and Mearsheimer rebut these claims by

arguing that conditions after 1990 no longer require the onshore commitment of the Cold War era, given the lack of would-be hegemons in Europe, for example. Moreover, intervening later in a regional conflict saves the US money and lives by letting the local actors bear the brunt of the fighting first, as was the case during World War II. Lastly, getting deeply involved militarily in places like the Middle East requires just as much, if not more, moral compromises as an offshore posture, due to the need to maintain bases in authoritarian places like Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates.[40]

The most relevant part about this vigorous scholarly exchange for our present GPC era is that Walt/Mearsheimer accepted the idea of China potentially being that aspiring regional hegemon that would require a US active onshore presence, but nevertheless at the time they concluded that the US could "markedly reduce its defense spending" if it curtails commitments to Europe and the Middle East. Brands and Feaver, in turn, didn't address that possibility and therefore maintained that US efforts to stabilize the Middle East, combat terrorism and nuclear proliferation, and stay heavily involved in NATO, in addition to maintaining the current commitment to East Asia, could all be pursued simultaneously. This early schism between China-focused realists and global-order-focused liberal/conservative internationalists represented a harbinger of our current grand strategy debate in the GPC era, particularly after the war in Ukraine and continued military involvement in the Middle East threatens to divert key US military and economic resources away from the Asia-Pacific region. While the *balancing* in offshore balancing was a mere hypothetical possibility a decade ago, it is arguably an urgent necessity today, as shown later in this book.

Arguably the most recent comprehensive scholarly effort to capture the nuanced differences between various competing grand strategies can be found in a 2018 *Texas National Security Review* article by Paul Avey, Jonathan Markowitz, and Robert Reardon. Similar to the now classic Posen/Ross framework from 1996, these scholars surveyed the recent literature and delineated four competing grand strategy paradigms separated by how their advocates define US national interests, objectives, and policy tools.[41] Starting with the theoretical anchor of each approach, they first describe a *Restraint* school grounded in balance of power realism. Even though they assign to this school a very *defensive realist* flavor (such as minimal use of force and a reduction in force structure and alliance

commitments), they argue that offensive realists also favor this approach because of the US privileged position in the Western Hemisphere and, crucially, "the absence of a potential hegemon abroad."[42] The other three schools of thought are all based on what the authors describe as versions of the hegemonic stability theory. They first list *Deep Engagement* where they include the Brooks and Wohlforth article I discussed earlier in this section, as well as Art's selective engagement ideas, but interestingly enough omit Ikenberry even though he was one of the three coauthors with Brooks and Wohlforth of the *IS* article advocating for Deep Engagement. This is because Avey et al. offer a separate third school for Ikenberry's views, *Liberal Internationalism*, which adds Institutionalism to hegemonic stability theory. Lastly, unlike some previous works, they also add a *Conservative Primacy* school (combining hegemonic stability theory with classical realism) where they include a mix of "neoconservatives, conservative internationalists, and conservative realists" ranging from Matthew Kroenig and Henry Nau to Colin Dueck, Peter Feaver, Hal Brands, and Eliot Cohen.[43]

This theoretical classification is a worthwhile endeavor, but ultimately suffers from some significant problems. First, as we are entering an era of Great Power Competition and China's rise for regional and potentially global hegemony becomes the determining factor in shaping world events, the differences between defensive and offensive realists became much more pronounced. Second, as the war in Ukraine brought the question of defending the liberal world order into intense focus, whatever small differences there may have been between Deep Engagement and Liberal Internationalism are now almost negligible. On the flip side, the Ukraine debate exposed serious cleavages between nationalist/realist conservatives and internationalist conservatives, with the two camps at odds about what to do: revealingly, one of the major Washington conservative think tanks, the Heritage Foundation, is far more skeptical of US involvement in Ukraine than the other one, the American Enterprise Institute. The same dynamic played out in the Republican Party in Congress and the presidential primary, thus confirming a growing schism between what Colin Dueck described in his book *Age of Iron* as distinct subtraditions of foreign policy on the American right.[44] Lastly, the authors only include military levers of power in their analysis. In the new GPC era, however, geoeconomics, technology policy, and diplomatic competition, as well as a war of narratives in the global information sphere, are arguably just as important as raw military power for grand strategic success.

"Competing Visions in US Grand Strategy" Redux*: The New Debates in the GPC Era*

In our current era of Great Power Competition, the US grand strategy debate is no longer best captured by the stale binaries of *restraint* vs. *deep engagement*, or *retrenchment* vs. *global leadership*. Instead, one must take into account the key structural shift in the configuration of the international system away from American unipolarity. The most significant grand strategic development of the current era is the rise of China as a near peer of the United States, and this transformation of the unipolar world into a multipolar one, with Russia's reemergence as a distant third great power. This configuration was perceptively called by Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth "1+1+n" to better capture the distance between the US, China, and everyone else.[45] However, while Brooks and Wohlforth claim the dynamics of world politics in this distribution will continue to resemble those of a unipolar world, I agree with many other experts who argue that the GPC era dynamics are those of a multipolar world.[46]

Consequently, I outline four grand strategic visions for America's role in this new configuration of the international system. In addition to the offensive realism framework, which I already mentioned in the introduction as being my preferred strategy, there are three other worthy alternatives: defensive realism, liberal internationalism, and conservative internationalism. While other versions of these grand strategies do exist in today's scholarship, such as Robert Kupchan's *Isolationism*, which is a slightly narrower version of the defensive realism school, or Van Jackson's *Progressivism*, which is a more pacifist and economically statist version of the liberal internationalism school, I argue that the four I am describing cover most aspects of the current GPC-era debate.[47] In this section, I compare and contrast these four grand strategic visions in order to highlight their key differences. Following the same approach as Posen and Ross and Avey et al., but updating it to include the substantive disputes of the present debate, I highlight the differences among the four frameworks across seven different dimensions that cover the most important characteristics of American grand strategy in our current GPC era (see table 1 below).

First, the four grand strategy schools are separated by different worldviews about how the world works. Three of them are based on classical theories of international relations: liberal internationalism, offensive realism, and defensive realism. The fourth one, conservative

internationalism, is based on a mix of hegemonic stability theory and classical liberalism.

Second, grand strategies are separated by what they view as the main grand strategic objective for the US and the main strategic guiding concept (or principle) shaping foreign and defense policymaking. While some are position oriented, focusing on the pursuit or maintenance of hegemonic status or the balance of power as the overarching goal, others are milieu-oriented, and they highlight upholding of the liberal rules-based world order as the main goal. At the same time, these overarching goals can be pursued through difference general approaches, such as a forward-leaning interventionist Deep Engagement, or a more restrained posture relying on Deterrence, or a combination of the two based on Offshore Balancing.

Third, the four paradigms have different expectations about the kind of diplomatic and economic relations prevalent among great powers. One way to conceptualize these differences is to code them along a spectrum from cooperation to competition and eventually to conflict.

Fourth, some schools of thought are much more confident than others in the power of nuclear deterrence and the so-called nuclear revolution to lower the risk of great power war and security competition.

Fifth, the four paradigms have different diagnoses of the current configuration of the balance of power (along the unipolar-bipolar-multipolar spectrum) and consequently different expectations for the nature of international order in the GPC era, ranging from a continuation of a US-led liberal hegemonic world order, to a transition to a more multipolar but still liberal order, to a realist order based primarily on balance of power considerations rather than liberal international norms and institutions.

Sixth, crucially, the four strategies identify different issues as *the* greatest security threat to the United States in the GPC era, with some of them focusing on the rise of China, others on climate change and illiberal challenges to the liberal world order, and yet others worrying about security dilemmas spiraling out of control. Prioritizing the most important among different threats is arguably *the* key role of a grand strategy, and therefore how each of the grand strategies make that choice is essential to separate their implications for a wide range of subordinate decisions regarding other foreign policy and national security decisions.

Seventh and last, there are strong differences on how Washington should deal with questions of foreign economic policy. Three of the schools adhere in various degrees to a free-market-oriented, globalization-

friendly foreign economic policy aimed to expand free trade and foreign direct investments around the world, while one of them is much more economically nationalist and skeptical of the liberal mantra of the benefits of free trade and globalization. While the previous studies mentioned above avoided teasing out the implications of various grand strategies in this area, in the GPC era questions of geoeconomics and industrial/technological policy are too important to be left out of the strategic analysis.

Table 1 summarizes the differences between these ideal-type grand strategic approaches across these different dimensions. In the remainder of this chapter, I offer brief sketches of the four paradigms, focusing on the seven categories of analysis outlined above, and compare and contrast their different diagnoses and prescriptions for American grand strategy in the GPC era.

Liberal Internationalism

Arguably the most dominant school of US grand strategy among both the Washington foreign policy establishment and the Biden administration alike remains the liberal internationalist perspective best captured by Brooks, Wohlforth, and Ikenberry's *Deep Engagement* framework mentioned above.

Unlike offensive realism's skepticism about great power politics and its emphasis on the struggle for hegemony, the liberal internationalist perspective is much more sanguine about the prospects for major countries peacefully cooperating to achieve mutual benefits such as a stable world order conducive to peace and prosperity for all. As Michael Mousseau starkly argues in an important *International Security* article, rather than entering a Thucydides Trap and potential hegemonic conflict as realists like Graham Allison and others worry about, the "world is moving rapidly toward permanent peace, possibly in our lifetime." Continuing a long liberal tradition of emphasizing the pacifying impact of global trade and economic factors on international conflict, he argues essentially that the two greatest powers of our age, the US and China, are both status-quo market economies interested in preserving the current liberal economic order.

Even if not all liberal internationalist scholars are as optimistic about the commonality of interests between US and China, most of them nevertheless disagree with the emerging narrative that the world has reentered a realist world of Great Power Competition. In an essay sharply

Table 1. Competing Theoretical Diagnoses and Prescriptions for US Grand Strategy in the GPC Era

IR Theory Foundation	Liberal Internationalism	Conservative Internationalism	Defensive Realism	Offensive Realism
Primary Strategic Objectives and Guiding Security Concept	Stability and Prosperity through Deep Engagement	Hegemony through Deep Engagement	Peace and Security through Deterrence	No Peer Rivals through Offshore Balancing
Diplomacy and Trade vis-à-vis other GPs	Cooperation and Competition	Competition and Conflict	Cooperation and Competition	Competition and Conflict
Impact of Nuclear Deterrence / "Nuclear Revolution"	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak
Role of Ideology and Values in FP	Major	Major	Minor	Minor
Polarity and Nature of International Order	Unipolar militarily and multi/ nonpolar in other dimensions, Liberal Institutional Order	Unipolar, Hegemonic-led Liberal International Order	Multipolar, Balance of Power Realist Order	Multipolar, Balance of Power Realist Order
Primary Security Threats to US	Climate Change, Illiberal Challenges to LIO	Rise of China as Peer Rival, Illiberal Challenges to LIO, Terrorism	GP Security Dilemmas	Rise of China as Peer Rival, GPC rivalry in Western Hemisphere
US Foreign Economic Policy	Free market, internationalist	Free market, internationalist	Mostly internationalist	Mostly nationalist

Note: FP = Foreign Policy; GP = Great Powers; GPC = Great Power Competition; LIO = Liberal International Order

critical of the GPC construct, RAND analyst Michael Mazarr describes a world of great power interactions shaped by international norms and institutions, and one in which the US-led liberal world order still plays a crucial part in maintaining great power peace and prosperity: "The postwar order, although imperfect, has produced the most highly institutionalized and norm-bound international system in history. Critically, this order is not imposed on an unruly set of troublemakers—it reflects deeply embedded economic preferences for peace, stability, and prosperity."[48] Therefore, in a liberal internationalist conception of great power politics, a mutual desire for maintaining the regional and global security architecture needed for fostering wealth creation is the most important factor shaping their interactions. In other words, above all else, today's great powers pursue security and prosperity.

According to this school of thought, the common desire for stability and wealth creation often leads to patterns of cooperation, sometimes competition, but almost never conflict in modern great power politics. These scholars do acknowledge that Russia and China have recently adopted more conflictual grand strategies than cooperative ones, but they nevertheless believe that old-fashioned geopolitics and military rivalries are a poor guide for modern statecraft due in no small part to the deterrent role of nuclear weapons.[49] This school of thought is generally confident that the "nuclear revolution," together with economic independence, has rendered the balance of power-type realist calculations much less relevant than in previous eras. Two of the most prominent liberal internationalists, John Ikenberry and Daniel Deudney, have pithily captured the differences between how this school of thought regards the role of the military balance of power in today's world compared to the realist alternatives: "In an increasingly interdependent world, basic security and welfare interests demand thicker restraints, configured in ways that are completely alien to the realist approach. With the hypertrophy of violent capacity produced by the nuclear revolution, simple attention to the relative distribution of power is grossly inadequate."[50]

A direct consequence of downplaying the role of the military balance of power and of traditional geopolitical rivalries is a different prioritization of US grand strategic goals. For liberal internationalists, a concern with addressing transnational threats cooperatively with other major countries takes precedence over Great Power Competition, and hence should supersede it if the two are in conflict. As Dan Nexon explains this position, "The United States must adapt to a world in which China and Russia are growing stronger, both militarily and economically. But in

many instances, cooperation—including with rivals—will advance U.S. security and prosperity far more effectively than competition. The world faces existential challenges such as climate change, ecosystem collapse, and nuclear proliferation that will only worsen if the United States, China, and others fail to collaborate."[51] In the same vein, one of the foremost liberal internationalist theorists, Joseph Nye, recently warned:

> National security and the global political agenda have changed since 1914 and 1945, but US strategy currently underappreciates new threats from ecological globalization. Global climate change will cost trillions of dollars and can cause damage on the scale of war; the COVID-19 pandemic has already killed more Americans than all the country's wars, combined, since 1945.[52]

Unsurprisingly given this unconventional and radical new way to frame the threats to US national security by including estimates of potential environmental costs and nonviolent deaths from a flu virus in the realm of grand strategic affairs, Bruce Jentleson has pushed this approach to its logical conclusion and advocates a new grand strategy focused on these two issues by naming "preventing pandemics" and "mitigating climate change" as the top strategic priorities going forward.[53]

In contrast to both defensive and offensive realists, liberal internationalists see the maintenance and strengthening of a liberal world order as a cornerstone for the present and future of US grand strategy.[54] The elements of such an order, according to Ikenberry, are "open markets, international institutions, cooperative security, democratic community, progressive change, collective problem solving, [and] the rule of law."[55] According to its proponents, the appeal of an institutionalized global order for managing great power politics is the ability of such an arrangement to foster cooperation and win-win outcomes, to provide a mutually agreed upon framework for areas of competition, and to lessen security tensions and the chance of armed conflict. Such an order served the US remarkably well during the Cold War and even in the post–Cold War era, its proponents contend, because it prevented a counterhegemonic balancing coalition forming up against Washington, as some realists expected after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Therefore, Ikenberry recommends that Washington double down on multilateralism and institutional cooperation even if now it would have to give up some of the privileges that it benefitted from in previous decades when US economic power and diplomatic influence were unrivaled: "The way

in which liberal order evolves will hinge in important respects on the United States—and its willingness and ability to make new commitments to rules and institutions while simultaneously reducing its rights and privileges within the order."[56]

Lastly, liberal internationalists historically have advocated for the spread of economic and political freedom around the world, as they assumed a more economically interconnected world, with prevalent democratic values, is one where great powers can live in peace and prosper together.[57] While realists worry about the strategic and national security vulnerabilities exacerbated by global supply chains and financial globalization, a liberal foreign economic policy is focused on deepening economic ties by opening markets abroad for US companies and by lowering trade barriers in general. Similarly, in contrast to the "billiard ball" view of foreign policy as being only marginally influenced by a country's domestic politics, solidarity with fellow democratic states and fostering democratic regimes in countries that lack them is another important principle of liberal internationalism. The actions of great powers, therefore, are greatly impacted by whether they are ruled by authoritarian or democratic regimes. And as the major democratic great power in the world, the United States has a special role in defending liberal values abroad. It should do that not just by promoting democracy but also by advancing a Western universalist position on human rights and by transcending power politics in favor of transnational priorities, or a "people-first" grand strategy, as Anne Marie Slaughter now describes it.[58]

Conservative Internationalism

In addition to liberal internationalists, another group of scholars advocating for the maintenance of a US-led liberal world order as the core goal of American grand strategy are the conservative internationalists.[59] They also favor the forward-deployed, world-ordering Deep Engagement security approach in broad terms, but the advocates of this paradigm nevertheless differ from their liberal counterparts in a number of important ways. This strategic approach is in many ways the GPC-era successor to the "primacy" option of the Posen and Ross (1996) and Avey et al. (2018) studies.

First, they are much more skeptical about the intentions of other great powers, and in fact they share with the offensive realists a focus on the struggle for hegemony as a key driver of world politics. There-

fore, they expect conflictual relations with other potential regional hegemons; as Hudson Institute scholar and *Wall Street Journal* columnist Walter Russell Mead explains: "China, Iran, and Russia never bought into the geopolitical settlement that followed the Cold War, and they are making increasingly forceful attempts to overturn it. That process will not be peaceful, and whether or not the revisionists succeed, their efforts have already shaken the balance of power and changed the dynamics of international politics."[60] Global cooperation through international institutions to address transnational issues does not represent nearly as high a priority for conservative internationalists as it does for liberal ones, nor do the former believe that other great powers like Russia or China are likely to prove reliable partners worthy of engagement.

Second, conservative internationalists regard Beijing and Moscow not just as great power rivals in a geopolitical sense but also as implacable ideological competitors inimical to the US democratic system and to the US-led world order shaped by liberal values. In explicit contrast to the realist perspective focused on the balance of power, conservative internationalists like Hal Brands emphasize the ideological element of today's era of Great Power Competition:

> The leading revisionists are autocracies that practice a distinctly authoritarian version of capitalism and see the advance of liberal ideals as an existential threat to their legitimacy and power. . . . For Russian and Chinese officials, moreover, authoritarianism is more than an approach to governing or a means of enriching a corrupt ruling class. It is an ideology in its own right—a distinctive way of looking at the world.[61]

Consequently, unlike liberal internationalists, conservative internationalists don't generally expect China to cooperate with the US to address common global problems like climate change or pandemics. Instead, as Matthew Kroenig and Dan Negrea put it in an essay, "confrontation with China cannot be avoided" as long as "Xi (and perhaps the Chinese Communist Party) remains in power."[62]

Third, even though both schools want to contain China's quest for regional hegemony in Asia, another important analytical difference between realists and conservative internationalists is that the latter believe that the way for the US to do that is to rely on hegemonic stability theory as the foundation for American grand strategy, while the former believe in the balance of power.[63] And similar to liberal international-

ists but unlike realists, conservative internationalists believe that sustaining and militarily defending a liberal world order is still possible and in fact a necessary goal of US grand strategy. They oppose a "sphere of influence" arrangement based on balance of power considerations, and instead favor doubling down on the post–Cold War liberal international order.[64] This connection between US power and liberal order is best synthesized by Paul Miller, who writes that "American power and liberal order are mutually constituting; that liberal order is the outer perimeter of American security; and that sustaining liberal order in the world's key regions is a cost-effective grand strategy for the United States."[65]

One of the most prominent conservative internationalists, Robert Kagan, goes even further in pushing the argument that defending US democratic liberal values at home depends on the success of the US liberal hegemonic project abroad: "The only hope for preserving liberalism at home and abroad is the maintenance of a world order conducive to liberalism, and the only power capable of upholding such an order is the United States."[66] In contrast to realists who focus on working with allies to defend US material interests and balances of power in key regions of the world, Kagan argues that "the purpose of NATO and other alliances is to defend not against direct threats to U.S. interests but against a breakdown of the order that best serves those interests."[67]

Fourth, in terms of the main threats to US grand strategy in the current era, conservative internationalists differ from offensive realists once more by not prioritizing the rise of China above all else. The ideological threat from authoritarianism and the continued fight against Islamic terrorism are seen as equally important challenges to the US-led liberal order, and therefore worthy of prioritizing as much as China's bid for regional hegemony. For example, Richard Fontaine criticized the redeployment of US troops from Africa and the Middle East as an example of the potential negative consequences of the Pentagon's Pivot to Asia and GPC: "It is highly unlikely that the benefits of a modestly increased presence in the Indo-Pacific are worth the pullback from a major front in Western counterterrorism efforts. . . . Defending Asia against Chinese hegemony is important, but protecting Americans against terrorist attacks is critical as well."[68] In the same vein, he echoes another concern of conservative internationalists when he warns of the ideological threat posed by Russia's information operations to the West: "It is not China but Russia, for example, that presents the chief current threat to democratic institutions in the United States and Europe."[69]

As a consequence of the focus on the ideological nature of Great

Power Competition, conservative internationalists like Hal Brands and Charlie Edel tend to recommend a US grand strategic framework centered around "Democratic Solidarity."[70] In their view, much like during the Cold War when the US led the free world against the threat of communist dictatorship, Washington needs to once again form alliances with its democratic partners and engage in a global competition against China and Russia to preserve the liberal nature of the global order: "The clash of liberalism and illiberalism is more central to global affairs than at any time since the Cold War, and US strategy should reflect that reality."[71] Consequently, conservative internationalists are also proponents of expanding free trade and promoting democracy around the world, as they regard these two issues as key components of a world order suitable to US interests. In *Conservative Internationalism*, Henry Nau unambiguously declares that the "goal of conservative internationalist foreign policy is to expand freedom and ultimately increase the number of democratic, constitutional and republican governments in the world community."[72] Similarly, in this theoretical paradigm political freedom is closely connected to free market economics; therefore, Nau argues, "the best tool for inching freedom forward not only in bordering but also distant regions is economic engagement or the free movement of goods, capital, and people."[73]

The real reasons for expanding free trade and promoting democracy, this school of thought argues, have less to do with an idealistic commitment to American values and more to do with a belief that this is the best way to defend US interests around the world. Similar to liberal internationalists but in contrast to realist interpretations, conservative internationalists contend that the United States followed a successful post–World War II grand strategy anchored in classical American political and economic values. Former Bush administration official Kori Schake pithily summarized this position in a recent *Foreign Affairs* essay: "In truth, the pillars of U.S. strategy for the past 70 years—committing to the defense of countries that share U.S. values or interests, expanding trade, upholding rules-based institutions, and fostering liberal values internationally—have achieved remarkable successes and will continue to serve the country well going forward."[74] In short, a conservative internationalist grand strategy seeks to expand the Pax Americana of the 1990s for the foreseeable future, and believes in the strength of not just preeminent American military power but also of American free trade and universal values as key components of Washington's foreign policy toolkit.

Defensive Realism

During the post–Cold War era, both defensive and offensive realists usually found themselves in agreement advocating a grand strategy variously called restraint, retrenchment, or offshore balancing, as explained in the previous section. Offensive realists like Mearsheimer and defensive realists like Walt often joined forces in opposing the liberal and conservative internationalists who favored an interventionist grand strategy supporting a liberal world order.[75] In the era of Great Power Competition, however, the two strands of realism point in different directions, and important fissures have occurred in the *Restraint* scholarly camp regarding primarily how to handle the rise of China, and secondarily the resurgence of Russia.[76] Unlike the offensive realists who expect an intensification of hegemonic rivalries in the GPC era, the defensive realists in academia and places like the Quincy Institute in Washington are much more sanguine that great power competition can coexist along with great power cooperation, and that China's and Russia's actions are primarily driven by a desire for regional security that could be successfully appeased by relying on spheres of influence, the balance of power, and nuclear deterrence.[77]

The first major difference, therefore, between defensive and offensive realists has to do with interpreting the scale of ambition driving Beijing's and Moscow's recent aggressive moves, and consequently the appropriate US response to them. Offensive realists expect China to aggressively pursue regional hegemony and eventually global hegemony, and Russia to expand its sphere of influence in its former Soviet territories, both undesirable outcomes from the perspective of US strategy albeit with Beijing's actions more of a concern than Moscow's. Defensive realists, on the contrary, tend to downplay the threat to the US strategic position and national security from China's assertive behavior in East Asia and from Russia's revisionism in Eastern Europe; in keeping with a long-standing distinction between the two forms of realism, they believe these two great powers will stop their aggressive moves once they feel more secure in their regions, rather than relentlessly pursuing hegemonic goals.

Josh Shifrinson, exemplifying this position, believes that those warning about Beijing's hegemonic ambitions have been "overly concerned with Chinese aggrandizement."[78] His theoretical model of great power politics "offers cautious optimism that a rising China may not systematically challenge and prey upon the United States' power and security position." Therefore, he concludes, "it is possible that a rising China will

seek to cooperate with or defer an overt challenge to the United States for reasons independent of the effects of economic interdependence, ideological compatibility, or institutional ties."[79] Another prominent defensive realist, Charles Glaser, echoes this idea that China's rise is not as big a threat to US interests as many analysts now contend, and that in fact US policy should *accommodate* it rather than try to *contain* it: "The pressures created by the international structure—the combination of material and information conditions that constrain states' international options—should allow China to rise peacefully, which, somewhat counterintuitively, increases the potential importance of accommodation."[80]

For defensive realists, therefore, the new era of Great Power Competition can and should be accompanied as well by US efforts at cooperation rather than containment toward China and Russia. In fact, these scholars and analysts are critical of what they perceive as Washington's increasing belligerence, and often worry that such actions could increase security dilemmas and limit the chances of cooperation while raising the risk of conflict. Along these lines, Stephen Wertheim advised the Biden administration to abandon the entire "self-fulfilling construct of 'great-power competition'," and called for the US to abandon its emerging focus on containing China's and Russia's regional ambitions: "Through prudent retrenchment, the United States can coexist with China and Russia and find the right mix of competition and cooperation as U.S. interests dictate."[81] Shifrinson echoed the concern with Washington's focus on GPC and on China's ambitions: "By making more of the China threat than warranted, neo-primacy thereby risks creating a broader and deeper contest with Beijing than is warranted."[82]

Another reason why defensive realists are more optimistic about the potential of avoiding conflict between great powers in the new GPC era is nuclear deterrence and the so-called nuclear revolution in world politics.[83] As Nuno Monteiro explains in one of the most comprehensive extensions of Robert Jervis's classical argument to the modern era, "Nuclear weapons guarantee that no state that possesses them will see its survival threatened by a state that values first and foremost its own survival. . . . They allow for the creation of a new leviathan: a unipolar power that has the potential to remain in that position indefinitely because it does not threaten major powers around it."[84] Even defensive realists who may disagree with Monteiro's argument on the lack of incentives to challenge unipolarity nevertheless tend to agree that nuclear weapons provide a strong impetus for great powers to limit their conflictual tendencies, a theoretical argument contested by offensive realists.[85]

A restrained competition in the security/military domain, however, does not mean a lack of conflict in other areas of great power politics as China and Russia assert themselves economically and diplomatically. Defensive realists indeed tend to be as skeptical as their offensive counterparts about the prospects of the US-led liberal world order and the Western-shaped international institutions supporting it.[86] As China's power and influence keep rising, Layne outlines the contours of a world order based much more on realist notions of sovereignty and noninterference than on liberal universal values: "as China's role in shaping the international agenda increases, democracy and human rights will become less salient."[87] One of the most consistent policy recommendations of restrainers over the years is to abandon the muscular interventionism of the post–Cold War era in the name of promoting American values; Will Ruger and Michael Desch, for example, call for a grand strategy that "would eschew the role of world policeman or global social worker committed to grand schemes such as regime change or aggressively promoting liberal democracy around the world."[88]

Instead of a *global* order grounded in the principles of international law, defensive realists contend, key geographical areas of the world are likely to be carved into "spheres of influence" by the great powers dominating them. They regard such arrangements as perhaps unfair but nevertheless unavoidable consequences of balance-of-power politics, and they assume that regional hegemons are mostly seeking security and are deterred from venturing outside their own regions. In contrast to the offensive realist position that opposes ceding such regional hegemonic status to Beijing and Moscow in East Asia or Eastern Europe, however, defensive realists like Graham Allison call on US policymakers to resign themselves to this emerging shift in the balance of power and accept China's and Russia's regional hegemonic ambitions in the South China Sea and the post-Soviet "near abroad," respectively.[89]

Not all defensive realists are willing to concede as much to China or Russia, and there is some debate among various scholars in this school of thought as to what bargains the US could strike with its rivals. The idea that a mutually acceptable bargain can and should be struck sooner rather than later, however, is what distinguishes this school from their offensive counterparts: as Jennifer Lind and Darryl Press explain this negotiating mind set, "In a post-primacy era, U.S. leaders should ask what they can realistically achieve without poisoning U.S.-Chinese relations."[90] From this perspective, these two authors recommend that Washington promises to no longer add any new military allies or partners in Asia in

exchange for Beijing respecting "the status quo in Taiwan and in other territorial disputes."[91] Glaser is less optimistic that Beijing would ever cave on the issue of Taiwan, and instead recommends a grand bargain that would see the United States "ends its commitment to defend Taiwan against Chinese aggression. In return, China would peacefully resolve its maritime and land disputes in the South China and East China Seas, and officially accept the United States' long-term military security role in East Asia."[92]

Lastly, in their foreign economic policy views, defensive realists and restraint proponents (many of whom, such as Emma Ashford and Chris Preble, have libertarian leanings) tend to regard free trade as a "core US interest."[93] They also regard extensive trade relations and interdependence as potentially leading to a lessening of the chance for great power conflicts, although not as much as liberal internationalists believe. As Ashford acknowledges, however, while many academic realists favor free trade, many restraint proponents in the policy world tend to be politically progressive and historically pro-labor and skeptical of free market orthodoxy and globalization.[94] Therefore, on balance, this school of thought is more favorably disposed to the promotion of free trade than their offensive realist counterparts, but less so than both liberal and conservative internationalists.

Offensive Realism

As briefly mentioned in the introduction, offensive realism is a structural theory of international politics that privileges the struggle for hegemony among great powers as the main driver of international politics. In today's GPC era, the United States is the only great power that enjoys a hegemonic status in its own region, and it should want to keep it that way. The United States is not a global hegemon, but it is a peerless great power because no other country can claim dominance over its own region the same way Washington does in the Western Hemisphere. In no small measure, this is because the United States has been involved during and since World War II in thwarting attempts at regional hegemony by Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, and the Soviet Union in order to establish America's peerless rival status.

In today's emerging multipolar world, the only other great power with the economic and military strength to make a bid for regional hegemony is China. Therefore, the number-one grand strategic priority for the US

is to make sure it continues to have *no peer rivals* by keeping China from gaining economic and military dominance over the Asia-Pacific region. At the same time, the US also needs to shore up its regional hegemony in the Western Hemisphere by refocusing on helping address the security, political, and economic problems of its own neighborhood, as well as on countering China's and Russia's encroaching activities in this region.

The offensive realist approach shares with the conservative internationalist one the goal of maintaining US hegemony in its own region, but it differs in limiting the US role to that of an offshore balancer to counter hegemonic bids in other parts of the world, and also in relying on regional balances of power rather than US military dominance to secure US interests in Europe, East Asia, and the Persian Gulf. To use the conceptual difference popularized by Layne in *The Peace of Illusions*, the US would satisfy itself with *regional*, not *extra-regional*, hegemony.[95] In the GPC era, however, the offshore perspective is no longer sufficient in the Asia-Pacific region, the one theater where the United States needs to reinforce its onshore position to deter and thwart Beijing's quest for regional hegemony. In contrast to most defensive realists who in the past also favored offshore balancing as a grand strategy, offensive ones now believe the time for vigorous *balancing* has arrived in East Asia in order to strengthen military deterrence against China and thus reduce the growing risks of a very costly war over Taiwan or the South China Sea.

Given some of Vladimir Putin's recent aggressive military moves in Eastern Europe, some may question why the threat from Russia is considered secondary to that of China in the GPC era. Unlike China's case in East Asia, Russia actually lacks the military and economic power to become a regional hegemon in Europe outside its former Soviet territory, and therefore containing its ambitions is not as difficult. America's NATO allies vastly surpass Russia in economic power and military expenditures, and they face a much more immediate geographical threat than the United States. With limited US support, they are more than capable of countering Putin's recently weakened army if they are incentivized to do so by a diminishing of the US military presence in the region. Truthfully, the biggest danger of the war in Ukraine for the United States is for Russia to become a de facto ally of China by the end of it, and hence shift the balance of power globally in the US-China strategic competition. Preventing this development should be at the top the list of Washington's concerns regarding Putin's actions. A secondary concern involves Russia's moves in the Western Hemisphere, but these are also not as threatening as China's expansive economic encroachments. A similar logic

applies to Iran's potential ambitions to dominate the Persian Gulf and maybe even the entire Middle East. Just like in the European theater, if combined with astute diplomacy and economic statecraft, an offshore balancing approach should be enough to thwart Tehran's ambitions by relying on American powerful local partners such as Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

Even though offensive realism focuses mostly on the struggle for hegemony between great powers, this doesn't mean that it entirely ignores other national security threats. It does mean, however, that it relegates these other issues to a secondary tier and calls for limited and cost-effective approaches to address them so as not to take away too many military or economic resources from the primary goal of the strategy. The second-tier threats facing the Unites States at the moment are the continued fight against radical Islamic terrorist groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda, and nuclear proliferation in places like Iran and North Korea. Transnational security threats like global terrorism and nuclear proliferation remain a concern in the GPC world, as does the Middle East/Persian Gulf area more broadly. However, they must not drain US resources away from Asia and the Western Hemisphere in the way they did in the post–Cold War era. Terrorist threats must be countered with limited force and mostly through intelligence and local partners, not with massive stability and counterinsurgency operations as was the case in Afghanistan and Iraq. The US military must strongly avoid getting dragged into another war in the name of combating nuclear proliferation: Iran and North Korea need to be handled through diplomacy, economic sanctions, and strong regional balancing coalitions without dragging the US into another wasteful military intervention.

Even in the nuclear age, offensive realists largely believe that great power politics remain highly adversarial and lead to intense military competition, or even limited conflict. In other words, as Keir Lieber and Daryl Press recently titled their recent book on the topic, the so-called nuclear revolution that was supposed to reduce (or even eliminate) military conflicts among great powers is a "myth."[96] Other skeptics of the nuclear revolution recently reinforced the idea that nuclear weapons do not significantly ameliorate tensions in the GPC era.[97] Preparing for major power war through investments in high-end conventional military capabilities, therefore, ought to be a key component of defense strategy in the GPC era. More specifically, the US together with its local Asian-Pacific allies should pursue a strategy of *denial defense*, as former Penta-

gon senior official Elbridge Colby explained at length in his book on this topic.[98] The defense of Taiwan in particular represents the greatest military priority for the US military in the short run, as the most likely scenario leading to a war against China.

Another assumption of offensive realism is that great power diplomacy in the GPC era is bound to be dominated by competition and conflict rather than cooperation. In such an environment, *zero-sum* interactions among great powers and a focus on *relative gains* are common patterns of state behavior. The diplomatic strategy of the United States should be mostly focused on containing China's increasing influence in international organizations, as well as on providing support for US allies and partners in Asia and elsewhere who are currently courted, bribed, or even coerced by Beijing to join its own sphere of influence. Instead of a global *liberal* rule-based order establishing the parameters for international governance, there will be multiple *realist* regional orders setting out the terms for cooperation, competition, or conflict in the GPC era.[99] The balance of power, rather than liberal norms and ideas, will be the deciding factor influencing the shape of international organizations, trade regimes, or technological standards.

In contrast with the liberal and conservative ideas-based paradigms, an offensive realist strategy assumes great powers strive for hegemony and act aggressively when it suits their interest, almost *regardless* of their internal form of government. In today's world, the revisionist ambitions of Beijing and Moscow are not driven primarily by their authoritarian leaders, but rather by geopolitical systemic imperatives that would push them in an aggressive direction even if they were ruled by more democratic leaders. Conversely, balance of power considerations rather than democratic or ideological compatibility should drive America's anti-China coalition-building efforts to contain Beijing's regional hegemonic ambitions. Not only should less-than-perfectly liberal democratic non-Western allies like India, Vietnam, and the Philippines be part of the US balancing coalition, but Washington should also be prepared to accept that democratic allies like Germany have their own realist and economic reasons to avoid joining the US in an anti-Beijing coalition.[100] Therefore, the US should significantly downgrade the role of democracy promotion and the attempt to export of liberal values abroad. In the age of GPC, such efforts to divide the world into "democratic" and "authoritarian" camps are not only unhelpful in terms of understanding the actions and allegiances of other powers, but rather counterproductive because they

needlessly alienate many strategically important but traditionalist countries that don't necessarily share the US State Department's most recent avant-garde positions on human rights.

In the realm of economics, an offensive realist approach expects that international trade treaties along with foreign direct investment strategies are being driven by mercantilist/strategic considerations as opposed to liberal market-based ones. The theoretical foundation for this understanding of trade relations goes back to Joseph Grieco's seminal article "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation." In showing how realists emphasize the role of *relative gains* as opposed to *absolute gains* as the primary drivers of great power interactions, Grieco laid the foundation for understanding how the international system has been and continues to remain anarchic, competitive, and conflictual, contrary to what liberal internationalists contend.[101] Rather than being driven almost exclusively by economic efficiency and free market considerations, decisions on global supply chains, advanced technologies like microchip manufacturing, Artificial Intelligence, or 5G telecommunication infrastructure are heavily influenced by political and strategic considerations. An offensive realist grand strategy therefore regards nationalist/protectionist policies as more conducive to the advancement of national security goals, in what the financial historian Niall Ferguson calls a new kind of "techno-economic war" against China.[102]

Just like China is trying to secure access around the world to key rare earth minerals, the US together with its Western allies and partners should pay much closer attention to "supply chain resilience," the new post-COVID-era buzzword capturing the need to avoid depending on an adversary for key inputs. As Daniel Drezner summarized the traditional realist policy preferences on foreign economic policy long ago, these views are characterized by "emphasis on relative gains, suspicion of economic interdependence leading to vulnerability, and hostility to foreign ownership of strategic assets."[103] The main goals therefore are the protection of strategically and economically important domestic US industries in the face of intense (and often illegal) competition from other great powers such as China. The offensive realist position on international trade is not inherently protectionist or nationalist, but during times of intense great power competition these concerns take precedence over pure economic efficiency. Adopting countermeasures and using tariff barriers to forestall such behavior and attempt to maintain relative technological superiority over a potential challenger is the kind of realist eco-

nomic strategy that even classically liberal great powers had to use from time to time. As no less of a proponent of free markets than Adam Smith recognized as he defended Britain's decidedly protectionist Navigation Acts, "defense is of much more importance than opulence."[104]

In the remainder of the book, I will make the case for the offensive-realism-based *No Peer Rivals* grand strategy as the best grand strategy for our GPC era. In each of the next four chapters, I will highlight how the tenets of this approach are better suited for guiding US foreign policy and national security strategy than the other schools of thought, both in terms of setting strategic goals and priorities and in choosing the right combination of means to achieve them. To begin with, the next chapter shows how offensive realism explains the dynamics of great power politics in the GPC era more persuasively than the other schools of thought.

CHAPTER TWO

Realism and the New Era of Geopolitical Conflict

In order to determine the major strategic threats to the US national interest in the GPC era, we must first discuss what theoretical framework best explains the dynamics of great power politics in today's international security environment. One major question to be addressed is whether China and Russia are pursuing regional hegemony as their ultimate grand strategic objective, as offensive realists and conservative internationalists contend, or merely security and prosperity in their regions, as defensive realists and liberal internationalists assume. Another question is whether they are constrained by the "nuclear revolution" in their actions in the military realm, as defensive realists believe, but contrary to offensive realist predictions. And how do these great powers act in regard to other areas of global politics such as international economics, technology, or international law and diplomacy—cooperatively, competitively, or in a conflictual manner? Lastly, are ideological differences a major factor in their interactions, as liberal and conservative internationalists believe, or are all great powers generally pursuing their national interests in a similar fashion, as realists assume? The four schools of thought outlined in the previous chapter make different predictions on each of these issues. This chapter begins by showing how the leaders of China and Russia recently think and act much more like offensive realism expects them to, and contrary to the predictions of the other frame-

works. It then shows how US policymakers wisely started to act more in accordance to the tenets of offensive realism as well, particularly during the Trump administration and in the early years of the Biden administration, but unfortunately stopped doing so after the war in Ukraine.

The Age of Great Power Competition

One could quibble with the exact timeline, but Matthew Kroenig is probably correct to date the emergence of the Great Power Competition era in 2014, the year Russia invaded Ukraine and China began to build artificial islands and aggressively expand its territorial claims in South China Sea.[1] Certainly by the time the Trump administration released its national security strategy and defense strategy documents in 2017/18, the GPC strategic concept had become ubiquitous in Washington foreign policy and national security circles.[2] A simple definition of this new era is that we are once more in a multipolar world in which great powers vie for regional and eventually global hegemony, and therefore competition and conflict dominates international politics at the highest levels, just as offensive realism would predict. The evidence for this new state of affairs between the US, China, and Russia can be abundantly found in their actions, as well as in their strategic documents and the statements issued by their leaders over the past few years.

US-CHINA TENSIONS

The most consequential geopolitical development of the past 10 years is China's unabashed quest for regional hegemony in East Asia, and also its worldwide ambitions in shaping international institutions and in making geopolitical inroads in Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East.[3] Particularly since President Xi Jinping came to power, Beijing's ambitions for pushing the United States away from its role as East Asia's primary security guarantor have been most evident. As Xi declared, "In the final analysis, it is for the people of Asia to run the affairs of Asia, solve the problems of Asia, and uphold the security of Asia."[4] And he did not hide anymore China's desire to reassert control over what it considers its own territories, including Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the South China Sea: "The historical task of the complete reunification of the motherland must be fulfilled and will definitely be fulfilled."[5] The aftermath

of the war in Ukraine also led Chinese officials to adopt an increasingly offensive strategy toward the US and its Western allies, galvanized by what they perceive as an increasingly dangerous external environment.[6] In addition to tightening its partnership with Russia, Xi put forth a strategic plan (the Global Strategic Initiative) designed to "undermine international confidence in the United States as a provider of regional and global stability and to create a platform around which China can justify augmenting its own partnerships."[7] The next chapter fleshes out China's strategic and military challenge to the United States' position as sole superpower in more detail, but for now it is worth highlighting seven areas where US-China recent tensions fit with the expectations of an offensive realist paradigm.

First, China's expansive military buildup over the past decade, and its impact on the military balance in the Asia-Pacific theater, is a key development indicating the arrival of the GPC era.[8] In 2022, an annual Department of Defense study on China's military strategy concluded that "Xi Jinping and the PRC leadership determined that the armed forces should take a more active role in advancing the PRC's foreign policy goals globally."[9] The US chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley, echoed the conclusions of the Pentagon's report when he testified before Congress in 2020: "China is seeking to invest its economic growth into equaling American military capabilities by 2035 and aims to be able to defeat the U.S. in an armed conflict by midcentury."[10] Therefore, for the first time in decades, the result of a conventional great power war is no longer a foregone conclusion, which erodes deterrence and raises the risk of such a catastrophic event even in the presence of nuclear weapons.

Second, in the South China Sea, local maritime border disputes between China and neighboring countries (Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei) took on broader geopolitical importance as China started building artificial island fortifications armed with antiship and antiaircraft missiles, and refused to comply with a ruling by an international arbitration body in favor of the Philippines regarding Beijing's claims on the Spratly Islands. This prompted the United States Navy to increase the number of Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPS) in that body of water claimed by Beijing but considered "international waters" by the rest of the international community.[11] The status of the South China Sea became a key area of geopolitical competition between Washington and Beijing, with the US determined to prevent China from achieving control of this territory. Secretary of State

Mike Pompeo positioned America as a defender of the status quo against China's hegemonic ambitions regarding this key body of water:

> America stands with our Southeast Asian allies and partners in protecting their sovereign rights to offshore resources, consistent with their rights and obligations under international law. We stand with the international community in defense of freedom of the seas and respect for sovereignty and reject any push to impose 'might makes right' in the South China Sea or the wider region.[12]

Third, the most dangerous flashpoint in the increasingly confrontational US-China strategic rivalry is a potential Chinese military attack on Taiwan, the conquest of which would offer Beijing a springboard to regional hegemony.[13] Once merely a distant possibility, this nightmarish scenario appears much closer than ever to becoming a reality: Chinese rhetoric on unification has heated up in recent years, and People's Liberation Army aircraft conducts provocative missions inside Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone at an ever increasing rate.[14] President Xi has unambiguously proclaimed that "complete national reunification is an inevitable requirement for realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," and some top China experts like Oriana Skylar Mastro increasingly worry that a war over Taiwan is now a real possibility: "Support for armed unification among the Chinese public and the military establishment is growing. Concern for international norms is subsiding."[15] The visit by US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan in August of 2022 sparked another crisis, with China's military launching four days of large-scale military exercises surrounding the island.[16] The Pentagon described these exercises as "much more complex than previous shows of force, demonstrating Beijing's ability to deploy an armada of aircraft, warships and missile batteries on short notice."[17] While an invasion of Taiwan is certainly not imminent, a new assessment by the US intelligence community did warn ominously that "Mr. Xi might try to move against the island in the next year and a half."[18] In another sign of US concern over a potential attack on Taiwan, US Special Forces troops and US Marines were reportedly deployed to help train and assist Taiwan's military to better withstand a potential conflict with the People's Liberation Army.[19]

Fourth, the new strategic era of Great Power Competition is even more evident in the nonmilitary realms of international affairs. China embarked in one of the most ambitious geoeconomic projects ever

recorded in 2013 when it launched the Belt and Road Initiative—an umbrella project that involves Chinese grants and loans to support infrastructure, massive construction, telecommunications, and shipping/port operations in large swaths of Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and even parts of Europe.[20] The overarching geostrategic goal of these financial investments was to enhance China's influence by using its newly found economic power and leverage to build favorable political and security relationships with countries around the world. However, as the *Wall Street Journal* reported, the investments soon came to be regarded as another facet of the Chinese-American strategic competition:

> Beijing envisions the rebooted Silk Road as a global network of ports, roads, railways, pipelines and industrial parks, largely built by Chinese companies and using at least $400 billion in funding from government-run banks. But as the program ballooned beyond infrastructure construction, Western officials . . . blamed it for advancing opaque financial deals that give Beijing political leverage by burdening countries with debt to China.[21]

Fifth, in addition to the Belt and Road Initiative, China's unfair trade practices also became a focal point of tensions between Washington and Beijing. The Trump administration regarded the trade imbalance as a grave geoeconomic threat to the United States, and imposed tariffs as well as other measures to shore up America's economic foreign policy and align it with the new GPC conditions.[22] In one of the few areas of bipartisan agreement, the Biden administration continued and even enhanced these policies. The new administration trade strategy stated that "[the Biden administration] recognizes that China's coercive and unfair trade practices harm American workers, threaten our technological edge, weaken our supply-chain resiliency and undermine our national interests."[23] Consequently, Treasury secretary Janet Yellen committed to "use the full array of tools" to counter China's "abusive, unfair and illegal practices."[24]

Sixth, another very important front in the US-China strategic rivalry is what scholars came to call the "tech war" between the two great powers.[25] As part of their plans to become *the* technology superpower of the 21st century, the Chinese government adopted a long-term plan that calls for the development of "significant breakthroughs on core technologies and seeks to be among the most innovative nations globally" by 2035.[26] The seven technologies emphasized for special funding

(Artificial Intelligence, quantum computing, integrated circuits, genetic and biotechnology research, neuroscience, and aerospace) would allow China to "reap huge benefits in hybrid warfare and intelligence gathering," according to Alex Capri.[27] In addition to using these investments to improve its own economic productivity and military capabilities, China also launched a concerted global campaign to export its technological advances in areas like 5G in particular, and to challenge the West for setting global standards on next-generation technologies.[28]

In response, the US government adopted a series of countermeasures, often in partnership with other Western nations, to stop China from gaining dominance over key emerging technologies or global standards in areas like AI or 5G. As Biden's secretary of state, Anthony Blinken, put it, "We have a very strong interest in making sure that the techno-democracies come together more effectively so we are the ones who are doing the shaping of those norms and rules."[29] The most prominent example so far of a "tech war" in the new era of GPC is the case of Huawei, a Chinese telecommunications giant that had an early lead in developing 5G networks in many parts of the world. However, the US government feared that a corporation so closely linked to the Chinese Communist Party leadership poses a great threat to US national security if it is allowed to embed itself in telecom networks worldwide. That was the case particularly in Europe, which would allow Beijing to potentially use Huawei's access to spy or disrupt communications. Consequently, the US government launched a massive and ultimately successful campaign to disrupt Huawei's operations and profits. As the *Wall Street Journal* reported, US restrictions "choked off the suppliers" and the company was forced to "experiment with new business lines, cede overseas territory, and foster a supply chain independent of the U.S., all while its stockpile of high-end chips diminishes."[30]

Seventh and last, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic only served to reinforce the new era of US-China strategic rivalry, as the two countries blamed each other for the origins of the virus, and used "vaccine diplomacy" to enhance their geopolitical standing.[31] Countries like Australia, for example, were even targeted by the Chinese Communist Party leadership with punitive sanctions for calling for an international inquiry into the possibility that the virus had leaked from a Chinese lab. According to the *New York Times*, "Across the globe a backlash is building against China for its initial mishandling of the crisis that helped loose the coronavirus on the world, creating a deeply polarizing battle of narratives and setting back China's ambition to fill the leadership vacuum

left by the United States."[32] In conclusion, as a report from the liberal internationalist World Economic Forum remarked with profound disappointment, the COVID-19 global pandemic had "accelerated a shift already under way from a rules-based international order to one based on power relationships."[33]

To sum up, Beijing's rhetoric and actions over the past decade betray China's ambitions for regional hegemony at first, followed by potential global hegemony. As its economic power rivals that of the United States, it is perfectly understandable from an offensive realist perspective that Chinese Communist Party leaders would expect their military power and diplomatic influence to eventually challenge the superiority of US military force and political clout, especially in their own region in the Asia-Pacific.

US-RUSSIA TENSIONS

US diplomatic relations with Russia are now arguably at their lowest point since the worst days of the Cold War, with the Pentagon engaged in a proxy war against Russian forces in Ukraine and Washington levying massive sanctions on the Russian economy. Once it started to recover economically from the ruinous 1990s, Vladimir Putin's Russia embarked on an ambitious military buildup and started a sophisticated politico-military campaign to restore its strategic dominance over its "near abroad" neighbors. And while this newfound military strength focuses mainly on its near abroad, Russia also displayed its global reach when it successfully intervened in the Syrian civil war and increased its military cooperation with Venezuela and Cuba, even threatening to deploy advanced weapons in America's backyard in a reminder of the Cold War.[34] Putin's strategy is clearly aimed at expanding Russia's sphere of influence in the former Soviet Union and its vicinity, as well as restoring some of Russia's global prestige and strategic influence in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America.[35]

And much like the Beijing government under President Xi, Moscow's actions under President Vladimir Putin fit with the expectations of offensive realism more than any of the other competing theoretical paradigms. In what is now often referred to as a landmark speech for Russia's grand strategic orientation of the past two decades, Putin sharply criticized the United States and NATO at the 2007 Munich Security Conference for encroaching on Russia's traditional sphere of influence in what

he called its "near abroad."[36] He deplored the unipolarity of the international system ("This is the world of one master, one sovereign"), and called for a return to multipolarity; he also expressed a zero-sum realist view of NATO enlargement, claiming that it threatens Russia's national interests: "The process of NATO expansion has nothing to do with modernization of the alliance. . . . We have the right to ask, 'Against whom is this expansion directed?'"[37] When later that year, at its Bucharest Summit, NATO declared that Ukraine and Georgia, two former members of the Soviet Union that Russia regards as part of its "near abroad" sphere of influence, would be invited to join at a future date, Putin set upon an aggressive military policy to prevent that from happening.

A few months after that summit, Russia invaded two Georgian provinces, leaving behind a frozen conflict and the threat of future military operations if Georgia attempts to join NATO in the future. A few years later, Putin invaded Ukraine and reincorporated the Crimean Peninsula into Russian territory; Moscow also sponsored separatist movements in eastern Ukraine, similarly leaving behind a frozen conflict and continuing to militarily threaten Ukraine's territorial integrity until it abandons any intention of joining NATO. Russia's aggressive moves to exert its regional quasi-hegemonic political-military control over its closest neighbors in its near abroad and deny them access to Western institutions is unsurprising from an offensive realist perspective. As Mearsheimer put it at the time, US and European leaders thought that "realism holds little relevance in the twenty-first century and that Europe can be kept whole and free on the basis of such liberal principles as the rule of law, economic interdependence, and democracy."[38] However, the war in Ukraine has showed how Russia very much acts according to offensive realist tenets: "The crisis there shows that realpolitik remains relevant—and states that ignore it do so at their own peril. U.S. and European leaders blundered in attempting to turn Ukraine into a Western stronghold on Russia's border."[39]

There was perhaps no better evidence of how the liberal internationalist orientation of many Western leaders led them to misunderstand and underestimate Putin's realist strategy than Secretary of State John Kerry's remark following the 2014 invasion of Ukraine: "It is not appropriate to invade a country and at the end of a barrel of a gun dictate what you are trying to achieve. . . . That is not 21st-century, G-8, major-nation behavior."[40] Unfortunately, as Walter Russell Mead dryly observed in the *Wall Street Journal*, eight years after the first Russian attack on Ukraine, "Neville Chamberlain learned more from failure at Munich than the

current generation of Western leaders learned from failure in Crimea."[41] While Putin used economic leverage like access to Russian energy as well as direct and indirect military pressure to project Russian power in the near-abroad states, liberal Western leaders still expected economic sanctions and diplomatic pressure from the so-called international community to moderate his behavior. Such efforts failed, and as a result Moscow is much further along the path of hegemonic control of the former USSR region, exerting particular influence in Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Georgia, and of course fighting a war over control of parts of Ukraine.

Moscow's military invasions of the former Soviet republics of Georgia and then Ukraine, first in Crimea and eastern Ukraine and then culminating with the full scale war of 2022, unambiguously demonstrate Russia's willingness to defy the rules and norms of the liberal world order in order to advance its security interests in its own neighborhood, just as realism predicts.[42] Sadly, prominent realist scholars and practitioners from John Mearsheimer to the legendary diplomat George Kennan warned early on that Russia will act aggressively as a traditional realist great power if the West keeps expanding its security presence closer and closer to its borders, but their concerns went unheeded by the liberal-internationalist-minded policymakers that dominated Washington circles during the post–Cold war era.[43] Nowadays, and most worrisome for the US in the GPC era, Putin also formed a "no limits" partnership with Xi, thus putting Washington in the unfortunate circumstance of having its two main great power rivals join forces against it, the exact opposite of the Nixon era realist coup of splitting the Sino-Soviet bloc.[44] In conclusion, Russia's recent actions in attempting to establish hegemony over its "near abroad" in the former Soviet space, and its new alliance with China against the US, both fit with the offensive realist theoretical predictions better than with the other theories.[45]

Of the four theories, the intensifying geopolitical rivalry of the Great Power Competition era goes against defensive realist and liberal internationalist predictions, but fits with both the expectations of offensive realism and conservative internationalism. In order to show that the former does a better job of explaining the empirical record than the latter, I will later show how across a variety of issues realist considerations of power politics and geoeconomics drive global politics (realist factors) in the GPC era more so than ideological conflicts over values (conservative internationalist factors). To take but one prominent recent example, the Ukraine war showed that economic and security considerations led many important countries from the Global South, such as India, Brazil,

and large parts of the Middle East and Africa, to reject the pro-Ukraine Western framing of that conflict as "freedom vs autocracy." Instead, they adopted a more realpolitik foreign policy toward Moscow, and largely stayed neutral despite their moral considerations in order to maintain trade relations with both the United States and Russia countries or to take advantage of the economic opportunities provided by the Western sanctions on Russia to benefit from access to cheaper oil.[46] Given that offensive realism best captures the dynamics of great power politics in our current strategic era, a grand strategy grounded in this perspective represents the optimal choice for the United States now and for the foreseeable future. Washington leaders actually started moving toward a GPC-based realist grand strategy as early as the mid-2010s when the Obama administration began a "pivot" to the Pacific, and that effort picked up speed during the Trump era and early in the Biden administrations, as the next section shows.

The Incremental Emergence of Offensive Realism in American Grand Strategy

The arrival of the multipolar era of Great Power Competition led to a rethinking of some of the core principles of US grand strategy away from the liberal internationalist US global leadership paradigm of the post–Cold War era, and toward a more offensive realist understanding of the international environment.[47] The Trump administration's national security strategy documents first acknowledged this geopolitical shift, and outlined a realist grand strategic orientation focused on strategic competition and on the need to contain China's regional and global ambitions.[48] Early on, the Biden administration largely continued the grand strategic pivot toward a realist grand strategy focused on great powers like China and Russia, despite the liberal internationalist mindset and priorities of most of its members.[49] Therefore, as offensive realism expects, the pressures from the changes in the international system led to important adaptations in America's national security strategy during the course of two very different presidents. These steps represent only the early stages, however, of what needs to fully emerge as an offensive realist grand strategic framework aimed at shaping America's role in the world in the upcoming years of the GPC era. And, most dangerously, the Biden administration abandoned its realist mindset and shifted toward liberal internationalism in the second half of their term in office.

Perhaps one of the most striking arguments in the Department of Defense's 2018 *National Defense Strategy* refers to the shift in priorities away from the post-9/11 focus on the Global War on Terror in favor or traditional geopolitics: "Long-term strategic competitions with China and Russia are the principal priorities for the Department, and require both increased and sustained investment, because of the magnitude of the threats they pose to U.S. security and prosperity today, and the potential for those threats to increase in the future."[50] The military's refocus on great power competition is a consequence of the strategic guidance offered in the 2017 *National Security Strategy* document issued by the White House. That *NSS* indicates a clear shift in US grand strategy toward a realist understanding of great power relations focused on geopolitics and the balance of power:

> A central continuity in history is the contest for power. The present time period is no different . . . after being dismissed as a phenomenon of an earlier century, great power competition returned. China and Russia began to reassert their influence regionally and globally. Today, they are fielding military capabilities designed to deny America access in times of crisis and to contest our ability to operate freely in critical commercial zones during peacetime. In short, they are contesting our geopolitical advantages and trying to change the international order in their favor.[51]

As the two documents indicate, the two revisionist powers posing the greatest challenge to US security are China and Russia. In different ways, both Beijing and Moscow aim to upend the balance of power in key regions of the world, and strive to become regional hegemons. In Asia, the *NSS* argues, "China seeks to displace the United States in the Indo-Pacific region, expand the reaches of its state-driven economic model, and reorder the region in its favor."[52] The administration's *NSS* takes aim at the post–Cold War American policy of treating China more as a potential partner and a would-be *responsible stakeholder* (in former deputy secretary of state Robert Zoelick's memorable phrase) in the international community than as an adversary: "For decades, U.S. policy was rooted in the belief that support for China's rise and for its integration into the post-war international order would liberalize China. Contrary to our hopes, China expanded its power at the expense of the sovereignty of others."[53]

The language on China in the *National Defense Strategy* (*NDS*) is even

more stern, and reflects a clear offensive realist concern about the future of US-Chinese relations:

> The CCP [Chinese Communist Party] is leveraging military modernization, influence operations, and predatory economics to coerce neighboring countries to reorder the Indo-Pacific region to their advantage. As China continues its economic and military ascendance, asserting power through an all-of-nation long-term strategy, it will continue to pursue a military modernization program that seeks Indo-Pacific regional hegemony in the near-term and displacement of the United States to achieve global preeminence in the future.[54]

After the publication of these two documents, the Trump administration's China strategy further evolved in a confrontational direction anticipated by offensive realism, so much so that the press described a major address by Vice President Mike Pence as the sign of a "New Cold War" between Washington and Beijing.[55] That speech ominously issued both a warning of Beijing's regional hegemonic ambitions and a signal of US resolve to counter them: "China wants nothing less than to push the United States of America from the Western Pacific and attempt to prevent us from coming to the aid of our allies. But they will fail."[56]

When it comes to Russia, the strategy documents are similarly clear in warning of the harm posed to US national security interests by recent geopolitical developments in Eastern Europe. According to the *NSS*, Moscow "seeks to restore its great power status and establish spheres of influence near its borders. Russia aims to weaken U.S. influence in the world and divide us from our allies and partners."[57] Moreover, the document also points out that Moscow is "investing in new military capabilities, including nuclear systems that remain the most significant existential threat to the United States, and in destabilizing cyber capabilities."[58] A separate Department of Defense strategic planning document, the *Nuclear Posture Review*, similarly singles out the threat from Russia's modernizing nuclear arsenal and its new nuclear strategy and doctrine aimed at using nuclear weapons to coerce the United States into "de-escalation of a potential conflict on terms favorable to Russia."[59] The assistant secretary of state for Europe, Wess Mitchell, reiterated the Trump administration's skeptical view of Russia in a well-publicized speech at the Atlantic Council: "From the Baltic to the Adriatic, across the Balkan Peninsula and through the Caucasus, America's rivals are expanding their political,

military, and commercial influence. Russia is again a military factor in this region, following the invasions of Georgia and Ukraine."[60]

The realist shift in strategy documents was largely accompanied by a similar shift in actual policy decisions. In its four years in office, the Trump administration took a series of measures that reflected a serious concern with China's aggressive foreign policy and its strategic moves in Asia and beyond. In the realm of international trade, Washington finally abandoned the failed strategy of turning a blind eye to China's cheating and unfair practices, and instead adopted a series of tariffs and countermeasures aimed to derail Beijing's "Made in China 2025" strategic plan of challenging US military superiority in futuristic technologies.[61] Another important move was to continue the Freedom of Navigation Operations by the US Navy and its partners in the South China Sea, and to disinvite China's navy from of the large-scale RIMPAC (Rim of the Pacific) maritime multinational exercise in order to punish them for their continued land reclamations and militarization of man-made islands in the Spratly Islands.[62] Similarly, the administration actually took a series of tough measures aimed at countering Moscow's aggressive behavior in Eastern Europe.[63] Despite the media focus on a possible Putin-Trump friendship, Russia expert Michael Kofman recounts some of the ways the administration was tougher on the Kremlin than many acknowledged: "[The Trump administration] has sanctioned countless Russians and Russian entities, provided weapons to Ukraine and Georgia, used force against the Assad regime, and substantially increased spending on deterring Russia in Europe."[64] Along the same lines, the US pulled out of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty due to Russia's alleged repeated violations of this arms control agreement, another indication that Washington was hardening its stance on Moscow across the board and preparing for an era of intensified geopolitical competition.[65]

The Trump administration in particular also challenged another key component of the post–Cold War grand strategy when it abandoned the commitment to a liberal international order. Realists in general have a very different historical interpretation of the so-called liberal world order (or "rules-based international order") that liberal internationalist scholars claim to have represented a core element of American grand strategy post–World War II.[66] In a *Foreign Affairs* essay, Graham Allison joined a number of prominent realists who describe this narrative as a myth: "The 'long peace' was the not the result of a liberal order but the byproduct of the dangerous balance of power between the Soviet Union

and the United States during the four and a half decades of the Cold War and then of a brief period of U.S. dominance."[67] From this perspective, as former Trump National Security Council staffer Michael Anton put it, the liberal order is an outdated Cold War era construct in need of significant reform: "The LIO [liberal international order] was not an end, but a means to preordained ends. But sometime around the end of the Cold War, the LIO acquired a logic of its own that demands the preservation of its every aspect without reference to America's basic interests."[68] Two key areas Anton highlights as being in need of reform are *free trade* ("The LIO elevates 'free trade'—really, phonebook-thick agreements that regulate every aspect of trade, mostly to America's disadvantage—to holy writ") and *alliances* ("NATO is far from irrelevant today, but it could surely be made more relevant").[69] These criticisms were a harbinger of two of the most consistent themes of Trump's foreign policy rhetoric, a realist inclination toward protectionist economic policies and concern with "free riding" by European allies.

The Trump administration made it clear on numerous occasions that it regards the international security system as a competitive realm of sovereign nation-states pursuing their own selfish security and economic interests. Early in the administration, the language used by two former senior National Security Council officials in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed to describe the president's approach plainly shows how realism permeates the Trump foreign policy worldview: "The president embarked on his first foreign trip with a clear-eyed outlook that the world is not a 'global community' but an arena where nations, nongovernmental actors and businesses engage and compete for advantage. We bring to this forum unmatched military, political, economic, cultural and moral strength. Rather than deny this elemental nature of international affairs, we embrace it."[70] The Trump administration's attitude toward multilateral institutions and the constitutive elements of the liberal world order similarly reflects a realist skepticism and weariness about the possibility of such international institutions infringing on US national interests. The *NSS* language on this topic acknowledges that participation in such institutions is sometimes necessary, but at the same time it portrays them as forums for competition rather than cooperation: "The United States must lead and engage in the multinational arrangements that shape many of the rules that affect U.S. interests and values. A competition for influence exists in these institutions. As we participate in them, we must protect American sovereignty and advance American interests and values."[71] Therefore, the Trump administration's view on the whole "liberal

world order" construct mirrors in many ways the criticism raised by realists as to the desirability of working to advance such an order.

In its first term in office, the Trump team took a number of highly controversial policy decisions that fit well with this principle of disregarding "milieu goals" regarding international law and norms in favor of a much narrower view of the national interest and a preference for bilateral agreements designed to maximize US leverage.[72] Therefore, a pattern of pulling back from multilateral deals in favor of bilateral ones has emerged. In trade negotiations, among other measures, the US pulled out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and instead pursued new bilateral deals with countries like Korea, Vietnam, and the Philippines; it pulled out of the Paris Climate Accords; it renegotiated the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and renamed it the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA); lastly, it imposed three rounds of massive tariffs on Chinese goods totaling $250 billion, even at the risk of sparking a trade war, until Beijing agreed to a new trade deal.[73] Consequently, President Trump and his trade advisors also criticized the World Trade Organization, and generally expressed his aversion to the type of multilateral trade liberalization promoted by that organization.

Another evidence of a shift toward offensive realism is the prioritization of hard power over other forms of power. By starting with making clear that "great powers are determined largely on the basis of their military capability," offensive realism takes a decidedly traditionalist view of hard power as still being much more important than what liberal internationalist scholars like Joseph Nye have termed "soft power."[74] As Mearsheimer writes, "Power is the currency of great-power politics, and states compete for it among themselves. What money is to economics, power is to international relations."[75] In the hierarchy of state goals, balance of power considerations are more important than either ideological preferences or the pursuit of mutually beneficial economic interactions.[76] The priority the Trump administration gave to investments in military force, as opposed to things like economic assistance, foreign aid, or democracy promotion, could hardly have been made clearer the day Mick Mulvaney, the director of the White House Office of Management and Budget, introduced the administration's first budget submission: "It is not a soft-power budget," Mulvaney explained. "This is a hard-power budget, and that was done intentionally. The president very clearly wants to send a message to our allies and to our potential adversaries that this is a strong-power administration."[77]

The rationale behind this shift in priorities was spelled out in the *NSS*

and *NDS*, both of which contend that America's post–Cold War liberal internationalist grand strategy allowed its hard power to decrease in the mistaken hope that an era of great power peace is upon us. The *NSS* claims that "since the 1990s, the United States displayed a great degree of strategic complacency. We assumed that our military superiority was guaranteed and that a democratic peace was inevitable. We believed that liberal-democratic enlargement and inclusion would fundamentally alter the nature of international relations and that competition would give way to peaceful cooperation."[78] At the same time, the *NDS* calls for an increase in military spending to preserve America's hard power superiority: "To address the scope and pace of our competitors' and adversaries' ambitions and capabilities, we must invest in modernization of key capabilities through sustained, predictable budgets. Our backlog of deferred readiness, procurement, and modernization requirements has grown in the last decade and a half and can no longer be ignored."[79]

Lastly, in his addresses at the United Nations, Trump more than once emphasized realist concerns, and avoided the traditional liberal-infused rhetoric about democracy promotion or other liberal ideals employed by post–Cold War presidents: "We engage with the world not to impose our way of life but to 'secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity.'"[80] While the administration would not be so straightforward about this topic in official documents, Anton's writings capture the thought process that guided how the White House negotiated the trade-offs between power and ideals: "America would likely be better off if the world were more democratic than it is, given that democracy correlates highly with friendliness or at least non-opposition to American interests. . . . But in some regions, democracy also correlates highly with instability, which breeds war and chaos that are antithetical to American interests."[81] This skepticism about democracy promotion and the liberal world order in general was shared by some but not all of Trump's advisors, and his foreign policy often oscillated between the more realist/nationalist wing like Anton, trade advisor Peter Navarro, and Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer versus the conservative internationalists like UN Ambassador Nikki Haley, Secretary of State General Jim Mattis, and National Security Advisor H. R. McMaster. Trump's instincts, however, most often sided with the first camp, and therefore the administration's overall grand strategy leaned more in the realist than in the conservative internationalist direction.

Despite a tumultuous 2020 presidential campaign in which Joe Biden raised harsh criticisms of Trump's foreign policy, the shift toward a China-focused realist grand strategy nevertheless continued in some important

ways into the Biden administration. In fact, Council on Foreign Relations president Richard Haass is but one of the many experts who noticed this phenomenon: "The view that China is the United States' chief competitor and even adversary has become widespread and ingrained, and the similarities in the two administrations' approaches far outweigh any differences."[82] The Biden administration's first grand strategy document, the 2021 *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance*, indeed adopts a tone on China that is fairly similar to the realist language of the Trump-era documents: "The distribution of power across the world is changing, creating new threats. China, in particular, has rapidly become more assertive. It is the only competitor potentially capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to mount a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system."[83]

Oftentimes, President Biden himself, as well as his top cabinet officials, employed realist rhetoric to describe their view of the grand strategic challenge from China and the present era of GPC. In one of the more widely quoted early pronouncements, Biden told CBS's *Face the Nation* that China should expect "extreme competition" from the United States during his administration.[84] Similarly, in his first congressional testimony as the Central Intelligence Agency director, William Burns spoke about "an adversarial, predatory Chinese leadership [that represents] . . . the U.S.'s biggest geopolitical test," and he vowed that his agency will show "intensified focus and urgency—continually strengthening its already impressive cadre of China specialists, expanding its language skills, aligning personnel and resource allocation for the long haul."[85] His counterpart at the Pentagon, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, called China the "pacing threat" for the US and consequently established early in his tenure a "China Task Force to 'Counter Chinese Efforts' by refining and analyzing force structures, strategies, weapons systems and emerging technologies of relevance to U.S.-China competition."[86]

The early realist pronouncements and documents were quickly followed by a series of actions on the part of the Biden administration that appeared to solidify this emerging shift in US grand strategy toward great power competition against Beijing. In order to further strengthen its ability to deny China's maritime claims in the Pacific, the US signed a deal with Australia (and the United Kingdom), termed AUKUS, that will provide Canberra with the technology to develop nuclear-powered attack submarines. Hence, Australia may eventually begin conducting routine patrols that could move through areas of the South China Sea that Beijing claims as its exclusive zone.[87] On the key issue of Taiwan, the new administration continued the Trump team's increasing willingness

to conduct high-level meetings with Taipei officials, as well as a secret military program to use US Special Forces to train the Taiwanese military.[88] Moreover, Biden even said in a CNN townhall that the US has a commitment to defending Taiwan in case of a Chinese attack, but the administration later backtracked and insisted the long-term US policy of "strategic ambiguity" has not been changed.[89]

In one of the most consequential foreign policy decisions of his presidency, Biden withdrew US troops completely from Afghanistan, and justified this as a way to better prepare for the rising challenge of China in the Indo-Pacific region.[90] This move led Joshua Shifrinson and Stephen Wertheim to publish a *Foreign Affairs* essay titled "Biden the Realist," in which they argue that he was pursuing a strategy of "pragmatic realism" that is a more coherent version of Trump's more instinctual realist approach. The withdrawal, in their view, is prime evidence of this shift: "In ending the two-decades-long war, Biden rejected every 'liberal internationalist' premise of the enterprise, including the notion that building a democratic Afghanistan and transforming the region served U.S. interests or advanced universal values."[91] Whether the terribly botched withdrawal hurt more than helped US military credibility in the Asia-Pacific region is a separate question, but the intent of the move indeed appears to have had realist reasons.

Even after the war in Ukraine led to a shift in diplomatic and military focus toward Europe, top cabinet members kept referring to China as the main grand strategic priority. For example, in a major address in May 2022, Secretary of State Blinken warned that "China is the only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military and technological power to do it. Beijing's vision would move us away from the universal values that have sustained so much of the world's progress over the past 75 years."[92] A month later, Secretary Austin similarly reassured the Asian defense leaders gathered at the Shangri-La Dialogue of the US commitment to the Indo-Pacific region: "That commitment has grown over the years, and it is now the core organizing principle of American national-security policy. Today, the Indo-Pacific is our priority theater of operations. Today, the Indo-Pacific is at the heart of American grand strategy."[93]

The Biden administration also continued and even enhanced a realist-oriented shift in US foreign economic policy. In conceptualizing international trade relations through a relative-gains perspective much more sensitive to national security concerns than pure economic efficiency, Washington is now focused on adopting a series of economic

measures aimed at the economic and technological competition against Beijing, as opposed to liberal priorities such as expanding free trade by strengthening the World Trade Organization or joining other multilateral agreements. As Gerald Seib recently argued in a column suggestively titled "In Biden's World, Economic Policy Is National Security Policy,"

> Today, America's long-term security is more dependent on reinforcing its industrial base, making sure its supply chains for critical goods are at home, stepping up research and development for competitive advantage, moving ahead on emerging technologies and protecting the nation's infrastructure from cyberattack. Trade agreements with China are important; more important is being sure America enters trade negotiations in a position of strength.[94]

The same can be said for efforts to counter China's Belt and Road Initiative with a somewhat similar program financed by the US and its G-7 allies, the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment. President Biden committed $200 billion over five years to this new initiative, and hopes to gather $600 billion more from US allies.[95]

Despite these early moves in the direction of a realist grand strategic framework across a number of policy areas, the Biden administration nevertheless in later years adopted a more liberal internationalist approach that took precedence over their realist priorities and thus endangered the most important strategic objectives in our new GPC era. The reversal in China strategy back to the failed engagement approach of the post–Cold War era was evident in Biden's diplomatic charm offensive in the summer of 2023, when the president sent no less than five top cabinet members to Beijing to boost diplomatic and economic ties, including Secretaries Blinken and Yellen.[96] "I think there is a way to resolve, to establish a working relationship with China that benefits them and us," declared Biden, in the win-win language typical of the liberal internationalist paradigm. However, Xi showed little interest in this rapprochement and instead maintained his realist position that Washington is trying to "contain" China's rise.[97] As the next chapters will show, America's great power rivals are committed to their aggressive realist grand strategies across all areas of competition (military, diplomatic, economic, and technological). It is imperative for the United States to respond with realist policies of its own, starting with a better prioritizing of the national security threats in the GPC era, the topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

China, Russia, and Other National Security Threats

The No Peer Rivals framework contends that containing China's hegemonic ambitions and restraining Russia's revisionist tendencies, in that order, ought to be the two major grand strategic priorities for Washington. An offensive realist grand strategy, therefore, prioritizes preparing for great power conflicts above all other threats, and the deterrence and containment of China as significantly more urgent than dealing with Russia's actions, even despite the war in Ukraine. And while geopolitical threats in the GPC era should take precedence over other national security threats, this chapter also outlines three additional dangerous second-order threats to the homeland: drug cartels, international terrorist groups, and rogue nuclear states (Iran and North Korea). Countering these other threats, however, should be conducted in a cost-conscious manner that does not take significant resources away from the primary strategic objective of containing China.

China's Bid for Hegemony

For most of the post–Cold War era, the threats to international peace and security in general, and to the US in particular, came from sources other than traditional great power politics. Civil wars in the Balkans and

Africa spilling across borders, transnational crime networks, nuclear proliferation by "rogue states," and of course the post-9/11 Global War on Terror dominated the agenda. This view was most memorably expressed in the 2002 Bush White House *National Security Strategy*, a document that epitomized the prioritization of the new types of threats over classical geopolitical rivalries: "America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones. We are menaced less by fleets and armies than by catastrophic technologies in the hands of the embittered few."[1] This relatively benign view of 21st century great power politics prevailed in many Western policymaking circles, so much so that when Russia launched a quasi-military invasion of Ukraine, Secretary of State John Kerry dismissed it as an aberration out of the 19th century.

A mere five years later, however, this optimism about a rule-based liberal order devoid of aggressive great power political rivalry was quickly dissipating.[2] And at least in some corners of the national security apparatus, it was all gone.[3] The Pentagon's 2018 *National Defense Strategy* summarily declared the return of traditional realist concerns to the top of the agenda: "Inter-state strategic competition, not terrorism, is now the primary concern in U.S. national security."[4] The War on Terror age of American grand strategy was over, therefore, as the United States entered a new era of Great Power Competition.[5] And not only were international politics among the major players headed into choppy waters, but the balance of power started to shift in an unfavorable direction for Washington. Consequently, in 2021 the US intelligence community ominously warned that China "increasingly is a near-peer competitor, challenging the United States in multiple arenas—especially economically, militarily, and technologically—and is pushing to change global norms."[6]

What brought this about? In the 1990s and 2000s, the Washington foreign policy elites, operating broadly speaking under a liberal internationalist worldview, assumed that deepening the economic engagement with rising great powers would serve to diminish traditional geopolitical conflicts, and instead lead Beijing and Moscow to accept the rules and norms of the Western liberal world order.[7] US leaders mistakenly bet that integrating China economically in the global economy would lead Beijing to play by the rules in terms of trade and investments, and also to act peacefully and acquiesce in the status quo in the East Asian military balance of power and other territorial disputes with its neighbors. Neither of those things turned out to be true: China repeatedly cheated and abused its partners in its economic relations with the West, while at the same time pursuing an ever more aggressive military posture in its

region. Beijing aims at diminishing the influence of the United States among its allies at first, and eventually establishing itself as the regional hegemon. As top Biden administration officials Kurt Campbell and Ely Ratner observed, "Diplomatic and commercial engagement have not brought political and economic openness. Neither U.S. military power nor regional balancing has stopped Beijing from seeking to displace core components of the U.S.-led system. And the liberal international order has failed to lure or bind China as powerfully as expected."[8]

Over the past decade, the scale of the Chinese Communist Party's ambitions became clear: Beijing is no longer "biding its time and hiding its capabilities" the way it used to in the 1990s and 2000s.[9] Instead, as its economic might grew ever stronger, it embarked on a quest to become a regional and eventually a global hegemon, exactly as offensive realists would expect a rising great power to behave. The evidence to support this assessment, which is more and more prevalent among both China experts in the West and policymakers around the world, can be found in the pronouncements and strategy documents of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leaders, as well as in their aggressive diplomatic, military, and economic actions in East Asia and around the world.[10] President Xi, believing that "time and momentum are on our side," set a long-term grand strategy goal of "national rejuvenation" by 2049, and launched a "series of policies centered around establishing a Chinese-led regional and global order."[11]

Since the end of the Cold War, as Rush Doshi persuasively details in his book on Beijing's grand strategy, the CCP went through three distinctive stages in its long-term quest to establish regional hegemony in Asia and eventually displace the United States as the global hegemon.[12] First, from the political shocks of 1989 (the fall of the Berlin Wall and Tiananmen Square) until the global financial crisis of 2008, the CCP worked on chipping away at American power and influence in Asia while focusing on domestic economic growth and mutually beneficial trade/diplomatic relations with its neighbors. Second, from 2008 to 2016, Beijing perceived a United States in decline and hence proceeded more boldly in establishing the foundations for China's rise to regional hegemony in Asia, particularly through more confrontational economic, diplomatic, and military means. And third, following what Chinese leaders repeatedly refer to as a project of "great rejuvenation" made possible by global "great changes unseen in a century" (such as COVID and the rise of populist/nationalist forces opposed to the liberal order in the West), Beijing expanded its regional focus to challenge US hegemony world-

wide. President Xi most recently reinforced this goal at the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) summit in August 2023, where he accused the US of not being "reconciled to losing their hegemony, and wantonly [wanting to] contain and suppress emerging market countries and developing countries."[13]

To accomplish its goal, Beijing's grand strategic ambitions therefore now require advances across all major dimensions of power in the 21st century: military, diplomatic, economic, and technological. And almost nothing should be more strategically worrisome for the US from a realist perspective than China's expansive military buildup and Beijing's increased willingness to threaten to use military power to achieve its goals. In what Adm. John Aquilino, head of US Indo-Pacific Command, described as "the largest military buildup in history since World War II," the Chinese modernization plan according to the Pentagon "encompasses all domains and all capabilities, whether it's naval ships, whether it's fifth-generation aircraft, whether it's missile forces, whether it's cyber-capability or capability in space, to include strategic nuclear capability."[14] China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been undergoing a sustained military buildup to become a "world class" military by 2049 and provide the hard power needed to sustain the CCP's strategic regional and global ambitions.[15] The Pentagon's 2021 annual report on Chinese military power ominously concludes: "The PLA's evolving capabilities and concepts continue to strengthen the PRC's ability to 'fight and win wars' against a 'strong enemy' [a likely euphemism for the United States], coerce Taiwan and rival claimants in territorial disputes, counter an intervention by a third party in a conflict along the PRC's periphery, and project power globally."[16]

To fund a military that can dominate its region and rival that of the United States, China steadily increased its defense budgets over the past decade. According to figures from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, PRC's 2022 defense budget of about $292 billion represents a 63 percent increase over the past decade, showing Beijing's commitment to back up its regional hegemonic ambitions with a properly funded military.[17] It also far exceeds that of any of its neighbors, and was greater than the combined expenditure of India, Russia, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan.[18] And even though this is still about a third of the US defense budget, China's lower pay for its troops means it can purchase more military power in raw terms than the Pentagon; a Center for Strategic and International Studies publication estimated that "the current annual pay for an entry-level active-duty U.S. soldier (about

$39,600) would likely cover the cost of several PLA soldiers due to price differences. When adjusted for purchasing power parity (PPP), China's 2019 defense expenditure rises by well over $100 billion."[19]

These sustained defense investments over the past decade allowed the PLA to build up conventional, nuclear, and increasingly cyber and space military weapon systems sufficient to challenge US military dominance at least over East Asia, if not yet on a global scale. For example, as the Pentagon noted in 2021, the PLA Navy has numerically the largest navy in the world with an overall battle force of approximately 355 ships and submarines, including more than 145 major surface combatants.[20] Similarly, the PLA Air Force and PLA Aviation together constitute the largest aviation force in the region and the third largest in the world, with over 2,800 total aircraft (not including trainer variants or unmanned aerial vehicles) of which approximately 2,250 are combat aircraft (including fighters, strategic bombers, tactical bombers, multi-mission tactical, and attack aircraft).

In the nuclear realm, China is dramatically increasing its production of nuclear weapons as well. According to the latest estimates, from its current level of about 200+ nuclear warheads, Beijing plans to increase that number to a level close to that of Washington and Moscow, approximately 1,500 warheads by 2035.[21] This leads some analysts to conclude that the PRC is abandoning its "minimal deterrence" nuclear posture in favor of a nuclear buildup to closely match the American and Russian arsenals.[22] Lastly, the PLA's newly formed Strategic Support Force command, which includes cyber and space operations and electronic warfare, as well as psychological-warfare operations, continues to develop proficiency in new domains of warfare such as space and to increasingly threaten US freedom of maneuver in a potential conflict. The State Department's *Elements of the China Challenge* report highlights this worrisome trend: "China has placed more satellites in space than any country other than the United States. Beijing is also working on a range of counter-space and anti-satellite capabilities designed to threaten U.S. nuclear and critical military command and control assets. The PLA demonstrated its progress in 2007 when it conducted a successful anti-satellite test, destroying a Chinese satellite operating in the same low-earth orbit as U.S. military-imaging satellites."[23]

Over the past decade, China's increasing military power gave CCP leaders the confidence to aggressively move to advance its interests and hegemonic ambitions in territorial disputes across the South China Sea, East China Sea, and the Himalayas, as well as in establishing political

control over Hong Kong and in increasing the military pressure over Taiwan. The least unambiguous action betraying China's hegemonic ambitions in the region is its insistence despite international law that 90 percent of the South China Sea (the so-called nine-dash line not recognized by anyone but Beijing) belongs to China, and the consequent buildup and militarization of artificial islands in that area.[24] For example, China claims sovereignty over the Spratly and Paracel Islands and sends its PLA Navy and other coast guard or maritime militia ships to patrol the area and harass ships from the other neighboring countries that have legitimate claims to the sea's resources and navigation rights (Brunei, the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Taiwan). The US Navy and its regional partners continue to conduct Freedom of Navigation Operations in the South China Sea despite China's claims, setting up a potentially dangerous clash between the PLA Navy and the US Navy.[25] Another major US ally, Japan, is also facing China's increasingly assertive claims over the Senkaku (Diaoyou) Islands in the East China Sea, further increasing the risk of war between Washington and Beijing.[26]

The most urgent scenario leading to a US-Chinese military clash, however, is undoubtedly a potential Chinese invasion of Taiwan. Some scholars even believe that a war is more likely in the next few years than in later decades, given Xi's proclaimed desire not to pass this issue to the next leader, and also given China's expected demographic decline and economic slowdown expected toward the middle of the century.[27] Indeed, over the past few years, China has shifted both its rhetoric and its military posture to make the possibility of an invasion more likely; for example, in October 2021, the *New York Times* reported that a record number of Chinese military aircraft, "including fighter jets, two anti-submarine aircraft and an early-warning-and-control plane," had probed the airspace near Taiwan, an act that according to regional experts reflects "Beijing's increasingly unabashed signaling that it wants to absorb the self-ruled island and will not rule out military means to do so."[28] PLA expert Oriana Skylar Mastro similarly warned in a *Foreign Affairs* essay of how CCP leaders may be increasingly tempted to use force to establish dominance over Taiwan; in addition to Xi Jingping's comments on national rejuvenation, she quoted Le Yucheng, China's vice foreign minister, boldly stating that "national unification 'will not be stopped by anyone or any force' and that while China will strive for peaceful unification, it does not 'pledge to give up other options.'"[29]

In addition to accomplishing arguably the most vexing goal in China's new grand strategic quest for national rejuvenation, forcing the US

to abandon Taiwan would also decisively shift the balance of power in favor of Beijing in the region and push the US military to back away from its dominant presence in the region. A comprehensive study of the military ramifications of a Chinese takeover of Taiwan indeed confirms how controlling the island will most likely allow the PLA to greatly threaten the freedom of movement for US aircraft and ships in much of the Philippine Sea, as well as endanger US submarines in the area.[30] As Mastro concludes, "In the Indo-Pacific region, China wants complete dominance; it wants to force the United States out and become the region's unchallenged political, economic, and military hegemon. . . . As one Chinese official put it to me, 'Being a great power means you get to do what you want, and no one can say anything about it.'"[31]

In the diplomatic realm, China is directly challenging Western dominance over international institutions and global norms, and seeks to reshape them to suit its own narrow national interests. In an article suggestively titled "Xi Jingping's New World Order," Elizabeth Economy documents how Xi is pursuing a "radically transformed international order" that will reflect Chinese preferences such as "elevating the right to development over individual political and civil rights and establishing technical standards that enable state control over the flow of information."[32] Moreover, Xi also wants China to "lead in the development of norms in areas where they are not yet fully established, such as space, the maritime domain, and the Arctic."[33] China has been pushing for a leading role similar to that of the United States in international institutions such as various United Nations agencies or the World Health Organization. Former US national security advisor Robert O'Brien accused Beijing of using "the leaders of these agencies to co-opt international institutions, parrot its talking points, and install Chinese telecommunications equipment in their facilities."[34] Most egregiously, during the COVID global pandemic, the CCP-backed head of the World Health Organization "repeated false Chinese talking points on the novel coronavirus outbreak—even opposing international travel restrictions on China while praising China's own domestic travel restrictions."[35]

The war in Ukraine offered China another opportunity to act more and more like a diplomatic global peer rival of the United States by choosing to unabashedly support Russia despite Western pressure, and even offering to mediate a peace deal to the conflict.[36] While that effort failed, President Xi succeeded in establishing Beijing as a major player in the Middle East when it stunned Western observers by brokering a deal between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Beijing abandoned the ill-advised aggres-

sive "wolf warrior diplomacy" from a few years ago, and instead relies on "gentler forms of persuasion" to address regional disputes; as Wess Mitchell and Christopher Vassallo argue in a new study of this diplomatic shift, "China is following the pattern of earlier rising powers that sought to expand their international influence to a level commensurate with their growing economic and military might."[37] For example, President Xi proposed three new initiatives expanding his vision for the world: the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative.[38] Lastly, in 2023 China strengthened its ties with Brazil and Venezuela in the Western Hemisphere, already trades more with Latin America than the United States does, and was suspected by US intelligence of setting up a military base in Cuba, thus challenging Washington's hegemonic status in its own region and threatening the long-established tenets of the Monroe Doctrine.[39]

China is strongly asserting itself regionally and globally in the diplomatic and economic arenas of great power competition as well. Its well-known Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) continues to allow Beijing to develop increased strategic leverage with key resource-rich and strategically important countries across Latin America, Central Asia, and the Middle East.[40] BRI, a program in which China invested over $400 billion, allowed Beijing to develop infrastructure projects and sign agreements with 138 countries, which account for 40 percent of global GDP and over 60 percent of the world population.[41] Moreover, while BRI is mainly about infrastructure, it also has a strategic component and serves China's economic ambitions: "The BRI has positioned China at the center of the international system, with its physical, financial, cultural, technological, and political influence flowing to the rest of the world. It is redrawing the fine details of the world's map, with new railroads and bridges, fiber-optic cables and 5G networks, and ports with the potential for housing Chinese military bases."[42]

The CCP thus uses economic tools to gain influence with local governments and gain control to some of the world's key natural resources needed for emerging technologies. In preparation for a potential transition to green energy, Beijing is cornering the market for the rare earths minerals key to batteries and electric engines.[43] Furthermore, by applying "brute force economics," Beijing is not only establishing itself as a global economic superpower, but it also carefully links these economic and infrastructure investments to its military and geopolitical goals. One such example is what Isaac Kardon and Wendy Leutert recently dubbed "port power," a maritime network sustaining the PLA's global reach.[44]

In potentially the most significant blow to Washington's global financial hegemonic privilege, Beijing is now pushing more successfully than in the past for the yuan to join, and eventually replace, the dollar as the global currency in the strategically vital oil market.[45] The CCP plans to chip away at the US dollar hegemony over the international financial system, thus diminishing one of the most powerful financial weapons enjoyed by Washington. Beijing also set as a goal to "seize the commanding heights of the fourth industrial revolution from artificial intelligence to quantum computing."[46] If it fully succeeds, in a few decades the US might have to resign itself to being not much more than a "deindustrialized, English-speaking version of a Latin American republic, specializing in commodities, real estate, tourism, and perhaps transnational tax evasion," as a Chinese official impolitely stated.[47]

Lastly, in close coordination with its diplomatic and economic agendas, China also pursues a technological strategy of surpassing the US as the main superpower in this domain. Historian Niall Ferguson refers to this new development in the US-China rivalry as a techno-economic war, because of the close connections between the two areas of competition.[48] Beijing's actions go far beyond fair market competition, and China's intellectual property theft has recently been called by a State Department report the "greatest illegitimate transfer of wealth in human history" with an estimated cost to the US economy of as much as $600 billion annually.[49] Moreover, China uses these illegally obtained technologies to propel its plans to dominate the world economy in ten key industries, an initiative known as *Made in China 2025*.[50] The areas selected for a particular focus include "Artificial Intelligence (AI), quantum computing and next-generation information technology; robotics and automation; aerospace and space; high-tech shipping and oceanic engineering; high-speed railway; energy efficiency; new materials; biotechnology, medical devices, and advanced pharmaceuticals; next-generation energy and power generation; and agricultural machinery."[51]

Not only do these areas likely represent the commanding heights of the 21st century global economy, but, as realists would expect, Beijing plans to use these advances in tech to eventually challenge the US military dominance in high-tech futuristic weapons system that will be dependent on AI and supercomputers. China is following a strategy called military-civil fusion by which the PLA is working closely with the largest Chinese companies, which are controlled by the CCP, in order to gain access to the most advanced technological discoveries. These companies in turn plan to achieve dominance in the technologies listed above by leverag-

ing government subsidies, by forced technology transfers, and through outright theft of intellectual property from the West.[52] In conclusion, China is pursuing hegemony in all areas of national power—military, diplomatic, economic, and technological—and is adopting a sophisticated grand strategy combining these various domains to improve its position relative to the United States.

Russia as a Strategic Distraction

Even though countering China's grand strategic ambitions in the Pacific region should be the main priority for the United States in the GPC era, there is a nevertheless a secondary revisionist great power and another contested geographical area worth mentioning. Russia's ambitious strategic moves have been driven largely by what Russia expert and former intelligence officer Angela Stent describes as the *Putin Doctrine*.[53] The Russian president's overarching strategic objectives, she argues, are "reversing the consequences of the Soviet collapse, splitting the transatlantic alliance, and renegotiating the geographic settlement that ended the Cold War."[54] Russia therefore is a revisionist power in its own region, and wants to achieve the same privileges of a regional hegemon that the United States benefits from in the Western Hemisphere. As Putin has stated, small countries such as Ukraine or Georgia "are not fully sovereign and must respect Russia's strictures, just as Central America and South America must heed their large northern neighbor."[55] As demonstrated in recent conflicts, Moscow has not been shy in resorting to military force (whether directly or indirectly through proxy actors or mercenaries like the Wagner Group) to defend what it perceives as its core legitimate interests in its own sphere of influence.[56] In other words, just like the US declared a Monroe Doctrine prohibiting outside powers from interfering in its own sphere of influence in the Western Hemisphere, Putin declared what a scholar called a "Monroyev Doctrine" claiming the same privileges for Russia in the former Soviet space.[57]

If Putin's regional hegemonic ambitions are clear in the "near abroad," there is still quite a bit of debate on the nature of the tactics he is using to achieve that. Is he a "crafty strategist or a reckless leader?," as the *New York Times* wondered during the outbreak of the Ukraine war of February 2022.[58] A 2021 RAND in-depth study of Russian grand strategy concluded that there is indeed a coherent approach guiding Moscow's decision, and the tenets of this approach resemble the Putin Doctrine

referenced above, which shows the Russian leader is indeed generally implementing his vision into policy:

> Russian decisionmakers believe that the current international order is transitioning from a Western-centric, U.S.-led unipolar system to a polycentric world, where power will be more-equally distributed among a broader range of states. From the Kremlin's point of view, this transition is not only inevitable but also desirable, because it will result in greater global stability and prosperity and a more prominent role for Russia as a regional leader and major power.[59]

The common argument that Russia is merely a "global spoiler" and that Putin is opportunistic but deprived of a long-term vision, therefore, is unpersuasive.[60] Instead, Moscow's actions during the era of GPC have been convincingly described as those of a "raiding" state by Russia military expert Michael Kofman: "Spoilers react to plans, but have little strategy of their own. Raiders, by contrast, launch operations with a strategic outlook and objectives in mind."[61] As Kofman explains, Russia is pursuing a "raiding strategy" during the GPC era with a narrow but very specific goal in mind: "Russia's strategy is aimed at pursuing a great power condominium, seeking to secure former Soviet space as a de facto sphere of influence and its status as one of the principal players in the international system."[62]

In order to implement this raiding grand strategy, Russian military doctrine evolved in the past 10 years to better align with Moscow's ambitious foreign policy in the GPC era, and it did so in a way that privileges indirect confrontation, hybrid war, and cyber and information operations over the direct use of force, at least up until the misguided invasion of Ukraine. In what military analysts refer to as the Gerasimov Doctrine, after Valery Gerasimov, Russia's chief of the general staff, Moscow envisions nonmilitary tactics aimed at "creating chaos and an environment of permanent unrest and conflict within an enemy state."[63] The innovative doctrine has also been complemented by sustained financial investments in modern weapons system and improvements in the quality of military training and logistics.[64] This "hybrid war" was most evident in Syria and Ukraine over the past decade. On the other hand, when Russia attempted a more conventional military invasion in 2022 in Ukraine, it failed to accomplish its initial military goal of taking Kiev, and ultimately ended up getting drawn into a protracted and expensive conflict. At the time of this writing, it remains to be seen how the war in Ukraine will ulti-

mately conclude and what lessons Russia will take from it. Moscow's poor military performance, however, should dissipate any concerns that Russia is going to seriously threaten any NATO country for the foreseeable future, given the Ukraine quagmire. Just like the US after the Vietnam or Iraq fiascos swore off large-scale military interventions for a long time, regardless of how the Ukraine war ends the Russian appetite for any such costly military adventures will be strongly suppressed for a long while.

Containing China First, and Russia Second

Even though China and Russia both are attempting to establish regional hegemony, the big difference is that Beijing has the military and economic power to potentially achieve that, while Moscow does not. This is the main reason why US grand strategy should prioritize containing China's ambitions first and foremost, while working to make sure Russia's revisionist strategy is being primarily addressed by America's powerful NATO allies in Europe. Unlike liberal and conservative internationalists who often focus on Russia's challenge to the liberal world order, and defensive realists who doubt China's hegemonic ambitions, offensive realists very clearly prioritize containing China over Russia.[65] In a *New Yorker* interview in 2022 after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Mearsheimer doubled down on this position:

> We should be pivoting out of Europe to deal with China in a laser-like fashion, number one. And, number two, we should be working overtime to create friendly relations with the Russians . . . If you live in a world where there are three great powers—China, Russia, and the United States—and one of those great powers, China, is a peer competitor, what you want to do if you're the United States is have Russia on your side of the ledger.[66]

Even though Russia's recent actions may appear more detrimental to US interests and international stability than China's, from a geopolitical long-term perspective the threat from Beijing is much greater.

A brief comparison of the balance of power in economic and military terms among the US, China, and Russia clearly shows the discrepancy of capability that leads offensive realists to focus on China. While not perfect, the size of a country's economy and the amount of money it spends on defense annually are useful proxies in the literature for the

balance of power. China's economy of over $17 trillion is about 10 times as large as Russia's $1.7 trillion, and more than two-thirds the size of the $23 trillion American economy in nominal terms, as of 2021.[67] The Russian economy, to provide some context, is smaller than Italy's ($2.1 trillion) and less than half that of major NATO allies Germany and Britain. In terms of military power, in 2022, the United States spent $778 billion on defense (first in the world), compared to $252 billion for China (second in the world) and only $61 billion for Russia (fourth in the world). For perspective, the third largest spending country is India ($72 billion), and NATO allies the UK, Germany, and France all spend in the $50–$60 billion range, similar to Russia. The economic and military power indexes make clear that China is the only potential peer competitor for the United States, while Russia can be easily overmatched by NATO's European allies with only minimal US assistance. Particularly after the invasion of Ukraine, Germany, the EU's largest economy, as well as other members, reversed a long-standing policy of underinvesting in defense and pledged to increase its defense spending to 2 percent of GDP, which should put NATO in excellent shape to deter any future Russian aggression.[68] Moreover, Russia has a declining and elderly demographic profile, which indicates its economic power will be even further diminished in future decades.[69]

In the new era of GPC, the United States is therefore facing two different strategic challenges from both China and Russia, and it is crucial that these two great powers do not form a quasi-alliance against Washington.[70] In recent years, there have been worrying signs pointing in that direction, such as a constant theme pushed by the Beijing and Moscow that the U.S.-led international order "does not represent the will of the international community," in Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov's formulation.[71] Writing in *Foreign Affairs*, Andrea Kendall-Taylor and David O. Shullman warn about a dangerous convergence between the two revisionist powers: "The problems the two countries pose to Washington are distinct, but the convergence of their interests and the complementarity of their capabilities—military and otherwise—make their combined challenge to U.S. power greater than the sum of its parts. China, in particular, is using its relationship with Russia to fill gaps in its military capabilities, accelerate its technological innovation, and complement its efforts to undermine U.S. global leadership."[72]

The emerging strategic partnership between Beijing and Moscow is indeed very worrisome from the US perspective, as Putin and Xi recently signed a "no limits" partnership that laid the groundwork for closer

cooperation and future anti-Western actions.[73] For example, their two militaries conducted joint exercises twice in 2022, in defiance of US and European efforts to isolate Russia after the invasion of Ukraine.[74] Similarly, the two chief US rivals in the GPC era have successfully worked together over the past several years to woo countries in the Global South and build economic, military, and diplomatic connections that allowed them to defeat Western efforts to achieve global condemnation against Moscow for its war in Ukraine, for example.[75] President Putin bragged of such efforts, and scolded Western leaders for their inability to recognize the emerging multipolar world order: "They do not seem to notice that new powerful centers have formed on the planet. . . . We are talking about revolutionary changes in the entire system of international relations. These changes are fundamental and pivotal."[76]

The offensive realist focus on containing China over Russia as the main concern of US grand strategy implies a significant change in Washington's approach to Moscow. Even though in the short run Putin's appetite for military aggression must be curbed by raising the costs of another potential invasion through strengthening the capabilities of NATO's eastern flank allies, the longer-term grand strategic approach must eventually offer Russia's leaders (whether Putin, or, most likely, his successor) enough security guarantees that their "near abroad" sphere of influence on the European flank is secured so that they can refocus their energies toward Central Asia and the Far East, toward China's backyard. Instead of lumping them together as a joint ideological threat, the best approach to break the Russian-Chinese alliance is to adopt a realist *Kissingerian* strategy of *détente* with Moscow, the weaker partner, in order to drive a strategic wedge between them; this would be equivalent to what Charles Kupchan aptly describes as helping Russia "leave a bad marriage."[77] This type of geopolitical shift would serve Washington's overall goal of containing Beijing's rise to peer rival status: "U.S. efforts to manage China's rise successfully and peacefully will be significantly advanced if China faces strategic pressure on more than its maritime flank and can no longer count on Russia's steady military and diplomatic support."[78]

It is important to realize that despite their recent partnership, natural geopolitical rivalries in Central Asia and the Far East reveal the limits of a Sino-Russian strategic partnership. In making an argument against the longevity of the current partnership between the two, Russia expert Leon Aaron chronicles recent areas of disagreement between them, including most importantly China's interreference through BRI in the former Soviet Central Asian republics that Russia considers part of its

near abroad.[79] The US should more actively exploit these fissures in the emerging Beijing-Moscow axis, as well as the deep historical animosities and the Russian resentment of Chinese immigration and business expansion in the Russian Far East.

The first and most urgent step in preventing a Moscow-Beijing axis from solidifying is to achieve a lasting diplomatic solution to the Ukraine crisis that would leave both Russia and the United States in a place out of which future relations could realistically improve. Loose talk of only accepting an unambiguous Russian "defeat" is not only unrealistic and needlessly extends the already significant human and financial costs of the conflict, but it is also counterproductive to US geopolitical interests in terms of GPC.[80] In addition to the financial assistance, the United States has already expended a large supply of some of its own advanced munitions in arms transfers to Ukraine and thus harmed its readiness for a much more important potential conflict in Asia.[81] Even more dangerous is the increasing risk of nuclear escalation, one that is often underestimated in the debates on US policy toward this conflict.[82] And while the massive economic sanctions have hurt the Russian economy to some extent, they have failed to achieve their ultimate goal of changing Putin's decision-making; one reason for that may be that, confounding Western experts, six months after the war began Russia is selling more oil than before the war and earning more money than ever from its energy resources, according to the *Wall Street Journal*.[83]

Therefore, the best option for Washington is to mediate a negotiated settlement that recognizes Kiev's future neutrality and limits NATO's expansion outside of Moscow's near-abroad area, thus setting the stage for more productive US-Russian relations in other areas of GPC of greater geopolitical importance to the US. Russia's efforts to establish a sphere of influence in Eastern Europe does not infringe on core US interests if it is limited to the "near abroad" area, and anything over that, encroaching on NATO territories like the Baltics, can be addressed by America's NATO allies in Europe with limited US assistance. In exchange for recognizing its sphere of influence in the "near abroad," however, US should ask Russia to adopt a neutral position vis-à-vis the US-Chinese strategic competition for influence in Asia and elsewhere, and to stop interfering in Latin America.

In conclusion, an offensive realist grand strategy must focus first and foremost on containing China's ambitions to become a regional and global hegemon, as that is the most pressing geopolitical threat for the United States. Washington's approach to Russia should be subordinate to

that primary goal, which in realist terms means that the US should focus on preventing Moscow and Beijing from forming an alliance, instead of pushing them toward one as the Biden administration unfortunately has been doing since the war in Ukraine started.

Other Threats to the Homeland: Drug Cartels, Radical Islamist Terrorist Groups, and Rogue Nuclear States

The geopolitical competition against China and Russia should represent the main priority for US foreign policy and grand strategy in the decades to come. Having said that, however, Washington policymakers must also address three other dangerous threats to national security that have already killed large numbers of Americans or have the potential to do so: drug cartels fueling the fentanyl crisis, international terrorist organizations like ISIS and al-Qaeda, and rogue nuclear states (primarily North Korea, and possibly Iran). Combating these threats in the context of an overall international security environment characterized by Great Power Competition requires adopting a cost-effective strategy that does not siphon off military resources from confronting Beijing and Moscow.

The United States must expect its great power rivals to attempt to get Washington to divert military resources toward confronting these threats (geographically located in Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East, with the exception of North Korea) so as to keep the Pentagon from fully focusing on countering Beijing's and Moscow's own regional ambitions in Asia or Eastern Europe, respectively. As offensive realism expects, would-be regional hegemons like China or Russia will increasingly try to interfere with the United States' own issues in the Western Hemisphere, which should in turn force Washington to pay more attention to its own region; similarly, they would use proxy forces and client states in the Middle East to prevent or delay America's strategic rebalancing away from that region of secondary strategic importance.

DRUG CARTELS AND CHINESE FENTANYL

It may be surprising for many to learn that, according to the Center for Disease Control, during the 2020–21 time frame the leading cause of death for American adults between 18 and 45 was not COVID-19, but fentanyl overdoses: this synthetic drug killed on average an American

adult every eight minutes in that time span.[84] And since 2021 the number of US victims of (mostly fentanyl) overdose, over 100,000, exceeds the number of Americans killed in action during the bloodiest year of World War II.[85] Given these catastrophic statistics, it's unsurprising the US government now recognizes international drug trafficking, particularly fentanyl, as an "unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy and economy of the United States."[86] Therefore, the drug cartels that conduct most of this trafficking, and their Chinese partners who provide the fentanyl, its precursors, and increasingly financing and money-laundering assistance, must be considered a high-priority, urgent strategic threat.[87]

The nexus between Mexican drug cartels and the CCP transforms the opioid epidemic into a national security threat, in addition to being a devastating public health and economic problem. According to Drug Enforcement Agency agent Michael Ferguson, it would not be an exaggeration to conceptualize it as a chemical weapon given its deadly impact on ordinary Americans: "Fentanyl is manufactured death. . . . Whatever can be likened to a weapon of mass destruction and the effect it has on people, it's fentanyl."[88] Other analysts, such as Lt. Col. Nathan Rusin of the US Air Force, go even further in linking China's unwillingness to crack down on fentanyl to a deliberate strategy of the Chinese Communist Party to launch "drug warfare" against the United States, as part of its overall "unrestricted warfare" doctrine based on using unconventional and asymmetric nonmilitary means to counter America's conventional military superiority in the GPC era. In his view, "China is pushing illicit fentanyl into the U.S. in an effort to destabilize, undermine and weaken the fabric of America's social and political systems."[89]

While the primary motivation for this connection may indeed be financial, it is increasingly evident to both US analysts and senior military officials that the Washington-Beijing struggle for power in the era of Great Power Competition certainly shapes what some call "a reverse Opium war."[90] The author of the most comprehensive study of this connection so far, *Fentanyl and Geopolitics: Controlling Opioid Supply from China*, Vanda Felbab-Brown, is clear on the connection between the two: "Put simply, Beijing thinks of counternarcotics collaboration as downstream from its geostrategic relations. Unlike the U.S. government, which seeks to delink the issue from geopolitics, China views the fentanyl crisis through the lens of its growing rivalry with the United States."[91]

Even if the CCP were not intentionally tolerating the transfer of fentanyl to the drug cartels fueling the opioid epidemic in the United

States, the connections between these two adversaries would still be worrisome enough to harm US national interests in the Western Hemisphere, according to top US military officials.[92] Testifying before Congress in 2021, Admiral Craig Faller, the commander of U.S. Southern Command, warned: "Two of the most significant threats are China and transnational criminal organizations. . . . Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) pose a direct threat to our national security. . . . They drive illegal migration, and they allow bad actors like China to gain influence."[93] Therefore, the drug cartels pose a geopolitical threat as well because their violent activities are setting the conditions for Beijing to advance its anti-American agenda and challenge US hegemony in the Western Hemisphere.

Given the increasing severity of the threat posed to the US homeland and its national security by the Mexican drug cartels, unsurprisingly the US government has been searching for new ways to more effectively address it. Former secretary of defense Mark Esper's memoir even claims that President Trump inquired about a military option to destroy the cartel labs inside Mexico.[94] More recently, Congress considered legislation giving the president authority to use the US military against cartel members in Mexico, a step advocated by former US attorney general William Barr who argues that these "narco-terrorist groups are more like ISIS than like the American mafia."[95] A separate piece of legislation backed by some experts but criticized by others recommends legally designating them as foreign terrorist organizations.[96] For advocates of this measure, the old law enforcement paradigm no longer fits the military advances of the cartels: the new cartels are "composed of former Mexican special forces with U.S. military training. The Jalisco New Generation Cartel maintains an arsenal of heavy machine guns, drones, and grenades. In addition to regular massacres of Mexican civilians, the cartel is responsible for downing a Mexican military helicopter with a rocket-propelled grenade launcher and the grenade bombing of a U.S. embassy."[97] And even if their goal is mostly to maximize profit and not political control or to conduct mass casualty attacks on American soil, the practical impact of their actions and capabilities does indeed rise to the level of a national security threat worthy of countering most aggressively, including with military force. Moreover, designating them as terrorist organizations would also allow for more effective measures to defund the fentanyl trade by giving the Treasury Department more authorities and tools.[98]

The United States cannot achieve its major grand strategic goals in distant corners of the world unless it establishes security, stability, and

prosperity first in its own immediate neighborhood. In other words, offensive realism dictates that Washington first of all needs to effectively control its own regional sphere of influence: the drug cartels and their emerging relationship with China are now the biggest challenge to Washington in its own region, and hence need to be addressed with a much greater sense of urgency.

RADICAL ISLAMIST TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS: ISIS AND AL-QAEDA

For most of the two decades since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the War on Terror against radical Islamist terrorist groups represented the top priority of the US national security establishment. In the last few years, however, the United States has shifted its grand strategic calculus away from treating radical Islamic terrorism as an overarching war requiring other strategic priorities to conform to its necessities, as the Pentagon's 2018 defense strategy made clear. In September 2021, President Biden also symbolically marked the end of the War on Terror as a defining era in American foreign policy when he declared in front of the United Nations General Assembly: "For the first time in 20 years, the United States is not at war. We've turned the page."[99] Even if combating jihadist terrorism is no longer the top strategic priority, however, it doesn't mean that groups like ISIS, al-Qaeda, and their future spinoffs don't represent a serious enough security threat to warrant a second-tier priority, behind great power competition but on a par with drug cartels and rogue nuclear states.

Using precious and scarce assets such as intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance collection platforms and fighter jets to strike terrorist targets across the larger Middle East and the Horn of Africa, however, is a misallocation of resources in the age of GPC. The same goes for providing funding and national level intelligence assets to US Central Command (CENTCOM), the part of the US military covering the Middle East, at the expense of Pacific Command (PACOM) and European Command (EUCOM). Similarly, maintaining the current level of about 30,000 US troops forward deployed in the Middle East represents a legacy of the War on Terror that prevents the US from adapting its military posture to the main threats in Asia and Europe, as does the recent military commitment to fight the Houthis in order to protect mostly non-US-related commerce through the Red Sea.[100] The downgrade in priority of

terrorism versus GPC should be accompanied by a downscaling of ambitious US goals in the region: even though the US should not abandon this important strategic area of the world, at least as far as counterterrorism is concerned a new approach is needed. An effective alternative is the "mowing the lawn" approach proposed by Dan Byman, which is modeled on that used by Israel: "The goal is to manage, rather than eliminate, the terrorist threat, and this frees the government to focus on other concerns."[101]

In the age of Great Power Competition, therefore, offensive realism downgrades the threat from terrorist groups such as ISIS and al-Qaeda to a security condition to be *managed*, rather than a strategic problem to be *solved*. From a grand strategic perspective, the United States needs to abandon the disastrous War on Terror premise that led to the military fiascos in Iraq and Afghanistan: a radical political transformation of the Middle East is not necessary to secure US core national interests, and large-scale counterinsurgency operations aimed at propping up emerging democratic regimes in the name of counterterrorism have been enormously costly blunders that the US can no longer afford to repeat in the age of GPC. Having said that, ISIS and al-Qaeda are still dangerous adversaries capable of reconstituting and threatening the US homeland or its interests abroad, and therefore a large-scale curtailing of global counterterror operations, as advocated by some defensive realists/restraint proponents at the Quincy Institute, for example, would shift the pendulum too much in the other direction.[102] What the US needs is a focused realist counterterrorist strategy that is cost effective by making use of local partners almost exclusively, is devoid of ideological influences in selecting those partners, and is ruthless in pursuing those terrorists most likely to directly harm the US homeland and military/diplomatic installations abroad.

The US national security establishment is slowly transitioning to a reshaping of its counterterrorism strategy vis-à-vis Islamic extremist groups in the new era brought about not just by the geopolitical transition to GPC but also by the complete withdrawal from Afghanistan.[103] The *New York Times* reported that, just as President Biden was proclaiming the end of the 20-year war in Afghanistan, "the C.I.A. was quietly expanding a secret base deep in the Sahara, from which it runs drone flights to monitor Al Qaeda and Islamic State militants in Libya, as well as extremists in Niger, Chad and Mali."[104] Similarly, the military's Africa Command resumed drone strikes against al-Shabaab, an al-Qaeda-linked group in Somalia, and the Special Operations Command (SOCOM) is

contemplating sending trainers back into Somalia. The SOCOM commander, General Richard Clark, describes the jihadist threat as having "metastasized": "It's gone into areas of Africa, where they could seek sanctuary and where there may be some areas of sanctuary that we have to look at. And when I say it is not diminished, I think it's spread."[105] And while he acknowledged that the US military is pivoting to focus on the threats posed by China and Russia, he also argued SOCOM's need to undertake counterterrorism operations "is still a requirement."[106] The same kind of analysis was echoed in the comments made by CIA director Avril Haines, who indicated that Afghanistan is no longer the priority of counterterrorism efforts: "What we look at is Yemen, Somalia, Syria, and Iraq for ISIS. And that's where we see the greatest threat."[107]

The biggest risk to the current downgrading of counterterrorism strategy to a second-tier category is that of spreading the more limited intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance and Special Forces assets too thin across too many countries. The important thing to keep in mind in the GPC era is that the US core national security interests are actually not threatened in most countries with an ISIS or al-Qaeda affiliate problem on their territory. For example, the latest Biden administration accounting of US military operations as part of the War on Terror comprises too large a number of theaters of operations, from Central Asia to the Levant to large swaths of Africa and even the Philippines.[108] The US can no longer afford to define its core national interests so broadly as to encompass the support of any government fighting a jihadist-related insurgency. It is only those Islamist terrorist groups that directly threaten the US homeland that are worthy of an aggressive US military response.

ROGUE NUCLEAR STATES: IRAN AND NORTH KOREA

The last group of second-tier national security threats in the GPC era is represented by rogue nuclear states such as North Korea and Iran. These actors can harm the US homeland and interests abroad, and thus constrain US military pursuit of its own geopolitical goals in their respective regions (East Asia and the Middle East). The past decade or two witnessed a heated scholarly debate on the impact of nuclear proliferation on international stability and on US grand strategy, as well as more recently on how the GPC era will influence the potential spread of nuclear weapons to new states.[109] Unfortunately for US national security, its nonproliferation agenda will become more difficult to implement as

the international system moves from unipolarity to multipolarity.[110] But does nuclear proliferation pose as grave of a strategic threat to international stability, and to Washington's national security, as US policymakers often argue? International security theorists have been arguing ferociously about this point for a couple of decades now, a debate usually framed around the Waltz-Sagan (proliferation "optimists" vs. "pessimists," named after Kenneth Waltz and Scott Sagan) argument, with most realists generally following the Waltz view while both the liberal and conservative internationalist schools of thought fall more in the Sagan camp.[111]

In the case of US grand strategy, as Frank Gavin showed, Washington policymakers found themselves strongly on the pessimists' side and made *inhibiting* the spread of nuclear weapons a tenet of US grand strategy during the Cold War and beyond.[112] One major reason why they did so is likely not because they were worried about the impact of nuclear proliferation on international security *in general*, but rather because proliferation can be particularly detrimental for "power-projecting states" such as the United States.[113] Conservative internationalist scholar Matthew Kroenig expands the optimist-pessimist debate by teasing out the "differential effects" of the spread of nuclear weapons, and argues that "nuclear proliferation threatens the United States more than any other state on the globe" given that the US military is the largest power-projecting force in the world.[114]

An offensive realist position on nuclear proliferation in the GPC era must necessarily be focused on both the level of the direct threat to the US from a country's nuclear capability and on how efforts at nonproliferation interfere with the geopolitical competition against fellow great powers. Washington can expect only minimal cooperation from Beijing and Moscow in curbing the ambitions of North Korea or Iran. Unlike defensive realism, an offensive realist position is more concerned about the proliferation prospects of regional actors that could either strive for regional hegemony and drain US resources, like Iran in the Middle East, or threaten local allies and complicate US freedom of action in Asia, as in the case of North Korea. And unlike internationalists who worry about all nuclear proliferation, be it from friendly or rogue nations, offensive realists do not necessarily worry about inhibiting US allies from developing nuclear capabilities if they want to do so. For example, Mearsheimer famously advocated in favor of a Ukrainian nuclear deterrent in the 1990s, a position that if adopted likely would have prevented Russia's eventual invasion of that country two decades later.[115] Therefore, com-

bating global nuclear proliferation per se should not be a major grand strategic goal; instead, US efforts should focus specifically on rogue states like North Korea and Iran, and even those should be regarded as a secondary threat to great power competition in terms of resource allocation. The exorbitantly costly war in Iraq, launched as part of a strategy to combat nuclear proliferation, serves as a perfect example of how disastrous it can be to overemphasize nuclear proliferation as a grand strategic goal.

The geopolitical threat to Washington from Iran's seemingly continued quest for nuclear weapons capability must be judged in the context of Tehran's own regional activities and its hegemonic ambitions on the one hand, and through the prism of its increasingly close ties with Beijing and Moscow on the other. A full-fledged Iranian nuclear program would certainly hurt US interests both regionally and in the context of GPC competition. The Biden administration, in liberal internationalist fashion, came into office intent on renewing diplomatic efforts to rejoin the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and proceeded apace with negotiations with Tehran and the other signatories to restore the original terms of the 2015 deal.[116] One of the major difficulties, however, is the progress already made by Tehran in its efforts to secure a so-called breakout capability, or the ability to produce a nuclear weapon in short order if they make the final decision. Moreover, the International Atomic Energy Agency also reported that Iran had taken steps toward a "possible atomic-weapons production, starting work on an assembly line to manufacture a key material used at the core of nuclear warheads."[117] The initial breakout time set in the 2015 deal was 12 months, but even Biden officials concede that Iran's enrichment progress over the past few years made that time frame unrealistic in the new limits set in a restored deal.[118] As of December 2023, the latest estimate was that Iran is only 12 days away from a nuclear breakout, should it choose to pursue it.[119]

The advocates of a liberal internationalist approach to Iran's nuclear program continue to believe that diplomacy and a nuclear deal offers the best chance to prevent Tehran from joining the nuclear club.[120] Even though Iran's progress may be very hard to reverse, at least a diplomatic solution will prevent Iran from crossing the nuclear threshold, and maybe even open up possibilities for negotiations on the ballistic missile program and support for insurgent/terrorist groups. Another option to curb Tehran's ambitions would be to entangle them in a regional deal that would give them economic incentives to keep good relations with their Arab neighbors.[121] Conservative internationalists are less sanguine

about the prospects of a diplomatic deal: they propose focusing on maximum pressure in order to foster regime change, or at the very least a crippling of Iran's economy that would lead in that direction.[122] A riskier option along the same lines would be for Washington to allow Israel to strike Iran's facilities, or at least give that impression, in order to deter Tehran from going nuclear. Lastly, prominent defensive realists including Waltz and Posen made the counterintuitive argument that Iran's nuclear weapons will actually increase regional stability by balancing Israel's program, or, at the very least, represent a problem that can be contained at a lower cost than any potential military solution.[123]

On the contrary, an offensive realist strategy has two goals: deny Iran's ambitions for regional hegemony, and raise the costs on China and Russia for supporting Tehran. The first goal would be made harder by an Iranian nuclear bomb, but not impossible. If negotiations with Tehran, financial sanctions, and cyberattacks cannot stop Iran from developing a nuclear weapon, the US should work to contain Iran's ambitions through solidifying its alliances. It could even balance this new capability by assisting Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt to develop their own nuclear capabilities should they want to do so, and rely on regional nuclear deterrence to keep the peace. The second goal, drawing Chinese and Russian resources more toward the Middle East, can be accomplished by raising the costs of doing business with Iran, and by passing the burden of securing energy flows to the Chinese navy as opposed to continuing to use the US Navy for that mission. The US is much less dependent on Middle East oil than China, and yet it continues to provide for this global public good as a relic of the previous decades of heavy US military and strategic involvement in the Middle East. As part of a new GPC era grand strategy focused primarily on Asia and Western Hemisphere, and secondarily on Europe, the Persian Gulf is now a tertiary theater and the resource allocation of US military assets should reflect that.

If Iran's nuclear ambitions are still in the early stages, North Korea's nuclear arsenal is already composed of about 60 nuclear warheads, and they can add at least six more every year.[124] Similar in many ways to the Western efforts to stop or at least retard Iran's progress to nuclear weapons through diplomatic deals and economic sanctions, Washington and its partners engaged in frustrating negotiations with North Korean leaders Kim Jong-Il first (and later with his son Kim Jong-Un) over the past three decades, from Clinton to Trump. The Biden administration has not paid much attention to North Korea's nuclear program as of yet,

as shown by the lack of any speech on the topic or a full-time envoy, let alone an actual strategy to deal with this threat.[125] This despite the fact that Kim's nuclear weapons program is going "full steam ahead," as Rafael Grossi, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, told the media in September 2021.[126] Over the past two years in particular, North Korea has conducted over 100 tests and expanded its arsenal to more advanced solid-fuel ICBMs and showed the ability to deploy tactical nuclear weapons.[127] Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program is accelerating rather than slowing down, and there is no evidence that diplomatic efforts or past economic sanctions or military threats, as liberal internationalists and conservative internationalists, respectively, favored as policy responses, are having any significant impact in changing that.

Therefore, a realist appraisal of the situation on the Korean Peninsula would conclude that Washington must abandon the short-term goal of denuclearization and instead focus on two other goals, deterrence and détente, in order to prevent Pyongyang from becoming a costly distraction in the effort to contain China's regional hegemonic ambitions. First, we must address the question of whether a rogue regime like North Korea's is deterrable, and the short answer is yes. Kim is not going to virtually guarantee his removal from power by intentionally starting a nuclear war against Washington or Seoul; and there is no reason to believe he is not capable of preventing an accidental use of his nuclear weapons.[128] Second, the US should adopt a policy of détente toward North Korea to keep it from fully becoming a Chinese asset in this new era of Great Power Competition in Asia. In the past couple of years, Kim's bellicose actions, such as his missile tests, whether he intended to or not, actually served to distract US allies such as South Korea and Japan from focusing on US priorities like defending Taiwan.[129]

A détente with North Korea may sound counterintuitive as an offensive realist position, but it makes perfect strategic sense in the new context of a GPC world dominated by the goal of containing China's hegemonic ambitions. As long as the United States, along with South Korea and Japan, remain strongly united against Kim, they can negotiate from a position of strength and diffuse the security dilemma on the peninsula. And unlike Iran, North Korea has no regional hegemonic ambitions of its own, and it also already possesses nuclear weapons, which is why the regime may be less revisionist and thus more willing to arrive at an accommodation.[130] At the end of the day, containing China is the main grand strategic priority, and dealing with the threat from North Korea's rogue nuclear regime must be done in a way that puts the US in

the best position to focus its attention in East Asia on its main geopolitical adversary.

To sum up, in the GPC era, drug cartels, international terrorist groups, and nuclear proliferators are indeed major threats to US national security, but they must be dealt with in a way that allows the US government to devote most of its resources to the larger grand strategic threat of preventing the emergence of Beijing as a global peer rival. One of the primary benefits of a grand strategic framework is exactly this type of prioritization of resources according to the level of strategic threat assigned to each of the national security challenges confronting a nation's government. The next three chapters of the book will explore how this overall grand strategic objective must shape the tools of power at Washington's disposal, starting with the shape and size of the military force needed for the GPC era.

CHAPTER FOUR

Military Power

Strategic Planning for Great Power Competition and Conflict

A proper appreciation for the role of military power is at the heart of any realist grand strategy. And in order for Washington to be able to prevent its great power rivals from achieving regional hegemony and thus peer rival status, the Pentagon needs to be able to credibly deter them from undertaking aggressive military pursuits, or defeat them if deterrence fails. This chapter analyzes the military requirements of a No Peer Rivals grand strategy across all major modes of warfare: conventional, nuclear, and unconventional/irregular. After 9/11, US military strategy emphasized preparing for irregular conflicts against insurgents and terrorists, while allowing some high-end conventional warfare capabilities to atrophy, and also failing to invest enough in cyber warfare, space, or AI futuristic technologies. Recent years have seen a welcome reversion to Great Power Competition as the primary mission of the Pentagon, as witnessed by the strategic guidance spelled out in the 2018 National Defense Strategy. However, this shift has been more rhetorical than reflected in the force structure, posture, investments, budgeting, and force employment decisions of the Defense Department or the White House over the past few years. In the following pages I highlight some of the trade-offs involved between competing priorities, and argue in favor of developing a US military strategy, doctrine, and force structure optimized for the needs of the GPC era.

The Return of Conventional High-Tech Wars and Naval Arms Races

The most fundamental implication of the No Peer Rivals grand strategic paradigm for the Defense Department's strategic planning efforts is the prioritization of high-end, conventional conflict against another great power. If the United States is to deny China's quest for regional hegemony, it needs to be able to deter, and, if deterrence fails, defeat the PLA in a potential military conflict in East Asia. That should be the number-one priority for Pentagon defense planners, and it should be reflected throughout the military's doctrine, planning, and procurement plans. The latest 2022 *National Defense Strategy*, building on its 2018 predecessor, appears to correctly identify the need to adapt to the new strategic realities of the GPC era: "The Department will act urgently to sustain and strengthen deterrence, with the People's Republic of China (PRC) as our most consequential strategic competitor and the pacing challenge for the Department."[1] Unfortunately, however, despite strong rhetorical warnings about the increasing dangers of a Chinese invasion and renewed commitments to come to Taiwan's aid, the Biden administration nevertheless has failed so far to speed up preparations for such a scenario.[2]

At the moment, the Pentagon is neither investing sufficient resources to match the PLA's increased capabilities, nor is it prioritizing those resources toward the Asia-Pacific theater. For example, the chief of naval operations, Admiral Michael Gilday, testified that "even the most optimistic option in the navy's latest shipbuilding plan would be unable to meet the operational requirements for defeating a Chinese attack against Taiwan before the 2040s."[3] Even more misguided has been the allocation of the limited resources available for defense: the Pacific Defense Initiative fund, which aimed for a Taiwan scenario, ended up supporting other regions as well, and the administration increased US military troop presence in Europe from 60,000 to 100,000, ostensibly for the duration of the war in Ukraine.[4] But, as Elbridge Colby points out, "Given that the administration has judged that the war in Ukraine is likely to be protracted, this may well mean indefinitely."[5] Unless the Defense Department does a better job of aligning its limited resources with its most important priority during GPC, which is the core of competent strategic planning, the US military runs the unacceptable risk of losing the one war that would most damage US national security for decades to come.

This section makes five interrelated arguments. First, military strategic planning in the GPC era must center around great power war, and must

realistically admit the challenges such a conflict would currently pose to the US military. Second, US defense strategy must be predicated on a "deterrence by denial" approach vis-à-vis China in the Pacific theater, and a buck-passing approach vis-à-vis Russia and Iran; the US military in the near-to-medium term cannot afford to fight two major conventional wars, and pretending otherwise is strategically dangerous. Third, the Taiwan scenario should be the main driver in shaping the positioning of US troops and in weapons acquisition decisions, where trade-offs are inevitable. Fourth, in addition to preparing for a great power war, the US should also prioritize winning the new naval arms race against the PLA Navy in order to maintain its maritime supremacy and deny China global peer rival status. Fifth and last, US fiscal budgetary realities must be more honestly incorporated into the Pentagon's planning decisions, and trade-offs must be made in favor of countering China at the expense of other threats.

The first required adaptation to the GPC era in the realm of defense strategy is coming to terms with the fundamentally different type of warfare the US military would have to engage in if there were a great power war, the kind of conflict that is now the main priority. Unlike the previous 20 years of fighting low-tech insurgents in the greater Middle East, the United States needs to be ready to fight a very complex multidomain battle against a highly sophisticated technological adversary that could realistically succeed in denying US and allied forces the kind of situational awareness, air dominance, and freedom of maneuver they enjoyed in the post-9/11 wars. The American military technological advantage over its great power rivals has been dramatically reduced over the past two decades, and it is high time for the Washington defense establishment to admit this and adjust its strategic planning accordingly to take account of this new reality.[6] One of Washington's most senior defense analysts, Andrew Krepinevich, has warned that the US cannot assume any longer that it would enjoy local superiority at the high-end conventional end of the warfare spectrum against the PLA:

> High-powered laser antisatellite systems based on Chinese territory would try to blind U.S. military satellites, while Chinese satellites would scout the seas around Taiwan and supply guidance information to PLA weapons homing in on their targets. Sensors placed on the seabed would send data on the movement of U.S. ships and submarines, as PLA submarines would prepare to ambush an arriving U.S. task force.[7]

The same type of dire warnings also come ever more frequently from former high-level Pentagon strategists. Michele Flournoy, for example, predicts that the PLA will continuously try to "disrupt and degrade U.S. battle-management networks" across all domains—sea, air, space, and cyber.[8] The US military intelligence community also sounded the alarm in recent years that China's military in particular has become "a formidable, highly lethal fighting force" that is "very much a peer" of the US military.[9]

Moreover, the recent war in Ukraine also raised the alarm about how poorly prepared the US military industrial base is for modern conventional warfare against a great power.[10] The amount of advanced ammunition expended in the fight between Kiev and Moscow strained US manufacturers to the breaking point, in what Seth Jones accurately described as a real munition crisis: "The number of Javelins transferred to Ukraine over the first six months of the war is the same number the United States would normally produce over seven years. . . . In addition, the rate at which several weapons systems are being exported—such as Javelins, Stingers, HIMARS, Guided Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (GMLRS), and Harpoon anti-ship missiles—may mean there will not be enough munitions in stock to match the requirements of U.S. war plans for China and Russia."[11] The same is true for less sophisticated munitions, such as 155-millimiter rounds, as Ukraine is firing as many rounds "in five days as the United States produces in a month."[12] Unsurprisingly, a series of war games conducted in 2023 by the Center for Strategic and International Studies warned that the United States "would likely run out of some munitions—such as long-range, precision-guided munitions—in less than one week in a Taiwan Strait conflict."[13] The Ukraine war awakened the US defense establishment to the reality of how low the stockpiles for some advanced weapons needed in a Taiwan scenario really were. For example, there are "fewer Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missiles-Extended Range (JASSM-ER) and Long Range Anti-Ship Missiles (LRASM) in storage than there are on the Ukrainian battlefield," as Thomas Mahnken remarked in an article questioning the Defense Department's current preparation for future wars.[14] In short, prioritizing great power conflicts at the strategic level needs to impact the Defense Department's planning decisions more directly and urgently than is currently the case.

Second, the US must shift its defense planning paradigm toward a "strategy of denial," a concept developed in detail by Elbridge Colby, a former deputy assistant secretary of defense for strategy and force devel-

opment, in his excellent book on US defense strategy in the new GPC era.[15] The basic idea is that the United States must primarily focus its military planning toward denying China the ability to successfully conquer Taiwan, or otherwise militarily coerce Taiwan or any other neighboring country into accepting Beijing's regional hegemony in the region.[16] Deterring Chinese aggression by convincing Beijing that it would lose a war against the United States, and defeating the PLA if deterrence fails, should therefore be the main goal of the Pentagon in the GPC era. This type of military strategy is best suited for the objectives of the No Peer Rivals offensive realist grand strategic framework.

The question of how to address America's relative decline in conventional military power vis-à-vis a potential peer rival is one of the most important grand strategic controversies of our GPC era. Unsurprisingly, a vigorous debate has emerged between scholars representing the various schools of strategic thought outlined in this book.[17] The Defense Department, following its own internal strategic reviews, has made a major doctrinal shift in its force planning construct by abandoning the so-called two-war standard in favor of a one-war standard.[18] The 2018 *National Defense Strategy* (*NDS*), according to one of its authors, Jim Mitre, aimed to make the transition from the "unipolar era" (1991–2014) when the US prepared for "the two-war construct—winning two near-simultaneous regional wars against rogue states"—to the Great Power Competition era (2014–present) when the US begins to shift to primarily preparing for winning one war against a major power like China or Russia.[19] The focus on two simultaneous wars left the US military potentially poorly prepared to fight a modern great power foe, because it ignored new conceptual developments and needed high-tech investments in order to focus on achieving dominance against two low-tech, nonnuclear adversaries, such as Iraq, Iran, or North Korea.[20] Given the new geopolitical realities, the 2018 *NDS* tried to reverse this trend by refocusing on great power foes, but the shift only goes halfway toward truly adapting the Defense Department to the GPC strategic era because it does not prioritize China over Russia as the only realistic would-be peer rival.

The contours of the debate on US defense strategy mirror the higher-level grand strategic debate. At one end of the spectrum, defensive realists call for reducing defense spending and abandoning what they call a self-defeating quest for "military primacy."[21] At the other end of the spectrum, conservative internationalists (and, particularly after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, many hawkish liberal ones as well) argue that the US needs to return to a strategy of global military supremacy and the

two-war standard. As Hal Brands and Evan Montgomery advocate along these lines, the United States should continue to remain committed to preserving stability simultaneously in three theaters (Europe, Asia, and the Middle East), in addition to other "world-ordering"-type interventions such as punishing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or preventing the collapse of a state like Venezuela. If that's the case, they are correct that designing a "one-war" military focused on China poses an unacceptable risk to other global commitments.[22] Similarly, Thomas Mahnken argues in favor of increasing defense investments to be able to fight Russia and China simultaneously, and employs the analogy of having had to fight two other authoritarian regimes (Germany and Japan) during World War II.[23]

On the contrary, the No Peer Rivals offensive realist approach resolves this strategic planning conundrum by explicitly making clear that the United States will abandon the global liberal hegemonic strategy along with the "world-ordering" interventions associated with defending the liberal international order; instead, the Pentagon will optimize defense planning for winning one major high-end war, while shifting the burden to regional partners for other lesser contingencies. It's crucial to realize that the Asia-Pacific region is the only one of the three key geopolitical areas of the world where America's allies, while capable, nevertheless cannot balance against a would-be regional hegemon and deny Beijing its goal of regional dominance without significant direct military assistance from US forces. Therefore, it makes perfect strategic sense to focus primarily on the PLA as the number-one adversary for planning purposes, and consider other scenarios as "lesser included," as the Pentagon refers to secondary missions. The military commitments to Europe and the Middle East, important theaters but areas where a regional hegemon is very unlikely to arise, will therefore be reduced and focused mostly on supporting local partners.

Third, while there are a number of different ways the US and China could end up in a direct military conflict, including contingencies in the South China Sea or cyberspace, none is more likely or more dangerous than a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. If Washington cannot stop Beijing from conquering Taiwan, it cannot possibly hope to prevent China from becoming a de facto regional hegemon. Japan, South Korea, and Australia would have no choice but to accommodate China in that scenario. Reasonably assuming that the PLA's best strategy for taking over Taiwan is attempting a fait accompli, Colby argues that the US should focus all its efforts on making it extremely costly for Beijing to succeed in the

early stages of what would be a very difficult amphibious operation. The US should predeploy its forces in the area and enhance its intelligence and surveillance capabilities, stock up on the needed munitions, and conduct more credible complex military exercises "to demonstrate to Chinese military planners that launching an attack would be unlikely to succeed."[24] A Marathon Initiative study by Austin Dahmer (*Resourcing the Strategy of Denial*) fleshes out the US military requirements of the "deterrence by denial" approach to China:

> Key to this strategy then are military forces that can 1) deny the attacker's ability to seize key territory, and/or 2) deny the attacker's ability to hold seized territory. The focus would be on attriting PLA power projection forces, specifically those necessary to seize Taiwan's core territory. The critical vulnerability of PLA power projection forces is their reliance on transportation from mainland China over the Taiwan Strait: amphibious shipping (both naval and civilian/dual-use), fixed-wing transport aircraft, and rotary-wing assault support aircraft. Forces that can credibly sense, target, destroy, degrade, or otherwise neutralize PLA ships and aircraft are therefore the critical capabilities to the strategy."[25]

Therefore, the US platforms and forces needed the most would include surface combatants (FFG, DDG, CG) that can generate long-range fire, submarines, long-range, long endurance aircraft (especially stealthy aircraft), including bombers (B-21, B-2, B-1, B-52) and UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles), maritime patrol (P-8), surface-to-surface strike (HIMARS, MLRS), surface-to-air (MSHORAD, Patriot), as well as counterspace and offensive cyber capabilities.[26]

In addition to US preparedness, however, ultimately the successful defense of Taiwan will rest primarily on Taiwanese military preparedness and will to resist. This is one of the main conclusions of the recent series of Center for Strategic and International Studies war games where a Chinese assault was simulated twenty-four times: the PLA invasion is usually blunted and defeated at a high cost to US, Taiwanese, and Chinese forces, but this is contingent on Taiwan's initial ability to hold the line until US forces arrive.[27] In order to do that, the authors recommend strengthening the ground forces of the Taiwanese army. This should be the main priority of Taipei's investments, as opposed to buying advanced aircraft or other such flashy purchases; currently Taiwan's forces show "severe weaknesses" that must be urgently addressed by increasing their

ability to conduct rigorous combined armed exercises. Another lesson from the war game is that "there is no Ukraine model" for Taiwan: in other words, the US and its allies (mainly Japan) need to provide Taiwan with everything it needs *before* the war starts, and quickly join in once hostilities begin.[28] In order to be in a position to do that, similar to what Colby suggested, the US should preposition more forces and material in theater. Former Pentagon official Michael Brown recently argued that in order to strengthen its ground forces, Taipei needs to be far more serious about its own commitment to deterring China: "Taiwan should double the proportion of its budget reserved for defense and double its current troop strength of 169,000. At present, Taipei spends about $19 billion on defense, a figure that pales in comparison with China's $293 billion."[29] Lastly, others experts suggested helping Taiwan adopt a "porcupine" strategy that would render them virtually impossible to invade at anything resembling a reasonable cost: supplying Taiwan with large quantities of US-made antiship missiles, sea mines, and Stinger missiles would go a long way toward implementing this approach.[30]

Even with all these measures, ultimately the US must also prepare itself for a longer and messier war than many anticipate, if the history of great power conflicts is any guide.[31] That's why strengthening US deterrence by convincing the PLA leadership that such a war is unwinnable for them should be the most urgent priority of the Pentagon. Unfortunately, there are increasing signs that deterrence is failing and President Xi along with the PLA leadership are growing more confident they could militarily annex the island in the near future.[32] While it may sound like hyperbole, Admiral Phil Davidson, back when he was the commander of US Indo-Pacific Command, predicted that China might invade Taiwan "during this decade, in fact, in the next six years."[33] Indeed, President Xi now speaks ever more menacingly about preparing for "extreme scenarios" including conflict with the West.[34] And the PLA is not only no longer maintaining channels of communication with the Pentagon directly to improve military-to-military understanding and avoid accidents, but acts aggressively on purpose around its coast to increase the risk for US forces patrolling international waters in the area.[35] In conclusion, reversing these trends by strengthening deterrence in the Taiwan Strait should be the primary objective of US defense strategy.

Fourth, in addition to a direct conflict over Taiwan, the other concerning trend in the military balance of power between the United States and the People's Republic of China is the PLA's naval buildup. Implementing a No Peer Rivals strategy requires the US to maintain

dominance over its main rival in this area of military competition. This is the key for making sure Beijing cannot militarily conquer or coerce its neighbors, or challenge the US for global hegemony in the military domain. In short, maintaining "command of the sea" is a strategic necessity in terms of ensuring that China cannot become a true peer rival of the United States in the decades to come. The Indo-Pacific, the most strategically important region for the United States, is fundamentally a maritime theater from a military operational planning point of view. Any forceful attempt by China to establish hegemony, whether against Taiwan or in the South China Sea, will involve intense naval combat against the US Navy and its allies.

The PLA's ambition to push the US Navy out of Asia is arguably their most important military operational goal, as it would make their invasion of Taiwan and their de facto regional hegemony all but certain, which is why in turn it must be the main goal of the United States to counter it. Moreover, Beijing's assertive global naval presence in the last few years is increasingly concerning for the United States, as most recently evidenced by China's basing agreement with the Pacific nation of the Salomon Islands.[36] And in addition to the western Pacific theater, China's naval presence allows it to interfere with the US in its own backyard in Latin America. As US Navy secretary Carlos del Toro warned: "The Chinese are everywhere: they're down the Pacific coast of Central and South America, they're down the West Coast of Africa, for example, and it's so important for us to be able to continue to engage with our maritime partners around the world to better understand why is it their countries are making the investments they're making."[37] Not only is China's navy present globally, but more importantly it also "consistently attempts to violate the maritime sovereignty and economic well-being of other nations including our allies in the South China Sea and elsewhere."[38]

The recent trends in the naval balance of power between the PLA Navy and the US Navy reveal a dangerous level of risk: US maritime supremacy is waning, or, worse, the US has already lost the "command of the sea" to the Chinese, as former US Navy commander and Congressman Joe Sestak provocatively put it in a recent article.[39] Indeed, even though warfighting capabilities are measured by more than just numbers, the Chinese navy has surpassed the US Navy in the number of ships, and by some estimates it is scheduled to reach 400 ships compared to 300 or so for the United States by 2030.[40] Not only is China's fleet larger and globally deployed, but their shipyards now have a much larger capacity than American ones.[41]

Unsurprisingly given these numbers, US Indo-Pacific Command head Adm. Davidson testified in front of Congress in 2018 that "China is now capable of controlling the South China Sea in all scenarios short of war with the United States" and that "there is no guarantee that the United States would win a future conflict with China."[42] Moreover, as Bruce Jones of the Brookings Institution thoroughly shows in his book *To Rule the Waves: How Control of the World's Oceans Shapes the Fate of the Superpowers,* China's naval ambitions have expanded from operating in its own littoral to global projects like exploring the Arctic or Indian Oceans, laying undersea cables, and building a network of global ports.[43] Lastly, as PLA Navy expert Toshi Yoshihara warned, "Chinese strategists envision future naval combat as 'extremely intense, extremely lethal, and very quick,' involving the launch of 'hundreds of missiles by both sides within about ten minutes' that could destroy an entire fleet in an afternoon."[44] Therefore, the US Navy must prepare for a level of high-intensity conflict unmatched since World War II.

In order to counteract China's naval buildup, a No Peer Rivals grand strategy would first of all shift resources from other parts of the US military not directly involved in a China fight (like the ground forces, mainly the army) to the navy in order to fully fund the 367 ships part of its "unconstrained" 30-year shipbuilding plan.[45] The navy, for its part, should in turn reform itself to optimize for Great Power Competition and the Indo-Pacific theater. For example, as a group of experts from the Pentagon-funded think tank Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments recommend: "Instead of mainly operating in Carrier Strike Groups (CSG) and Amphibious Ready Groups (ARG), naval forces should be separated into forward-postured Deterrence Forces of submarines, surface combatants, and unmanned vehicles that rely on missiles for defensive and offensive fires; CSGs and ARGs should be postured in a Maneuver Force outside littoral areas such as the East and South China Seas or Mediterranean."[46] This would also imply that the navy abandons (or greatly reconfigures) the traditional geographical basing of its fleets to reflect the new priorities by shifting more aircraft carriers to the Pacific theater and away from the Middle East/Persian Gulf, the Atlantic, and the Mediterranean.

Fifth and last, the US defense budget and force allocations must reflect the emphasis on containing China. Even though at the level of rhetoric and *NSS* documents China is now considered the main priority, this has not yet fully permeated the decision-making and budgetary processes inside the national security establishment, which is still over-

reacting to the daily headlines or to legacy commitments to NATO or the Middle East. The evidence of this lack of the needed laser-focus attention on China abounds. For example, the Pentagon sent so many weapons to Ukraine that it depleted its own stockpiles of advanced weapons, as noted above.[47] Similarly, Congress appropriated an expensive $40 billion aid package to Ukraine that is larger than the entire defense budget of Australia or Italy. And when Iran seized some foreign oil tankers in the summer of 2023, as they often do, the Defense Department rushed to send more warships and US Marines to the area to deter this behavior.[48] Such spending of precious resources in the European or Middle Eastern theaters would be fine if the US would still benefit from what defense analysts call "overmatch" in the Asian theater, but that is not the case anymore.[49] Moreover, Russia's military limitations were made patently obvious during their recent botched invasion of Ukraine. Moscow's military inability to pursue hegemony over Eastern Europe should make it even easier for the United States to outsource European security to other NATO members in order to be able to focus on the main priority, China's PLA.

The realist No Peer Rivals strategy, unlike the current internationalist strategy of defending the rules-based order, does not require higher levels of defense spending, but rather a divestment of some commitments in Europe and the Middle East in order to free up resources for preparing to fight the PLA. The Marathon Initiative think tank analyzed three scenarios: keeping defense spending about the same, decreasing it by 10 percent, and increasing it by 10 percent.[50] It then shows how a strategy of denial could be financed with the current level of defense spending, assuming some cuts are made to programs not essential for a Taiwan scenario (mostly army programs and European Command resources) and those funds are used for navy/air force and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command requirements.[51] Therefore, the offensive realist strategy of "defense by denial" could be resourced within the current level of defense spending, which is scheduled to increase by 3.6 percent over the 5-year Future Years Defense Program. A decrease in spending would be preferred by defensive realists at places like the Quincy Institute, while an increase in spending is advocated by conservative internationalists at places like the American Enterprise Institute and increasingly by liberal internationalists as well after Ukraine. Reducing defense spending in an era of heightened geopolitical competition would be shortsighted, particularly as China is constantly increasing its military power. However, given the ever larger levels of debt that threaten the future of the US economy and of

the dollar as a reserve currency, increasing defense spending would not be optimal either because domestic political considerations mean that such an increase will worsen the deficit (as opposed to being financed by cutting other types of discretionary spending).

Modernizing Nuclear Deterrence

The new era of Great Power Competition is also going to profoundly change the nuclear deterrence strategic calculus, with China attempting to join the US and Russia as a fellow nuclear superpower on the one hand, and Russia relying more and more on nuclear weapons to make up for its conventional military deficiencies on the other. Over the past couple of years, Chinese nuclear forces have been going through a "crash buildup" to eventually reach parity with the United States, according to US officials.[52] Beijing has long maintained a "minimal deterrent" capability of about 200–300 warheads, but now the Pentagon estimates that they increased their warheads to 500 and are on track to reach 1,500 by 2035.[53] For perspective, the US and Russia each have about 1,550 warheads currently, under the terms of the START arms control treaty. The US government estimates have been reinforced by the public disclosure of two new massive missile silos, counting 120 and 110 ICBM (Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles) potential slots, respectively;[54] these new projects, according to a couple of arms control experts, represent "the most significant expansion of the Chinese nuclear arsenal ever."[55] Given China's ability to equip its ICBMs with MIRV (multiple independent reentry vehicle) technology, if they were to fill these new silos alone analysts estimate they could ultimately reach as many as 3,000 weapons.[56] And while it's unlikely Beijing will aim to surpass US and Russia in nuclear weapons, recent intelligence about Chinese military doctrine clearly indicates Beijing plans to increase its reliance on nuclear weapons and become a de facto nuclear superpower on par with Washington and Moscow.[57]

China's rapid nuclear buildup not only fits well with their overall goal of achieving a world-class, full-spectrum military by 2049, but it also makes sense from the more immediate concern about the possibility of a war over Taiwan because it would prevent the US from using its larger nuclear arsenal to militarily coerce China in a crisis. As one Chinese official put it, "China's inferior nuclear capability could only lead to growing U.S. pressure on China."[58] Particularly in the aftermath of the war in Ukraine, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that "the U.S.'s wariness about

getting directly involved in the war there has likely reinforced Beijing's decision to put greater emphasis on developing nuclear weapons as a deterrent," according to people with direct knowledge of the reasons behind China's nuclear buildup.[59] As a retired Chinese military official pointedly observed, nuclear weapons still matter greatly in international politics: "Ukraine lost its nuclear deterrence in the past and that's why it got into a situation like this."[60] And in addition to building more nuclear weapons, Beijing is also significantly upgrading its missile program to deliver them, as witnessed by their recent test of a hypersonic missile that completed an orbit around the Earth.[61] Such a weapon could evade all US missile defense systems tailored for ICBMs, and it could soon be nuclear armed; unsurprisingly, the test caused serious concern among US military officials, with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley likening it to a "Sputnik moment."[62]

If China is adapting to the new GPC era by enlarging its nuclear weapons capabilities, Russia is doing so by modernizing its nuclear weapons, pursuing hypersonic missiles of its own, and most worryingly by changing its nuclear weapons doctrine to the controversial "escalate to deescalate" paradigm.[63] This strategy calls for Russian military use of a small yield, or "tactical" as opposed to "strategic" nuclear weapon, in case of a conventional military defeat in order to convince the other party to sue for peace, or to deter the US from interfering in a conflict. The idea is that *escalating* to the nuclear level but doing so in a very limited way, maybe even by detonating a weapon over a sparsely populated area, will have the effect of *deescalating* by bringing the conflict to an end sooner rather than later and also by avoiding a full-scale large nuclear exchange. The elevated concerns in the West over the possibility of Russia using one such small-yield nuclear weapon in Ukraine was only the first real world example of the new paradigm potentially being employed, but it is unlikely to be the last.[64]

The accelerated rise of China to the level of nuclear superpower will sooner rather than later bring about a tripolar nuclear system, and with it a series of new problems with the theories of nuclear deterrence and strategic stability. Andrew Krepinevich recently compared this emerging nuclear world with the physics concept of a "three body problem," a situation where chaos rather than order is the default outcome and solutions for stability are much harder to achieve than in a bipolar configuration: "To begin with, once China, Russia, and the United States all have large nuclear arsenals, each power will have to work to constrain the behavior of not one but two different adversaries."[65] Therefore, in

the fast approaching world of not only great power competition but also *three* nuclear great powers, the United States needs to rethink its nuclear deterrence strategy, as well as its nuclear force structure and missile defense capabilities.

In order to both deter China and Russia at the strategic level and avoid being subjected to nuclear coercion at the tactical level in case of a limited war, the US will need to adopt a more realist worldview that matches its competitors' increasing reliance on nuclear weapons. The top American military official working on this question, US Strategic Command (STRATCOM) leader Adm. Charles A. Richard, indeed recognized these rapidly changing circumstances and launched a major strategic review whose aim was to, in his words, "revise our 21st-century strategic deterrence theory."[66] He specifically focused the US military's attention on the blurring of the lines between conventional and nuclear forces, as well as the role of other domains like space and cyber in the new calculus for deterrence: "We have to be able to plan and execute integrated operations, multidomain, whether conventional or nuclear, and most importantly, we have to be able to fight in, around, and through that environment to achieve our objectives."[67] In other words, in order to deter nuclear and other forms of conflict in the new strategic environment of great power competition, the US military needs to be prepared for a multifaceted approach to deterrence that will be more complex than simply achieving a "second strike" capability and securing extended deterrence for its allies, as was the case during the Cold War.

Despite the concerns expressed by the military regarding the newly found prominence of nuclear weapons in the strategic doctrines of Russia and China, the Biden administration adopted a liberal internationalist grand strategic position on questions of nuclear weapons in its 2022 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) and defense budget. Liberal internationalists are major proponents of arms control agreements with other great powers, and of efforts to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in national security strategy in general. Therefore, they opposed the recent realist moves in the 2018 NPR to reinvest in modernizing nuclear deterrence to face the new challenges of the GPC era.[68] Biden's NPR echoes these positions in its analysis almost perfectly: "The NPR underscores our commitment to reducing the role of nuclear weapons and reestablishing our leadership in arms control. We will continue to emphasize strategic stability, seek to avoid costly arms races, and facilitate risk reduction and arms control arrangements where possible."[69]

The shift in rhetoric to deemphasize the role of nuclear weapons

had the first practical consequence in the decision to defund the navy's nuclear Sea-Launched Cruise Missile, SLCM-N; *Defense News* reported that a senior government official confirmed this cut was made in accordance with the new guidance from the NPR in order to implement the "direction from the President to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our defense strategy."[70] In keeping with this liberal internationalist approach to nuclear deterrence, shortly after taking office the Biden administration also extended the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) arms control agreement with Moscow that limits both countries' long-range missiles to 1,550 warheads.[71] Combined with the elimination of the SLCM-Ns and the lack of interest in continuing the development of a low-yield warhead to match Russia's tactical nuclear weapons capability, the US nuclear deterrence modernization is failing to adapt to the increase dangers of the GPC era.

An offensive realist approach to nuclear deterrence, on the other hand, would focus on three major changes to the current policies: modernization of the nuclear arsenal, hypersonic missiles, and adapting arms control to the emerging tripolar nuclear era. First, the United States should reverse the current direction of reducing the role of nuclear weapons in its defense strategy, and instead match Russia and China's nuclear modernization programs by investing the required resources to develop the next generation of the nuclear triad. As Krepinevich explains, "U.S. production lines for land-based missiles, nuclear ballistic missile submarines, and long-range bombers will still be operating in the mid-2030s. Beijing and Moscow will have a greater incentive to negotiate limits on their own nuclear forces if they confront a modernized U.S. nuclear deterrent force rather than one facing so-called block obsolescence, when the reliability of entire weapons systems becomes questionable."[72] And, at the same time, the US should continue to invest in advanced missile defense technologies such as directed energy systems, high-energy lasers, high-powered microwave weapons, and particle beam weapons.[73] Nuclear deterrence requires a combination of offense and defense, and while a foolproof missile defense system is still a long ways away, even gradual improvements can have an impact on the deterrence calculus.

In addition to modernizing the current systems, moreover, the US should also invest in new capabilities to match those of its great power adversaries, particularly in the areas of small-yield nuclear weapons and hypersonic missiles. The "escalate to de-escalate" doctrine adopted by Moscow, which could easily be copied by the Chinese in the future,

risks putting the US in an incredibly difficult position in the middle of a conflict over Taiwan or a NATO country, for example: either respond with a large nuclear weapon and risk a catastrophic full-scale nuclear exchange, or concede to the peace terms of the enemy. Neither one of these options is really acceptable, and therefore the US ability to deter nuclear war is being diminished by this new development. John Mauer correctly observes that the new requirements for nuclear deterrence now include nonstrategic nuclear capabilities: "Deterring limited nuclear use by adversaries during future crises requires the ability to threaten retaliation against limited nuclear use without employing the larger strategic nuclear force. A small but robust nonstrategic nuclear capability can provide greater credibility to American nuclear threats across the spectrum, making limited nuclear use less likely in the first place."[74] In a study specifically focused on a response to Russian aggression, Matthew Kroenig reached a similar conclusion, and he called on the US and NATO to "establish a type of intra-war nuclear deterrence in which they can continue to prosecute their war aims to roll back any Russian aggression while deterring Russian nuclear escalation."[75]

Investing in hypersonic missiles is another important area of concern in the new nuclear world. The Chinese rapid development of hypersonic capabilities, as already mentioned, could put the US in a precarious position in the not too distant future: Gen. John Hyten, the former vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, even warned after the Chinese test that these new missiles look "like a first-use weapon. That's what those weapons look like to me."[76] If that were true, or would become true, then the US nuclear deterrence toward Beijing could be imperiled if the US does not match these missiles with its own hypersonic missiles. Alas, the US military stopped pursuing this technology a decade or so ago, and now needs to play catch-up. The Pentagon now can and should work together with its interested regional partners to develop hypersonic missiles. Fearful of China, Japan already is working intensely on this technology, and as Arthur Herman recommended, "An agreement among the U.S., U.K., Australia, Japan, and India on hypersonics—along the lines of the recent AUKUS agreement on nuclear submarines—will send the proper signal to Beijing and stimulate innovation and strategic thinking on both sides of the Pacific."[77]

Lastly, the US needs to rethink its arms control strategies and the kind of agreements that are needed, and possible, in the emerging tripolar nuclear world characterized by great power competition.[78] Ideally, any significant future agreements will need to include China in addition

to Russia; given that the strategic threat from Beijing is now greater than from Moscow, it would make little sense to set limits such as the ones laid out in the defunct Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty the US rightly abandoned in 2019.[79] Even the renewed US-Russia New START agreement is arguably already outdated, as it limits only the traditional long-range strategic weapons to 1,550, but does nothing for the over 2,000 short-range nuclear weapons Russia has deployed since the singing of the agreement.[80] And if China continues to reject participation in a trilateral agreement, then the US could increase its nuclear weapons to something like 3,000 to 3,500 weapons to assure deterrence of both rival great powers, as former Pentagon strategist Frank Miller recently proposed.[81] A bipartisan congressionally mandated commission recently even proposed that the US embark on a new nuclear buildup, a proposal worthy of consideration in that scenario.[82] Alas, the increasing tension of the GPC era will make it harder and harder for significant arms control agreements to be achieved, and an offensive realist perspective is definitely skeptical of their actual impact even when they are signed. The more likely outcome is a new arms race and a competition for "nuclear superiority" among Washington, Moscow, and Beijing.[83]

Unconventional Conflicts: Cyberwar, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Space, and Gray Zone Conflicts

For a decade or so after 9/11, the idea of "unconventional warfare" was mostly associated with counterinsurgency (COIN) and nation-building operations in the Middle East. Now that the US military is finally moving away from those missions in the new GPC era, the unconventional warfare category comprises the high-end technological realms of cyber, artificial intelligence (AI), and space. While Iran and North Korea also threaten the US in the cyber domain, the magnitude of the challenge posed by them pales in comparison to the capabilities of the two great powers in Beijing and Moscow. The increasing importance of the cyber domain to national security strategy is thus not only driven by technological advances but also by the increased geopolitical competition of the new era.

As early as 2010, the United States military defined cyberspace as a new domain of warfare, akin to sea, air, land, and space, and consequently formed a Cyber Command to serve as a functional headquarters for this new mission set.[84] However, unlike the other domains where the US

enjoys technological superiority (in terms of conventional warfare) or at least parity (in terms of nuclear weapons), in the cyber domain China and Russia over the past decade have proved themselves to be capable opponents willing and able to conduct a number of serious cyberattacks without the US military being able to deter them in any meaningful way.[85] The Russian attacks received more of the media attention, particularly the Solar Winds and Colonial Pipeline incidents, as well as the 2016 election interference; in each of these incidents, as well as less egregious ones, the US government failed to respond forcefully enough to deter future occurrences.[86] As the *Wall Street Journal* described the role of such attacks, they form part of Russia's "gray zone" tactics of unconventional warfare and allow Moscow to "play geopolitics on the cheap."[87]

The cyberattacks by China have not received quite as much publicity, but they have caused at least as much damage to US national security, if not more.[88] Most egregiously, in 2015, Chinese-linked hackers, likely connected to the government, breached the Office of Personnel Management and stole the extremely detailed and sensitive private information of four million government employees, including security clearance forms for US military and intelligence officials that could leave them exposed to blackmail or capture in the case of active covert agents around the world.[89] In more recent years, Chinese government-linked hackers have attacked not just government computers but also large US companies such as Microsoft and private universities.[90] A comprehensive review of these attacks indicates a clearly planned Chinese persistent strategic "cyber campaign" against the US, as opposed to isolated cyberattacks.[91]

Unsurprisingly, Chinese doctrinal writing has constantly emphasized "infomationalized warfare" as a revolutionary development in military affairs that can be exploited by the PLA against a superpower such as the United States.[92] The US intelligence community is now awakening to the major advances in Beijing's hacking strategies:

> While it once conducted relatively unsophisticated hacks of foreign companies, think tanks and government agencies, China is now perpetrating stealthy, decentralized digital assaults of American companies and interests around the world. Hacks that were conducted via sloppily worded spearphishing emails by units of the People's Liberation Army are now carried out by an elite satellite network of contractors at front companies and universities that work at the direction of China's Ministry of State Security, according to U.S. officials and the indictment.[93]

The US response to China's and Russia's cyberattacks so far has been uneven, and reflective of an ongoing debate both inside the national security bureaucracy and also in academia about the most appropriate theoretical and conceptual understanding of the cyber domain. While mostly everyone agrees it represents an area of strategic competition and conflict against other great powers, there are key questions still unanswered: Is it a domain of actual warfare, as the US military insists, or more like spycraft and the intelligence "war" of the Cold War era? Is deterrence even possible? And what are the risks of offensive cyberattacks leading to an actual war?[94]

In terms of its grand strategic approach, US actions in the cyber domain have oscillated between attempting to establish norms and boundaries with Russia and China in a more cooperative liberal internationalist fashion on the one hand, and militarizing this domain along with launching some cyber-offense operations on its own in a realist manner on the other.[95] For example, the Obama administration reached a deal with the People's Republic of China to limit hacking in 2015, but after a brief lull in cyberattacks the activity level from Chinese picked up again;[96] during the Trump administration, conversely, the US deployed computer code inside Russia's electric power grid and other targets as a warning to Russia about their interference in the midterm elections.[97] The US Cyber Command most recently issued a new strategy for competing in cyberspace predicated on the concept of "forward defense," or the idea that the US must constantly play both defense and offense in the cyber domain: the US must at times go beyond simply working to secure its networks and instead also execute operations outside the US military's networks.[98]

Liberal internationalist scholars are critical of the idea that cyber issues should be treated primarily through a competitive military mindset, and argue that the threat from China and Russia in the cyber domain is overhyped.[99] They also believe working to establish common norms of behavior and achieve a decent amount of deterrence in cyberspace is the right strategy to deal with these issues. As Joseph Nye explains this approach, "Many aspects of cyber behavior are more like other behaviors, such as crime, that the United States tries (imperfectly) to deter. Preventing harm in cyberspace involves complex mechanisms such as threats of punishment, denial, entanglement, and norms."[100]

An offensive realist approach to cyber warfare, on the contrary, is more skeptical about the power of international norms and legal constraints to deter China or Russia from exploiting US cyber vulnerabilities

for their own strategic gain. Given that both of these great powers regard their cyber capabilities as a way to compensate for the Pentagon's superior conventional military power, it is very likely that they will continue to rely on cyber means to close the military and technological gap with the United States, and to more broadly threaten US national security interests. Therefore, the United States must not only continue to develop its own cyber defenses but also be more aggressive with cyber-offense operations against Beijing and Moscow, for example by "hacking the hackers."[101] It also doesn't make much sense to expect nonmilitary tools such as economic sanctions to have an impact on the adversary's calculus in terms of cyberattacks. The security and strategic benefits of their cyber campaigns have proved time and again to be seen as worth the (modest) cost of targeted Western sanctions.

The US can and should act more aggressively to degrade the cyber capabilities of Beijing and Moscow, in the hope that a *deterrence by denial* approach will be more successful than the *deterrence by punishment* approach currently employed. In order to be able to do that, however, the US must continue to invest significant resources in developing its own cyber capabilities and do a much better job of preventing China from benefiting from US technological advances, as will be further discussed in the next chapter of this book.

Another increasingly important area of the military technological competition is artificial intelligence. One need not necessarily agree with Russian president Putin, who famously said that "whoever becomes the leader in this sphere will become the ruler of the world," or with former Google CEO Eric Schmidt who wrote that AI will shape the "future of geopolitics," to worry about the impact of AI on military conflict in particular and on the balance of power in global politics more generally.[102] Military planners, both in the West and in China and Russia, envision a variety of ways in which AI could shape the high-tech wars of the future. Some narrower applications are extensions of commercial AI technology, such as automated image analysis and pattern recognition through neural networks, and other such improvements in data analysis that can lead to improvements in tactical and operational military effectiveness.[103] But arguably the more significant applications to military force would involve using AI applications to bring together various sources of large data and produce original insights to help make better decisions on the ground. As a recent article on AI and the future of warfare explained, AI could "predict future attacks and make recommendations for how to alter unit force posture."[104] This is already more than

just a theoretical possibility. Schmidt points out how AI already impacts today's battlefields: "The Ukrainian military, for example, has used AI to efficiently scan intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance data from a variety of sources."[105]

The Pentagon is paying lip service to the role of AI in maintaining America's military edge over its great power rivals in Beijing and Moscow, and even published an official strategy document on AI and national security.[106] Similarly, the military services are now routinely asking for money to integrate AI into the force.[107] However, many independent experts studying the investments made in the military application of artificial intelligence worry that the US is already falling behind China, a country with the stated goal of leading the world in this field in future decades.[108] Writing in *Foreign Affairs*, Michael Horowitz, Lauren Kahn, and Laura Samotin exemplify some of the areas in which Beijing is arguably outpacing the US in integrating AI capabilities into its military:

> Over the last few years, China has invested roughly the same amount as the United States has in AI research and development, but it is more aggressively integrating the technology into its military strategy, planning, and systems—potentially to defeat the United States in a future war. It is investing in AI-enabled systems to track undersea vehicles and U.S. Navy ships and to develop the ability to launch swarm attacks with low-cost, high-volume aircraft.[109]

One problem has to do with the Defense Department's slow and inefficient procurement system. Steve Blank, a researcher at Stanford, pithily observes that "China is organized like Silicon Valley and the Pentagon is organized more like a Detroit auto maker. . . . That's not a fair fight."[110] National security officials recently reached out to Silicon Valley to get America's most innovative companies more involved in military and defense-related AI projects, but unlike Beijing, Washington cannot simply order them to do it.[111] Moreover, while the Chinese government and its state-controlled companies worked in concert to steal Western technology for decades, FBI director Christopher Wray warns that they are now "working to use AI to improve their already-massive hacking operations using our own technology against us," and thus turbocharge their intelligence collection in the US.[112]

The AI competition against China therefore goes beyond the military realm, but its consequences could be the most drastic in this domain.[113] Analyzing the recent data showing China surpassing the US in citations

in AI research, a US National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence warned that "China possesses the might, talent, and ambition to surpass the United States as the world's leader in AI in the next decade if current trends do not change."[114] A No Peer Rivals grand strategy doesn't require the United States to dominate its rivals in every possible military contingency and technology, but it does require the Pentagon to maintain and solidify its edge in the most advanced and potentially revolutionary military technologies. AI is certainly one of those areas where the United States cannot afford to fall behind China if it hopes to prevent Beijing from achieving regional hegemony and challenging the US military on a global level. The potential use of AI to gain a potentially significant advantage in a Taiwan invasion scenario is but one of the many reasons why the United States needs to increase its investments in military uses of AI.[115] In terms of unconventional warfare, AI represents a way for an aspiring rival to attempt to blunt America's military conventional superiority in the same way that insurgents found innovative ways to do that in Iraq and Afghanistan. The strategic consequences of defeat in a war against China, however, far supersede those of the post-9/11 wars, and therefore US defense strategy must be laser-focused on avoiding such an outcome. And there is still optimism in some quarters that with better planning the US can still win the AI race.[116]

Much like AI, advances in militarizing space also pose a great threat to the US military's ability to maintain its technological superiority over the PLA.[117] Space is a key warfighting domain for high-tech modern militaries, because today's operations are thoroughly dependent on the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance provided by satellites, as well as early warnings for ballistic missiles and other communication capabilities. As Colby explains, while these may seem rather like "back office" functions to a lay reader, they are "actually the stuff of which American global military primacy is made."[118] During the Trump administration, the Defense Department acknowledged the rising strategic importance of this new domain of warfare, and appropriately created the US Space Force as a separate military branch designed to maintain and extend US military superiority in space.[119]

China and Russia also understand the growing importance of the space domain, however, and they are pursuing countermeasures to challenge US dominance. The US intelligence community recently concluded in a report that "China and Russia are training and equipping their military space forces and fielding new antisatellite (ASAT) weapons to hold US and allied space services at risk, even as they push for

international agreements on the non-weaponization of space."[120] Similarly, the most recent Department of Defense report on Chinese military capabilities concludes that China intends to pursue antisatellite weapons despite its rhetoric against the militarization of space: "China already has operational ground-based missiles that can hit satellites in low-Earth orbit and probably intends to pursue additional ASAT weapons capable of destroying satellites up to geosynchronous Earth orbit. . . . According to China's military strategy, an adversary's imaging, communications, navigation, and early warning satellites would be targeted in order to blind and deafen the enemy."[121] US Space Command head Gen. Stephen Whiting reinforced this message in March 2024, warning that China is growing its military space abilities at a "breathtaking pace."[122]

The Biden administration, however, recently adopted a liberal internationalist grand strategic approach to this issue and decided to end US antisatellite missile testing in the hope of reaching a global agreement dealing with space security.[123] This position is misguided, and the US should abandon it and recommit to developing the most advanced defensive and offensive weapons in space. Just as China would like to degrade US military communications systems at the start of a conflict, the US should be fully prepared to do the same to Chinese satellites, in addition to attempting to defend its own.

Lastly, another part of unconventional warfare in the GPC era will be what US military leaders refer to as "gray zone" conflicts against Russia or China.[124] The Pentagon thinking on this matter revolves around the idea that irregular warfare will evolve to be a part of great power conflict, and therefore remain important even in a post–Global War on Terror era: "China, Russia, and Iran are willing practitioners of campaigns of disinformation, deception, sabotage, and economic coercion, as well as proxy, guerrilla, and covert operations. This increasingly complex security environment suggests the need for a revised understanding of [information warfare] to account for its role as a component of great power competition."[125] Therefore, the US Special Forces will need to move away from the counterterrorism focus of the past two decades back to their original roots in supporting indigenous resistance against a potential Chinese invasion of Taiwan, for example.[126] Similarly, using "subversion" tactics against Beijing and Moscow will be another dominant feature of the new GPC era, and the US military should brush off some of its Cold War skills in this domain.[127]

As important as maintaining an edge in military power over its competitors may be for the No Peer Rivals grand strategy, this superiority is

unlikely to last much longer unless the United States revitalizes the economic and technological foundations underpinning its peerless military strength. A No Peer Rivals grand strategy for the Great Power Competition era requires not just readjusting America's military strategy but also how Washington develops and uses the nonmilitary tools of national power. Therefore, the next chapter discusses the requirements of a GPC-focused strategy in terms of economic issues such as domestic investments in the semiconductor and energy sectors, trade policy and foreign investment strategy, as well as the broader technological and resource competition against China.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Sinews of Power

Strategic Competition in Economics, Technology, and Energy

In the GPC strategic environment, issues such as trade deals, global investment strategies, management of energy resources, and the development of futuristic technologies are better understood through the prism of competition for strategic influence between great powers, rather than merely in terms of the pursuit of economic efficiency or scientific progress. America's military edge versus China and Russia cannot be sustained and extended unless the US economy provides the basic foundations for this competitive advantage in terms of both the budgetary resources needed to finance it and the technological sophistication needed to support it. In a previous era, these economic and financial elements were aptly described as the *sinews of power* underpinning the rise of the British Empire.[1] This chapter will show how the No Peer Rivals approach shapes policies in what strategist Edward Luttwak calls the *geoeconomics* realm, the intersection of economics, technology, and security/strategic considerations.[2] It also addresses the crucial importance of the energy market for US national security strategy, and how the GPC era is shaping the dynamics of that market.

Geoeconomics in the Age of Great Power Competition

Unlike the optimistic assumptions underpinning the post–Cold War liberal internationalist US grand strategy, realists are much less sanguine

about the prospects of great power peace due to the increased economic interdependence of the last few decades. Dale Copeland recently showed that even though "interdependence promotes peace when states expect mutually beneficial trade to continue, . . . it creates incentives for war when at least one of the states expects that trade trends will leave it dangerously vulnerable."[3] Similarly, Mariya Grinberg recently examined trade between adversaries during major wars, and concluded that trade continues even when hostilities begin; therefore, "the expectation that significant economic ties will help prevent conflict between a rising China and its neighbors or the United States is misguided."[4] Quite the contrary, realists argue that the trade "wars" and financial sanctions between the US on the one hand and China and Russia on the other hand are creating the kind of conditions where security conflicts are exacerbated, rather than diminished, by economic ties.[5] In such a competitive security environment, economic power is deeply connected to military power and grand strategy in what is known as "geoeconomics." Michael Miklaucic defines this concept as an approach or theoretical lens that "studies and compares the national economic endowments that determine global power dynamics, including manufacturing capacity, workforce demographics, terms of trade, currency strength, national creditworthiness, technical innovation, and growth."[6]

Therefore, while it is well understood that military power ultimately rests on a foundation of economic power, the importance of economic statecraft in today's GPC era goes beyond the size of a state's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or its level of military spending. US grand strategy in the post–Cold War era adopted a largely liberal internationalist view of foreign economic policy and promoted free trade and open markets in the quest for economic efficiencies and an interconnected global economy. US businesses were encouraged to develop global supply chains, and strategic or security considerations were relegated to secondary importance as long as the US economy kept growing. Factors important to realist views of international economics such as manufacturing capacity or trade account deficits were largely ignored, as neoliberal principles guided US foreign policy. This was only natural for the US and its Western liberal allies, given the traditional focus on cheap consumer goods and the influence of business interests in these societies.

Realist ideas like geoeconomics, with their protectionist and industrial policy connotations, can be seen as somewhat unusual and outdated by many liberal internationalist policymakers. Not so for those policymakers in Beijing and Moscow, however; those leaders are acting according to the principles of realist geoconomics, and are purposefully

connecting their national economic strategy with their national security strategy.[7] As *Wall Street Journal* columnist Greg Ip observes:

> Russian President Vladimir Putin used state control of key industries such as natural gas to reward or threaten neighbors. The Chinese Communist Party insists that state-owned and even private enterprises give priority to the state's interests. In return, China tilts the playing field in those companies' favor at home and abroad. China is a master of economic coercion, punishing countries such as Australia or Lithuania or companies that cross its diplomatic red lines by depriving them of access to the Chinese market, knowing other countries and companies will eagerly take their place.[8]

The Chinese Communist Party in particular perfected the art of geoeconomics in the recent past by developing *brute force economics*, a term developed by Liza Tobin that encapsulates the tactics Beijing uses to ruthlessly eliminate foreign rivals in key industries through a series of tactics, including but not limited to "market access restrictions in strategic sectors, massive subsidies that fuel domestic overcapacity and enable Chinese firms to wipe out foreign competition, requirements for foreign firms to transfer technology in order to access the Chinese market, economic coercion, intellectual property theft, cyber- and human-enabled espionage, and forced labor."[9] Her study concludes that the net effect of these policies has been to transform "activities that are usually thought of as positive sum—trade and technology cooperation—into zero-sum games."[10] In other words, when it comes to US-China trade and tech relations in the GPC era, we are in a realist world, not a liberal internationalist one.

In order for the United States to effectively compete against China's and Russia's economic statecraft, Washington will need to seriously begin integrating realist geoeconomic insights into its international economic policies across a variety of areas, from trade and finance to strategic investments and supply chain resiliency. The overall goal of these efforts should be to counter Beijing's own economic ambitions to reshape the global economy in its favor.

Trade Agreements, Tariffs, and Sanctions

As part of its post–Cold War grand strategy, Washington pursued a vigorous liberal agenda of global trade liberalization and financial integration of worldwide stock markets, betting that economic forces will trump geo-

political ones and that America's economy will thrive, and moreover that rising powers like China will welcome this liberal world order. In retrospect, this neoliberal economic policy failed both in terms of protecting America's own economic interests and in advancing the kind of peace and prosperity it promised worldwide. Trade and financial liberalization went too far, and turned into what the influential Harvard economist Dani Rodrik calls *hyperglobalization*. Rodrik's verdict is scathing:

> Increased trade with China and other low-wage countries accelerated the decline in manufacturing employment in the developed world, leaving many distressed communities behind. The financialization of the global economy produced the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. . . . Politicians and policymakers downplayed these problems, denying that the new terms of the global economy entailed sacrificing sovereignty.[11]

The same conclusion about the negative effects on the United States of the post–Cold War neoliberal agenda is echoed by *Financial Times* columnist Rana Foroohar, who accurately points out that "the two biggest beneficiaries of neoliberal globalization have been the Chinese state, which never played by the letter of the WTO's laws, and multinational companies, which were mostly unaffected by national political turmoil."[12]

The advent of the era of Great Power Competition brought about a much needed reassessment of America's enthusiastic push for free trade agreements and hyperglobalization, and while this economic nationalist shift clearly started during the Trump administration, it was partly continued by the Biden administration as well.

Unsurprisingly given China's mercantilist policies and the way it took advantage of the liberal policies promoted by Washington to advance its own strategic goals to the detriment of the United States, US government officials have begun to use more realist-minded rhetoric in describing the economic relations with China. For example, the Biden administration proclaimed in a statement that "it recognizes that China's coercive and unfair trade practices harm American workers, threaten our technological edge, weaken our supply-chain resiliency and undermine our national interests. . . . Addressing the China challenge will require a comprehensive strategy and more systematic approach."[13] Or, as Treasury secretary Janet Yellen pithily stated, "We are clear-eyed about China's doubling down on its harmful trade and economic abuses."[14] As if to confirm that for the CCP national security interests trump the rule

of law and economic growth priorities, President Xi recently named a top spymaster to crack down on foreign due-diligence firms like Bain & Co. with bogus accusations of being involved in intelligence gathering.[15] The failed era of Wall Street and business interests dominating US foreign policy on China appears to have finally given way to a more sober strategic approach grounded in realist thinking, but the United States and its allies are only slowly taking the necessary steps to fight back against Beijing economically.

One way the US is adapting its economic strategy to the era of GPC is by imposing tariffs on China. In 2020, the Trump administration imposed $370 billion in tariffs to punish China for its cheating on trade deals and other illegal activies; so far, the Biden administration has kept these tariffs in place, partly because China only bought 57 percent of the U.S. goods and services it committed to purchase over 2020 and 2021 in a deal made with the Trump administration.[16] Opponents of tariffs argue that American consumers are also suffering due to the increased costs of importing cheaper Chinese products, but the better reason for US tariffs on China is geopolitical, not economic. In order to compensate for the tariffs on China, the US could lower them on other friendly countries. As Alexander Salter explains this new realism-inspired strategic approach to international trade in a *Fortune* magazine op-ed:

> U.S. tariffs on friendly nations should be greatly reduced, if not eliminated. Tariffs on China should increase. Currently, the U.S. taxes Chinese exports at an average of 19.3%. That figure should rise over several years according to a predictable schedule. Again, the goal shouldn't be to punish China for unfair trade practices, but rather to give cost-conscious firms a reason to create wealth in regions outside the Chinese Communist Party's influence.[17]

In other words, in the GPC era tariffs are more than ways to address economic cheating or protect domestic interests: they should mainly be regarded as an economic weapon in the geopolitical competition against China in order to advance America's geoeconomic interests in steering US and Western companies away from investing in China.

Another way to adapt to GPC economically is to link new trade agreements with geopolitical priorities and interests. Unsurprisingly, China is already doing that, as witnessed by the formation in 2022 of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, which comprises 15 Asia-Pacific economies in the world's largest trade bloc. To counter that move, the

Biden administration shortly thereafter announced the creation of a Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, composed of the United States, India, Japan, South Korea, Australia, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. This new institution is partly designed to replace the ill-fated Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade deal abandoned by the US during the Trump administration. However, as the *New York Times* reported when the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework was announced, there are serious doubts that it will accomplish its goals vis-à-vis countering China's regional economic ambitions:

> Business executives say the China-led bloc has now done more to define trade in the region, even though it asks little of its members and focuses mainly on limiting red tape. The American vision for the region, in contrast, is ambitious, aiming to raise labor and environmental standards. But without offering more access to its market, analysts say, the United States does not have a lot of carrots to encourage those changes.[18]

In fact, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework focuses on only four areas (harmonizing efforts to secure supply chains, expanding clean energy, fighting corruption, and paving the way for greater digital trade) and doesn't commit the US to open access to its market to gain the strategic allegiance of the members. The liberal domestic priorities of the Biden administration, such as offering labor and environmental groups "premier seats at the table" during the negotiations, will most likely prevent the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework from serving US geopolitical interests in the Indo-Pacific.[19] A realist approach would focus on offering clear economic and technological benefits to Washington's partners in the region, setting international standards, and fostering a framework for innovation. It would also avoid letting Biden's progressive views on domestic issues like labor, government accountability, or environment regulations get in the way. In the age of GPC realist multipolar competition, unlike the post–Cold War era of liberal hegemony, economic national interests must be prioritized over ideological partisan ones.

In addition to trade agreements and tariffs, the third important geoeconomic weapon in the US toolkit in today's world is the use of sophisticated financial sanctions, as the recent massive use against Russia made all too clear.[20] More so than in any other area of the global economy, due to the dollar's status as the global currency and to the reach of the

US financial system, Washington enjoys what scholars call an "exorbitant privilege."[21] The size and scope of the sanctions put on Russia in 2022 by a US-led coalition of Western major economies reinforced the idea that America remains the world's sole "sanction superpower," but it also raised concerns about whether Washington is using this privilege in a prudent way.[22] Indeed, economic sanctions have been the most commonly used tool in the foreign policy toolkit over the past decade, even though there is precious little scholarly evidence that they achieve their stated goals of changing an adversary's behavior.[23] At best, "sanctions lead to concessions between one-third and one-half of the time," according to a recent study.[24] And, as Drezner writes in a critique of the overuse of sanctions, they incur seriously underappreciated costs for the US, as they can "strain relations with allies, antagonize adversaries, and impose economic hardship on innocent civilians."[25]

The dramatic imposition of sanctions on Russia by the US and its Western allies, and the conspicuous opposition to join in this sanction regime by the major non-Western great powers like China, India, or Brazil, offers important lessons about the connections between economics and geopolitics in the GPC era.[26] Treasury secretary Yellen made headlines when she bluntly stated that the reaction to the war "has redrawn the contours of the world economic outlook."[27] However, the Biden administration appears to have drawn the wrong lessons by attempting to double down on its liberal ideological approach to dividing the world into friendly democracies and antagonistic authoritarian regimes; Yellen called for new trade agreements along these lines, with "countries we know we can count on."[28] Such an approach is misguided, and risks alienating important geopolitical allies, particularly Asian nations like India, Vietnam, or Singapore whose support is needed to balance against China.

Moreover, the harsh sanctions imposed on Russia could have the long-term detrimental strategic impact of pushing Russia to become further dependent economically on China, as a *New York Times* analysis noted at the time by highlighting the moves by the central bank of Russia toward Chinese currency.[29] The ability of Russia to find alternatives to Western markets is evident in the fact that Russia's rate of GDP growth (3.7 percent) in 2023 outpaced both the US and EU economies, thus seriously calling into question whether the sanctions had any serious impact.[30] Just like with military/diplomatic considerations, in the realm of international economics it is a cardinal strategic sin for Washington to make it easier for its two great power opponents (Beijing and Moscow)

to cooperate and potentially develop a parallel global economic financial system to rival the current one dominated by the US dollar.[31] The US should instead limit the use of sanctions to those smaller countries not as important to its GPC priorities, and not allow China the opportunity to provide a financial alternative to non-Western states.[32] Imposing harsh sanctions against a great power like Russia, in addition to being largely ineffective, therefore risks hurting US interests in the great power competition by bringing Washington's two main rivals closer together economically.[33]

Crucially, the overuse of sanctions could also harm one of the critical economic advantages of the US compared to its GPC rivals, the status of the dollar as the premier global reserve currency and dominating currency in global equity markets, commodities trading (including oil), bank deposits, and corporate borrowing.[34] This privileged status confers on the United States the ability to not only run budget deficits and borrow cheaply (so far) from foreign creditors in a way no other great power could do, but also to impose devastating economic sanctions through its ability to block a country's access to dollar-denominated payments and to the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) international banking messaging system, essentially cutting off that country from the modern global economy.

Unsurprisingly given the massive US sanctions, Moscow attempted to join forces with Beijing and others to "de-dollarize" the international economy. Zongyuan Zoe Liu and Mihaela Papa summarized these efforts in a recent *Foreign Affairs* piece on the emergence of an "anti-dollar" axis between Moscow and Beijing, starting at least as far back as 2018 and intensifying in the past year particularly after massive Western financial sanctions imposed on Russia:

> The Russian government allowed Russia's sovereign wealth fund to invest in yuan reserves and Chinese state bonds. Chinese policymakers hope that partnership with Russia will help broaden a yuan-based financial infrastructure, including a Chinese rival to SWIFT and a rival bank card payment system, thereby boosting the yuan's status as a reserve currency and bolstering China's financial autonomy.[35]

It is almost undisputable that the United States has a clear financial interest, as well as a geopolitical one, in maintaining the role of the dollar at the center of the global economy. The threat to the dollar's status is therefore more dangerous than whatever impact on US national security

Russia's invasion of Ukraine might have, or even Iran's development of a nuclear program. If US sanctions lead other countries to join economic forces with Beijing and set the foundations for a de-dollarization of the global economy, the costs of imposing them is not worth whatever modest benefits they may bring. Therefore, in the new GPC era of realist power politics against Beijing and Moscow, the US should jealously husband the dominating status of the dollar in the global economy by being a lot more prudent in terms of using its "exorbitant privilege" in the international banking system.[36]

Decoupling from China: Restoring Manufacturing and Supply Chain Resiliency

It was the usually diplomatic Barack Obama, not Donald Trump, who observed that "it's pretty hard to have a tough negotiation when the Chinese are our bankers," a reference to the amount of US debt held by China following two decades of an ever expanding trade deficit between Washington and Beijing.[37] Ever larger levels of US imports of Chinese goods were paid for by borrowing funds from China and hence going deeper into debt. Moreover, while Americans received cheaper goods, Beijing abused the bilateral trade relationship to advance its own geoeconomic agenda:

> China had been forcing U.S. companies to form joint ventures with local firms to access its 1.4 billion consumers. These arranged marriages then allowed China to acquire U.S. technology. Sometimes companies would hand it over to grease the palms of regulators, sometimes they would license it at below commercially viable rates, and sometimes Chinese firms or spies would steal it.[38]

During a time of great power peace such as the post–Cold War era, Beijing's ownership of US debt or its cheating on trade deals and technological theft were mainly an economic or financial concern. In the GPC era, however, they become a clear grand strategic threat because they expose the US economy to financial harm from its main competitor. Therefore, the most pressing geoeconomic challenge for the United States in the GPC era is "decoupling" its economy from the Chinese economy, and restoring its manufacturing base along with new resilient supply chains.

In response to the increasing economic and geopolitical challenge

from Beijing, the Biden administration laid out its international economic agenda in an important speech by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan at the Brookings Institution.[39] The new approach marked a departure from the neoliberalism of the post–Cold War era, but unfortunately it ended up being mired in contradictions. The main weakness of Biden's approach is trying to combine the needed adaptation to the realist structural constraints from geopolitics and geoeconomics in dealing with China on the one hand, while also satisfying the liberal internationalist ideological orientations of the administration when it comes to climate change and green energy on the other hand.[40] Sullivan started with a realist diagnosis of the problem, which suggests the administration appreciates the role of geoeconomics in the GPC era:

> The People's Republic of China continued to subsidize at a massive scale both traditional industrial sectors like steel, as well as key industries of the future, like clean energy, digital infrastructure, and advanced biotechnologies. America didn't just lose manufacturing. We eroded our competitiveness in critical technologies that would define the future. Economic integration didn't stop China from expanding its military ambitions in the region or stop Russia from invading its democratic neighbors. Neither country had become more responsible or cooperative, and ignoring economic dependencies that had built up over the decades of liberalization had become really perilous. From energy uncertainty in Europe to supply chain vulnerabilities in medical equipment, semiconductors, and critical minerals, these were the kinds of dependencies that could be exploited for economic or geopolitical leverage.[41]

However, despite the realist geopolitical analysis above, he went on to give equal priority to progressive concerns with the "accelerating climate crisis and the urgent need for a just and efficient clean energy transition."[42] The upshot is that while the administration imposed some targeted restrictions on Chinese companies and invested in domestic production of microchips and other key tech sectors, it also plans to do two other things that will be dramatically at odds with a realist GPC-focused grand strategy. First, the US will spend hundreds of billions or even trillions of dollars on highly speculative green energy projects, thus exacerbating the already enormous $33 trillion budget deficit and limiting the amount of funding for defense and other technologies, not to mention risking a catastrophic collapse of the entire economy. Second, and

of even more urgent concern, the speech softened the administration position on Beijing in a way that makes a grand strategy of containment virtually impossible. "U.S. and China can and should work together on global challenges like the climate, like macroeconomic stability, health security, food security," Sullivan said, before emphasizing that the overall administration position is "*de-risking and diversifying, not decoupling*" (emphasis added). This preference for "de-risking" as opposed to "decoupling" was also reinforced by the G-7 summit in Japan later that year, thus establishing it as the official Western approach to dealing with China's economic aggressiveness in the GPC era.[43] And when Secretary Blinken visited Beijing in the summer of 2023, he not only talked about the need to cooperate on climate and macroeconomic stability, but even inexplicably argued that the "growth of major economies such as China is in the U.S. interest," thus reverting back to the rhetoric of the liberal internationalist failed grand strategy of the post–Cold War era.[44]

An offensive realist grand strategy requires the United States to move to a gradual but nevertheless intentional and consistent economic decoupling from China. Weaker versions of this like "de-risking" are not enough.[45] The US and China are engaged in a geopolitical confrontation akin to a cold war, not merely in a "competition" in the same way that the US and the EU might be in certain areas of international trade or tech standards. As Oren Cass correctly points out, many Washington policymakers and Wall Street leaders often forget this crucial geopolitical fact, and wrongly assume that the US and China can still have an economically symbiotic relationship despite their incompatible overall strategic goals: "No one considered seriously an integration of the American and Soviet economic systems. We only countenanced a coupling with China because we assumed wrongly that it would lead to economic and political liberalization."[46] While opponents of decoupling suggest the two economies are too intermingled for that to be practical without large economic disruptions, they underestimate the much larger costs of a potential military conflict with China that could well be the result of the failure to contain its rise to regional and global hegemony, and to deter its ambitions regarding Taiwan and the South China Sea. As long as China's economic and tech advances continue, it will be less and less likely to be deterred from pursuing its aggressive ambitions. There is no realistic way to "de-risk" from China without decoupling: limited efforts will only serve to further embolden Xi to advance his vision, without seriously limiting his economic and technological ability to do so.

There are a number of avenues for Washington to decouple its econ-

omy from Beijing in way that minimizes economic costs to US consumers and businesses. First, as the next section on technological competition discusses in more detail, the US should redouble its efforts to increase domestic production of strategically important technologies such as microchips, semiconductors, and other dual-use components.[47] Second, when production in the US is not feasible, Washington needs to reimagine global supply chains along what some experts and Western policymakers now describe as "friend-shoring." In order to eliminate Chinese companies from the supply chains, the US and its partners should strongly pressure global corporations involved in strategic industries to shift production to other low-cost countries, as the apparel industry had already done due to human rights concerns.[48] Some US businesses are already making contingency plans as they understand the higher risks involved in operating in China during increased geopolitical tensions, and Washington should further encourage this trend.[49] Third, Washington needs to work on disentangling the global financial flows of capital and investments both from the West toward Chinese companies and from Beijing sources toward American businesses. China's strategic approach based on civil-military fusion and the overt or covert control exercised by the Chinese Communist Party over their business community implies that Western investments in putatively private companies end up essentially supporting the Chinese civil-military industrial complex.[50]

During the Trump administration, the White House tried to combat this problem by signing an executive order that accused China of "increasingly exploiting United States capital to resource and to enable the development and modernization of its military, intelligence, and other security apparatuses."[51] That executive order, together with the Holding Foreign Companies Accountable Act, prevents direct investment in companies linked to the Chinese military, but unfortunately it doesn't go far enough because it does not "penetrate or capture index funds that may include great numbers of Chinese firms."[52] Therefore, as former secretary of state Mike Pompeo wrote, "The world's largest asset managers are pouring hundreds of billions of dollars of investment capital into Chinese corporations controlled by that nation's communist party."[53] The Biden administration should build on these restrictions and further the legal push for US asset managers to divest from Chinese companies. The US should also use mechanisms such as national security reviews by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States to restrict Chinese purchases of shares in US companies related in any way to military and advanced technologies, as was the case recently with

Beijing's efforts to purchase the largest share in Icon Aircraft.[54] All these measures will certainly be controversial with the American business community, but they are necessary to advance the long-term national interest in cutting economic ties with Washington's greatest geopolitical enemy in order to curtail the CCP's ability to gain access to US financial and technological resources.

Over the last year, signs of a growing decoupling between the US and Chinese economies started to emerge, but there are nevertheless worrying signs that this process of disentanglement is not as clear cut as it should be.[55] On the one hand, statistical data shows a trend in the right direction: "According to official U.S. trade data, China accounted for just 13.3% of U.S. goods imports during the first six months of this year [2023]—the lowest level since 2003, and far below the annual peak of 21.6% in 2017. . . . Direct U.S. investment into China hit a 20-year low of $8.2 billion last year, according to Rhodium Group, a New York-based research firm," according to the *Wall Street Journal*.[56] On the other hand, some US businesses continued to make major investments in China, and others now purchase goods from third countries whose companies use Chinese suppliers, in effect simply adding one more link to the global supply chain but doing nothing to ameliorate the underlying problem.[57] Even more concerning, and also a revealing example of the failures of the current policy, when the US government decided to prevent DuPont Industries from transferring a sensitive technological discovery to a Chinese partner on national security grounds, the Chinese firm nevertheless gained access to it either through the negligence of the US partner or more likely intentional theft.[58] As long as US businesses continue to deal with their CCP-controlled Chinese counterparts, the spillage of intellectual property and of American tech and military secrets cannot be stopped. Only an aggressive decoupling of the two economies will protect US national security and economic interests in the long run.

Winning the Tech War against China

For more than a decade, the US and China have been engaging in what Stanford historian Niall Ferguson calls a *tech war*.[59] In the era of GPC, former Google CEO Eric Schmidt argues that the deciding factor in the rivalry between US and China will be what he calls "innovation power."[60] He joins a chorus of American and Chinese experts in expecting that "technological advances in the next five to ten years will determine

which country gains the upper hand in this world-shaping competition."[61] Chinese president Xi is certainly one of those aware of the stakes involved in this arena of GPC: "technological innovation has become the main battleground of the global playing field, and competition for tech dominance will grow unprecedentedly fierce."[62] Unfortunately, so far the United States is falling behind in this domain of the great power competition against China. As a Harvard report recently warns: "China has made such extraordinary leaps that it is now a full-spectrum peer competitor. In each of the foundational technologies of the 21st century—artificial intelligence, semiconductors, 5G wireless, quantum information science, biotechnology and green energy—China could soon be the global leader. In some areas, it is already No. 1."[63]

It goes without saying that achieving technological superiority in the leading industries of the future will be key to maintaining America's military edge. As outlined in the previous section, the US government and the business community together will need to think about trade policy and technological innovation more from a realist competitive strategy perspective, as China does, and less from a liberal market efficiency one. Therefore, in addition to trade and capital flow barriers, tools such as increasing government research funding and economic subsidies to strategic high-tech industries, cooperating with allies on setting international communication standards, and funding infrastructure investments are needed in a way that was not the case since the early days of the Cold War. The containment strategy toward Beijing must apply to the technological domain as much as it does in the military and economic spheres.[64]

How was China able to achieve tech parity with the United States, and, more importantly, what are its next moves in the new tech war that the US and its Western allies must counter? The short answer is that Beijing adopted a realist policy of techno-nationalism and successfully underwent a technology revolution over the past decade.[65] A Center for Strategic and International Studies study shows that China spent "much more in helping favored industries with state-directed funds, cheap loans and other government incentives than other major economies."[66] The report estimates Beijing spent 1.39 percent of its GDP in 2019, more than three times as much as the US, which spent 0.39 percent of its similar-sized GDP in Purchasing Power Parity terms.[67] Even the free-market-oriented *Wall Street Journal* concedes that the expectations of liberal internationalists regarding China's technological policy have been proven wrong: "Many economists and Western officials once

assumed that Beijing would gradually reduce the state's role in directing credit and other resources as the economy matured. However, government interventions have increased in China over the years, especially under President Xi Jinping, who sees industrial policy as vital to reducing China's economic dependence on other countries while increasing their dependence on China."[68] And just as realists feared, the civilian technological advances are rapidly translated into military technology, under a "civil-military fusion" strategy implemented by President Xi in an effort to create a military-industrial complex on a par with that of the United States.[69]

This techno-nationalist industrial policy is likely to continue in coming years, as the CCP leadership is now dramatically intensifying its efforts to develop a domestic semiconductor industry to avoid having to rely on Western suppliers.[70] To achieve this, according to technology expert Adam Segal, Beijing leaders "are mobilizing tech companies, tightening links to the countries participating in China's Belt and Road Initiative, and sustaining a campaign of cyber-industrial espionage."[71] The world is already being divided into Western-dominated and Chinese-dominated tech spheres, with Chinese companies like Huawei, ZTE, and Alibaba competing for global influence and profits against Western ones like Apple, Google, Cisco, Nokia, and Ericsson.[72] Moreover, the CCP also has a systematic program ("A Thousand Talents") to steal US technology in key industries by infiltrating US academic and government institutions, as a former high-level Energy Department official recently warned about.[73] For example, the *Financial Times* reported that Xi issued a "top-down directive" for the civil-military fusion policy to expand it to "all domains of competition . . . broadening the scope from not just core weapons technologies but also to cyber, finance, space and maritime sectors."[74] Lastly, Chinese courts are the latest way for the CCP to "legally" appropriate Western technology by invalidating Western patents.[75]

To win the new tech war against China and maintain its current geopolitical position, the United States also needs to adapt its approach to domestic innovation and manufacturing, science and technology funding, export controls, promotion of international technical standards, and infrastructure investments in order to stop Beijing from dominating the key emerging technologies of the future. The People's Republic of China's "Made in China 2025" plan to gain an edge in future key strategic technologies by massively investing in state-owned Chinese companies has already allowed the CCP to move ahead in certain areas, a concerning development given the "first-mover" advantage nature of some

of these future-shaping industries like 6G or AI. The US government needs to urgently develop an innovation strategy for this tech war that supports US and allied companies that are engaged in fights over market share, communication infrastructure, and technological standards domination against Chinese companies, and allocate the research funds and legal support needed to win these fights.[76]

In other words, Washington must adopt a realist techno-nationalist strategy of its own. It must reacquaint itself, as policymakers have already been doing, with the concept of industrial policy: governments should direct resources to industries critical to the national interest rather than leaving things to the market.[77] In addition to merely fostering innovation, the strategic goals of America's industrial policy in the new context of GPC should include "to secure U.S. supply, create jobs and ensure that the resulting intellectual property stays in the U.S. rather than being transferred to Chinese competitors via outsourcing."[78] Virginia Democratic senator Mark Warner, one of the advocates of this approach in Congress, argues that "the Chinese state ensures that Chinese, not foreign, companies become the dominant players in its domestic market, effectively guaranteeing them a big share of the world's market. . . . It's hard to see how a company in America or any normal, traditional market-based economy can compete against that kind of juggernaut and win."[79] This is not just hyperbole: an overview of the critical semiconductor market shows Beijing's success in its efforts to establish dominance. As Graham Allison and Eric Schmidt warn:

> China is on track to overtake Taiwan as the world's largest manufacturer of chips as soon as 2025. It already prints more than half the world's circuit boards, which are necessary to install chips in devices. . . . Unless the U.S. government mobilizes a national effort similar to the one that created the technologies that won World War II, China could soon dominate semiconductors and the frontier technologies they will power.[80]

In order to counter China's efforts to dominate the critical semiconductor market, therefore, the United States must work together with its allies and partners to develop manufacturing capabilities in the West. The Biden administration indeed issued an executive order in 2021 to enhance "supply chain resiliency" and revitalize American manufacturing.[81] The following year, Congress passed the CHIPS and Science Act, which allocated $52 billion in funding to subsidize the domestic produc-

tion of microchips, which is still only a third of China's yearly spending on this.[82] The goal was "to create at least two manufacturing clusters for leading-edge chips by 2030."[83] In an incredibly shortsighted move, however, the Biden administration added so many unrelated requirements to the CHIPS Act (to advance Democratic partisan priorities) that it pushed the top world's top manufacturing companies, such as Intel, TSMC, and Samsung, to delay their US investments and focus on other countries instead.[84] Unsurprisingly, the United States is already behind on what some have rightly called the competition for "the oil of the twenty-first century."[85] While Taiwan, the world leader with 92 percent of production, is a friendly state, it is also vulnerable to a Chinese takeover (peaceful or not) given Beijing's insistence on eventual reunification. One solution could be for TSMC, the largest Taiwanese company manufacturing microchips, and Samsung of South Korea to move some production inside the US by partnering with American companies.[86] US and European efforts to reduce the risk of China being able to take over almost the entire global semiconductor production if they invade Taiwan are only in an incipient state.[87] Due to their highly complex manufacturing, however, it will be remarkably difficult, costly, and time-consuming for Silicon Valley or other US-based locations to catch up in this industry, as Chris Miller cautions in his new book *Chip Wars*, thus making dramatic US efforts all the more urgent.[88]

Export controls are another needed measure to deny the Chinese military access to advanced US semiconductors, and the Biden administration passed some new restrictions to address this concern in 2022.[89] However, the effectiveness of such efforts is questionable, and some experts are skeptical that the new restrictions will work as intended.[90] For example, the *Wall Street Journal* recently reported that "China's top nuclear-weapons research institute has bought sophisticated U.S. computer chips at least a dozen times in the past two and a half years, circumventing decades-old American export restrictions meant to curb such sales."[91] Moreover, the Biden administration weakened its own restrictions by inexplicably allowing top semiconductor manufacturers from South Korea and Taiwan to maintain and expand their existing chipmaking operations in China.[92]

In addition to semiconductors, another key technological front in the tech war is the development of advanced lithium batteries for electric vehicles. Just like with microchips, this is another area where Beijing already dominates today's battery supply chain, from the extraction and processing of critical minerals like lithium to the production, packag-

ing, and recycling of battery cells.[93] A long-term concerted effort by the CCP to support Chinese battery company CATL has helped it establish dominance over this very important technology.[94] As a research report from the Hudson Institute explains, in addition to their use in the automobile industry, "Electric Vehicles (EVs) and advanced batteries also have important military applications. EVs will function as mobile energy nodes on the battlefield, providing power for unmanned systems, communication links, electromagnetic warfare systems and more. These capabilities will help the US military conduct more decentralized operations in contested regions."[95] Just like with the semiconductor market, the US government should get a lot more involved in providing financial and regulatory support for investments in the mining of key minerals, processing, and eventually development of next-generation battery technologies to substitute for scarce minerals controlled by Chinese suppliers; this is particularly true for military-grade batteries, which have more extreme specifications.[96]

The case of China's cornering the global market on rare earth minerals is an instructive one of Beijing's tech dominance strategy.[97] The 17 minerals designated as rare earths are needed in the manufacturing of most modern electronics, including major American weapons systems like F-35 fighter jets, M1 Abrams tanks, and surface-to-air missiles.[98] A Heritage Foundation analysis warns that "although China only has around 36 percent of the world's RE [rare earth] reserves, it controls more than 70 percent of the world's extraction capability and nearly 90 percent of its processing capacity." The reason why Beijing now controls the global supply is the result of a deliberate strategy pursued over the past two decades, a period in which the Chinese Communist Party used industrial policy to largely push Western companies out of the rare earth mining and processing business.[99] As far back as 1992, Deng Xiaoping, former general secretary of the CCP, was reported as saying:

> The Middle East has its oil, China has rare earth: China's rare earth deposits account for 80 percent of identified global reserves, you can compare the status of these reserves to that of oil in the Middle East: it is of extremely important strategic significance; we must be sure to handle the rare earth issue properly and make the fullest use of our country's advantage in rare earth resources.[100]

The CCP could use that dominance to its advantage in a potential conflict against the US, as it did during a 2010 crisis between Japan and

China over the disputed Senkaku Islands: at that time, Beijing significantly reduced the supply of rare earths to Japan, a major importer of its minerals.[101] Therefore, Washington's dependence on Beijing's supply of rare earths needed to operate its military in case of war is a national security risk of the highest order. Unlike World War II, the US cannot afford to wait for a major war to start before aligning its industrial policy with its national security objectives. The US has belatedly started working with allies such as Australia to build rare-earth mining and processing facilities in order to reduce reliance on China, but such efforts are likely to take a long time unless more funding is allocated and onerous environmental regulatory hurdles simplified.[102]

Investments in domestic (or friendly countries) manufacturing of strategically important technologies is a very important priority in the new tech war against China, but not the only one. The geoeconomic competition in technology also has an important international component, manifested most prominently by China's Belt and Road Initiative, that must be addressed as well.[103] Indeed, Markus Brunnermeier, Rush Doshi, and Harold James examined previous eras of economic great power competition and found that infrastructure investments are an important tool of economic rivalry: "They not only facilitate trade and connectivity, they also offer the opportunity to practice 'economic power projection'—that is, to reshape the strategic geography of great power competition."[104] The objectives of BRI very much make it a part of China's grand strategic challenge to the United States, as it aims, among other things, at "securing a consistent source of inputs for its manufacturing sector and [to] reorient global commerce away from the United States and Western Europe toward China."[105] According to a comprehensive analysis of BRI conducted by a Council on Foreign Relations task force, this project is worrisome to the United States because it provides opportunities for the People's Republic of China to "subsidize privileged market entry for state-owned and non–market oriented Chinese companies . . . to lock countries in to Chinese ecosystems by pressing its technology and preferred technical standards on BRI recipients . . . [and to] leave countries more susceptible to Chinese political pressure while giving China a greater ability to project its power more widely."[106]

The United States can counter the impact of China's BRI in a number of ways, with scholars from different schools of grand strategic thought offering competing recommendations. First, most everyone agrees that Washington should not simply respond in a knee-jerk fashion, "trying to match it port-by-port or road-by-road."[107] Proponents of liberal inter-

nationalist policies such as Charles Kenny and Scott Morris predictably think in universalist terms and advocate that the US recommits to acting through global institutions for global progress rather than develop a specifically anti-BRI strategy: "Rather than trying to beat China at its own game, the United States needs to recommit to a vision of planetary prosperity through global cooperation, openness, transparency, and equal opportunity. When it comes to physical capital, the World Bank and regional development banks are best suited to accomplish those goals."[108] Conservative internationalists like Patrick Cronin are more concerned about the impact of BRI on US national security, but they still generally recommend a strategic focus on defending the tenets of the current liberal world order as the response in the competition against Beijing: "The United States should compete on its own terms with an asymmetric foreign assistance strategy that draws on its natural strengths. This means preventing the rise of an illiberal world order by promoting open commerce, fair rules for the digital space and freedom of the seas. With such an approach, the Biden administration can make good on its vow to 'out-compete' China."[109]

On the contrary, an offensive realist approach to countering BRI, rather than relying on corrupt and ineffective international bodies where Beijing and its allies hold critical sway, or on using up diminishing American resources in trying to prop up global tenets of the vanishing unipolar liberal order like free trade, would instead focus narrowly on those strategically important countries where Chinese infrastructure projects have the potential to become PLA military bases. For example, China plans to invest over $50 billion in the "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor," a project that Pentagon experts in 2018 argued may lay the groundwork for mutual defense projects as well.[110] Similarly, recent news of Chinese upgrading the Ream Naval Base in Cambodia presented similar concerns of a PLA presence, as did Beijing's most recent security pact with the Solomon Islands, another strategically significant location in the Pacific region.[111] In such cases, China's BRI and technological advances pose the most immediate concern to the overall grand strategic goal of preventing Beijing from achieving the status of a regional hegemon, and hence the US counteractions through economic and technological assistance are more warranted than in the case of BRI's outreach to African countries, for example. A good recent example of US efforts along these lines is working with regional allies in the South Pacific to fund a project, the Trilateral Partnership for Infrastructure Investment in the Indo-

Pacific, that will "install an undersea fiber-optic cable in Palau and bring both electrification and a joint naval base to Manus Island."[112]

One final component of the tech war against China is the fight for setting international standards.[113] The competition for such global standards represents a common way for great powers to attempt to achieve technological supremacy, as Brunnermeier et al. point out: "States whose technology becomes the dominant standard can wield that leverage over others, a point not lost on rising powers who often work to reduce their vulnerability by creating parallel systems."[114] In today's era of GPC, the fight over international standards between the established dominant tech superpower (the United States) and the rising tech peer power (China) is taking place for a new generation of technologies, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, "dependent on 5G networks, including driverless vehicles, so-called smart cities and the Internet of Things—advances that will connect the digital and physical worlds as never before. . . . New fields including facial recognition touch on privacy and public safety, with greater consequences for national security than in the past."[115] And unlike the privacy laws often embedded in Western societies, as a Japanese official bluntly put it, "If Chinese products are set up to collect data, you have to work on the assumption that it will all end up with the Chinese government."[116] Therefore, the United States government, together with its Western allies, has been targeting Chinese companies like Huawei for example, the largest telecommunication company in the world, and successfully hobbled its global dominance in 5G as well as seriously hurting its profitability and future prospects.[117]

The campaign against Huawei was an example of Washington winning an important battle in this arena against Beijing, but the fight over standards like the tech war in general will be a long one, and a more comprehensive strategy is needed. The United States and its allies are in good shape to win such a conflict, if they play their cards right.[118] China's tech efforts, while well funded, still suffer from serious setbacks due to China's repressive and corrupt government.[119] As with other parts of the grand strategic effort to prevent China from achieving regional hegemony in the Asia-Pacific, cooperation with partners is paramount, as is the narrow focus on pragmatic objectives as opposed to broader concerns about free trade principles. For Washington, it will be key to work closely with technologically advanced partners in the area, such as Japan, South Korea, Australia, and India, in order to deny Chinese government-backed companies the ability to establish dominance in key emerging technologies.

In conclusion, high technology is one critical area of geoeconomics in which China is already a global peer rival of the United States in many ways, and therefore an American realist strategy to contain China's tech ascendancy is urgently needed. The rules-based liberal international free market system has been manipulated by Beijing's techno-nationalist approach, with the (often unwitting) help of Western companies, and it's high time for Washington to adapt to this new reality. The US should adopt a similarly realist strategy toward the most strategically important technologies of the 21st century, and take the necessary measures together with its allies to block China's access to Western technological advances in the same way that the Soviet Union was denied access during the Cold War. This is a much taller task given the extensive current connections between the Chinese and US economies, another reason to vigorously pursue the decoupling of the economies recommended in the previous section.

Energy Realism in the GPC Era

One last key arena of geoeconomic competition against China in the GPC era is the energy sector. Oil and gas reserves have been used as tools of geopolitical competition for decades, and the recent war in Ukraine has only served as a reminder of the intricate connections between energy security and grand strategy.[120] What some called "post-Ukraine climate realism" should serve to shift the priorities of American energy policy away from liberal internationalist concerns with the Green New Deal agenda of reducing reliance on oil and gas, and instead return to a more traditional realist objective of securing energy resources for domestic consumption and to advance geopolitical objectives.[121] A realist energy strategy for GPC focuses on maximizing all resources of power, particularly strategic ones like oil and gas, and downplays the pursuit of liberal domestic priorities like the climate change agenda.[122] While the US and European countries could indulge in pursuing nonstrategic goals like reducing carbon emissions during the unipolar era at relatively low geopolitical cost, such a distraction would be devastating to US national security interests in today's era of great power competition against China and Russia, two countries with energy policies reliant on fossil fuels.[123]

A realist energy policy suited for a No Peer Rivals grand strategy starts from the fact that the United States is endowed with enormous amounts

of oil and gas. Combined with world-class industrial know-how in the energy extraction, refinery, and transportation business, Washington has the ability to achieve not just energy independence and security, but global energy dominance.[124] Therefore, the main priority should be to use this competitive advantage in oil and gas to advance its interests in the emerging global energy market post-Ukraine, a market characterized more by geopolitical competition than by free markets, as well as by a return to reliance on fossil fuels.[125] For example, the United States could produce enough natural gas to sell some of it to Europe and help its NATO allies wean themselves off Russian gas, a geopolitical win as well as a financial boon for the US economy.[126] This would also counter the fact that China has shifted its purchases of gas from the US toward Russia, further evidence of how the energy market follows geopolitics more closely than economic incentives in the GPC era.[127]

At the same time, the US should of course continue to invest in research and development of other energy resources to position itself at the forefront of renewable sources of energy, but do that in parallel with traditional sources of energy.[128] The Obama administration promoted this a decade ago as an "All of the Above" energy strategy, and it was mostly continued by the Trump administration.[129] The liberal internationalist turn in energy policy taken by the Biden administration under the leadership of climate envoy John Kerry is endangering the US economy and geopolitical standing alike.[130] Rather than foolishly attempting to reverse it, *adaptation* to the impacts of climate change is a sound and empirically based policy to address this problem.[131] It is also a much savvier strategy than drastically harming America's own energy security and economy, and hence its geopolitical position in the world, through self-imposed limits on its production of oil and gas, as the Biden administration had unwisely done since taking office.[132]

The biggest obstacle to adopting a realist energy policy reliant on securing energy dominance in the fossil fuel markets and relying on adaptation and tech innovation to mitigate the negative consequences of climate change is the idea that such a policy will harm the fight to eliminate CO_2 emissions and reverse climate change. The Biden team, along with many liberal internationalist foreign policy experts, mistakenly conceptualize a complex global environmental problem like climate change as an actual American grand strategic priority, and place it at the top level of an "existential threat," even more important for some than the rise of China.[133] Consequently, they advocate for a self-defeating policy of "net zero," forcing drastic changes in the US economy away from fos-

sil fuels in a way that would weaken US military and economic power.[134] Moreover, rather than regarding Beijing as a strategic challenger for regional and global hegemony, they prioritize the importance of cooperating with China to "jointly address climate change," despite all evidence to the contrary that the CCP is not interested in that.[135] Rather than climate change, it is actually climate alarmism that is a national security threat for the United States, and it is already harming the US geopolitical position in the great power competition against China and Russia.

Climate change is an important global transnational challenge from an environmental and economic perspective, mostly as a development problem for poor countries in its actual impacts, and it does have some tangential national security implications for the US military. Having said that, it is not an "existential crisis" in any meaningful sense of that word, and whatever negative impacts it will cause can be most efficiently addressed through adaptation and technological innovation, not through a dramatic reduction in CO2 as the advocates of entirely abandoning fossil fuels contend.[136] A major analytical mistake of alarmist media accounts of the potential dangers of climate change is ignoring the role of human engineering adaptations in estimating the costs of rising sea levels, for example. As a recent study of flood impacts found, "By raising the height of dikes, the study shows that humanity can negate almost all that terrible projected damage by 2100. Only 15,000 people would be flooded every year, which is a remarkable improvement compared with the 3.4 million people flooded in 2000. The total cost of damage, investments in new dikes, and maintenance costs of existing dikes will fall sixfold between now and 2100 to 0.008% of world GDP."[137] Similarly, when talking about climate deaths, alarmist narratives ignore the fact that for last year, for example, the approximately 6,600 casualties of storms, floods, droughts, wildfires, and extreme temperatures represent a 99 percent decline from a century ago, when the climate had far fewer CO2 emissions.[138]

Moreover, the actual impact of climate change over the next decades may well be far more benign economically than climate activists warn about.[139] Many empirical studies estimating the actual economic costs of climate change show that it is a serious but manageable problem when viewed in proper context.[140] For example, Dan Negrea and Nick Loris surveyed the recent literature and noted the following:

> SwissRe, the second-largest reinsurance company in the world, produced a detailed report in April 2021 on the impact of climate change.

> It noted that by mid-century under the current likely temperature-rise trajectories, the world temperature will be 2.0–2.6 degrees Celsius higher and global GDP 11–14 percent lower than in a world without climate change. If today's world GDP of $85 trillion grows annually at 3 percent, it will reach $194 trillion in 2050, or 2.3 times greater than today. With climate change losses of 13 percent, the world's GDP in 2050 will only be double what it is today.[141]

In addition to ignoring the economic estimates and the possibilities for adaptation, another part leading to alarmist policies is that today's Western policymakers have a flawed understanding of the climate issue due to the poor information they are presented with by supposedly objective international institutions. The UN-based Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports, which provide the main scientific backing for the climate agenda, are unduly alarmist, as many such heavily politicized reports tend to be, and they have a poor track record of explaining either previous changes in the climate or in estimating subsequent changes.[142] As former New York University engineering professor and Obama Energy Department science advisor Steven Koonin explains:

> Previous climate-assessment reports have misrepresented scientific research in the 'conclusions' presented to policy makers and the media. The summary of the most recent U.S. government climate report, for instance, said heat waves across the U.S. have become more frequent since 1960, but neglected to mention that the body of the report shows they are no more common today than they were in 1900. . . . The Summary for Policy Makers section says the rate of global sea-level rise has been increasing over the past 50 years. It doesn't mention that it was increasing almost as rapidly 90 years ago before decreasing strongly for 40 years.[143]

One of the more important factors often ignored in the debates on energy and climate, moreover, is that despite enormous recent financial and regulatory pressure from both the Western governments and the corporate community in recent years, both scientific and political limitations prevent global carbon emissions from decreasing nowhere near fast enough to match the minimum goals set by the IPCC, as liberal internationalists like Kerry push for.[144] For example, the panel advocates that "by 2050, global coal, oil and gas use will need to decline by 95, 60 and 45 percent respectively, compared with 2019 levels, for the world to have a

halfway decent shot at capping global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius."[145] Such a dramatic shift from fossil fuels to renewable sources in that time frame is scientifically impossible given current technological limitations and the daily needs of a modern economy in wealthy countries, as well as the needs of industrializing economies in the poor ones.[146]

According to the International Energy Agency, "even if all current climate policies are delivered in full, renewables will only deliver one-third of U.S. and EU energy in 2050," not enough to meet the IPCC goal.[147] And the implementation of those policies is highly unlikely anyways, because, as Bjorn Lomborg explains in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed, the energy provided by fossil fuel sources simply cannot be replaced by renewables despite the policies pushed by climate change activists:

> That's why fossil fuels still provide more than three-fourths of wealthy countries' energy, while solar and wind deliver less than 3%. There are enough batteries in the world today only to power global average electricity consumption for 75 seconds. Even though the supply is being scaled up rapidly, by 2030 the world's batteries would still cover less than 11 minutes. . . . This is why solar panels and wind turbines can't deliver most of the energy for industrializing poor countries.[148]

Placing the actual economic threat from climate change in proper perspective is needed in order to avoid the hyperbole and alarmism that has dangerously distorted US energy, economic, and even military priorities in recent years. Pursuing a "net zero agenda" and forcibly moving away from fossil fuels as a grand strategy goal puts the US at a comparative geopolitical disadvantage against China and Russia in at least two important ways. First, it hurts military readiness by distracting the Pentagon with entirely unrealistic plans to "electrify" military equipment at a time when the US military already faces munition shortages and a budgetary crisis due to inflation and costs overruns. And, second, it is hurting US economic competitiveness by squandering America's comparative advantage in oil and gas; to make things worse, America's adversaries would directly benefit from this self-inflicted wound, as China has positioned itself as a main global supplier of "green" tech like solar panels and batteries, while Russia and Iran are gaining market share and revenues in oil and gas. Moreover, even if the US and its Western allies were to stick with this agenda despite its economic and strategic downsides, a realist theory of great power politics predicts that the impact on the climate would be negligible because its GPC rivals in Beijing and

Moscow, as well as other important countries in the Global South, will not cooperate and thus the overall CO_2 level will continue to increase.[149] The evidence so far unambiguously points in this direction: despite billions of dollars spent by the Biden administration since entering office, the levels of CO_2 have continued to increase.[150]

If climate change were truly a security threat in the same way as, say, nuclear annihilation, then fighting against this threat would be more important than the geopolitical competition against China and Russia. And yet the kind of national security threats potentially exacerbated by climate change over the next decades, according to the US intelligence and defense communities, are issues like increased instability in poor countries, potential conflicts over resources like water in the Middle East, competition in the Arctic, increased migration flows, or, more directly related to the US military, a need to shore up naval bases if ocean levels increase.[151] Such potential threats are not negligible and worth addressing in the future as they materialize, but compared to other GPC goals they are at best third-order threats, not in the same category as great power conflict, or even second-order issues like nuclear proliferation or terrorism.

And yet, unfortunately, the Pentagon is now embarking on a misguided effort to prematurely reduce reliance on fossil fuels in the absence of realistic alternatives. This is distracting from what should be far and away the overarching goal of the department during GPC, deterring and if needed defeating great power rivals. As defense expert Nadia Schadlow observed, "Meaningful shifts away from fossil fuels are limited by the need to power ships and airplanes, maneuver to and across faraway theaters, and keep the lights on in its installations. All this is critical to deter adversaries. Until scalable and sustainable advances in power generation and energy storage arrive, decarbonizing the Pentagon would undermine deterrence."[152] Whether due to political pressure from the administration or to strategic malpractice, both the Defense Department and the intelligence community now routinely include combating climate change in their lists of major strategic threats, even though they can only justify this by conjuring vague risks of hypothetical climate-related resource wars, increased migration flows, increased harm to US installations, and general instability.[153] Once again, while not entirely negligible, none of these potentially negative developments represent actual grand strategic threats on a par with China, Russia, or international terrorism. And even if they were to drastically increase in severity in future years, the Defense Department would not be in any position to meaningfully impact these developments anyways given the minuscule amount of CO_2

emissions it controls compared to the US economy as a whole, let alone the global emissions from actual adversaries like China or Russia who are going to continue to use their fossil fuel resources.

The history of climate agreements and negotiations provides clear evidence why a liberal internationalist approach to energy and climate policy does not work in the GPC era, even if we were to assume that drastically reducing CO_2 is a necessary goal. Recent climate negotiations proved that there are virtually insurmountable political obstacles to achieving the kind of international cooperation needed for a truly unified global effort to reduce carbon emissions in the GPC era.[154] The idea that interest-based world politics will be replaced by a sort of "planetary politics" in which governments "designate the survival of the biosphere as a core national interest and a central objective of national and international security," as Stewart Patrick calls for, remains a naïve hope of scholars who put their faith in global governance institutions despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.[155] As realists can easily explain but contrary to the expectation of liberal internationalists, great powers like China and Russia vigorously pursue their narrow national interest in achieving energy security by continuing to rely on fossil fuels even at the potential risk of long-term damage to the climate.[156]

Because CCP leaders think in realist not liberal terms about the climate issue but understand that American leaders sometimes do the opposite, Beijing has been using this issue to gain concessions from Washington without actually taking any decisive steps to reduce carbon emissions. Chinese leaders are not even trying to hide the fact that they leverage cooperation on climate measures to gain concessions on other issues from Washington: as China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, put it, "cooperation on climate change cannot be divorced from the overall situation of China-U.S. relations."[157] Unsurprisingly, China's continued reliance on coal plants has more than offset whatever impact on climate the reduction of Western CO_2 emissions might have had over the past few years, another empirical data point that should lead to a change in the self-defeating US approach.[158] This shows that the CCP does not see the threat of climate change as existential like most Western leaders do, but as a way to take advantage of the United States and continue the path to regional and global hegemony. Indeed, for realists it would be highly surprising if Beijing and Moscow wouldn't act this way: China is the largest emitter of carbon dioxide, but also an industrializing country heavily reliant on coal, while Russia is a huge natural gas producer and derives

a large share of its financial resources as well as geopolitical clout from its gas exports.[159]

The mistake made by liberal internationalist Western leaders is to believe that diplomacy can change these priorities. Instead, as former State Department official Wess Mitchell argues, Beijing uses "climate diplomacy" as another way to increase its relative economic power versus the West: "China can extract concessions and encumber rivals with costly emission restrictions that slow their growth while avoiding similar restrictions on its own economy—simply by pledging to make such cuts in the far-off future."[160] Not only is China not reducing its use of cheap fossil fuels, but it is at the same time using massive state subsidies to dominate Western markets for renewables (wind turbines, solar panels, lithium batteries), thus gaining further geoeconomic leverage against the United States and its allies, which would thus come to depend on Beijing for energy resources if the so-called green energy revolution were to come to pass.[161]

In addition to distracting from the efforts to contain China's rise, Biden's net zero agenda also harms the US position against Russia, its other main GPC competitor. The reduction in domestic investment in oil and gas, for example, surrendered the strategic benefits of energy independence and of being the top global oil producer that Washington enjoyed for the last few years.[162] Even worse, it allowed US adversaries like Russia to fill in the void in the energy market. As the *Wall Street Journal* reported, in 2021 "Rosneft announced a $170 billion oil and gas project in Russia's north, which it claims can supply the entire world's oil demand for a year. It says the project will become the world's largest liquefied natural gas producer by 2030. Russia is also laying down thousands of miles of oil and gas pipelines to supply Europe and Asia."[163] Moreover, the sanctions on Russian oil after the war in Ukraine accomplished nothing in terms of diminishing Moscow's energy industry. To the consternation of Western policymakers, after six months of economic pressure, "Russia pumps almost as much oil into the global market as it did before its invasion of Ukraine. With oil prices up, Moscow is also making more money."[164] In fact, in Russia's case, Moscow is not even trying to hide the fact that they view global warming in parts of Siberia's arable lands and the increasingly thawing shipping passages through the Arctic Ocean as potential sources of economic opportunity to be exploited.[165]

In conclusion, unless the United States returns to a policy of energy realism, Washington will foolishly surrender a key strategic asset (its oil

and gas energy resources) in the vain hope that such actions will have any meaningful long-term impact on reversing climate change, despite scientific and historical evidence suggesting otherwise.[166] Such a grand strategic mistake would be disastrous for US economic well-being, as well as for its geopolitical position against China and Russia in the era of GPC.[167]

As this chapter has made clear, while some decisions on strengthening America's economic and technological sources of power are domestic in nature, many others require coordination with allies and partners around the world. Therefore, the last component of a No Peer Rivals–shaped American foreign policy is a regional diplomatic strategy guided by the principles of offensive realism and the realities of our current GPC era. The next chapter outlines how Washington's alliance system needs to adapt to the competitive dynamics of an emerging realist world order replacing the liberal world order of the past few decades.

CHAPTER SIX

Regional Diplomacy, Alliances, and a Realist World Order

Adapting to the era of Great Power Competition has profound implications for American diplomacy, for Washington's old and new alliances or partnerships, and most critically for the kind of world order that will emerge from the US-China rivalry. For example, US diplomacy toward Latin America, a neglected priority, needs to be elevated to a top priority in order to shore up the unique position of the United States as a regional hegemon. At the same time, the much ballyhooed "pivot to Asia" must be not be derailed by events in Eastern Europe or the Middle East. Old alliances like NATO and new partnerships like AUKUS (Australia, UK, US) and the Quad (US, Japan, India, Australia) need to be shaped or reshaped to match the overall goal of containing China's regional and global ambitions.

As the system moves from unipolarity to multipolarity, the nature of the world order necessarily changes as well because a multipolar world comprising one or more authoritarian great powers will be a contentious realist one; it cannot be liberal any longer as was the case under American hegemony in the post–Cold War era.[1] In such a highly competitive environment, each great power "seeks to maximize its own share of world power, which is likely to clash with the goal of creating and sustaining stable international orders."[2] To the extent that an international order emerges in the GPC era, the main tenets of this realist order will be

centered around the US-China geopolitical rivalry, Russia's resurgence, and a narrowing of the policy space for multilateral cooperation through global institutions. Therefore, rather than attempting to resuscitate the liberal world order, as the Biden administration is attempting to do, it is now time to shape the emerging realist world order in order to prevent the rise of a full-fledged peer rival to the United States.

Transitioning to a Realist World Order

A world order, in Ikenberry's definition, is composed of the "explicit principles, rules, and institutions that define the core relationship between the states."[3] World orders can be either liberal or realist, as Glaser explains: "All of the basic types of security arrangements—including hegemony, balance of power, collective security, concerts, and security communities—qualify as international security orders or partial orders. Security orders vary in terms of the degree of competition and cooperation between states, as well as in the extent to which power and coercion play central roles."[4] From an offensive realist (i.e., structural) point of view, the balance of power is the primary factor determining the kind of order that will emerge. The post–Cold War unipolar era allowed the United States to shape a liberal world order in accordance with its preferred values as the only superpower, but now that the world is multipolar and other great powers have conflicting values, ideological considerations will be surpassed by power considerations. Hence, the world order in the GPC era is bound to be a realist order.[5] As the structural constraints of the GPC era are becoming more pronounced, the incremental realist turn in US foreign policy over the past few years led to vigorous scholarly and policy debates about the wisdom of abandoning the post–Cold War grand strategic goal of defending a US-led liberal world order.[6]

On the one hand, proponents of liberal internationalism (John Ikenberry, Michael Mazarr, Rebecca Friedman Lissner, Mira Rapp-Hopper) and conservative internationalism (Hal Brands, Michael Beckley, Eliot Cohen) joined forces in criticizing the realist move away from the principles of the liberal world order (sometimes known also as the "rules-based international order") by arguing that maintaining this order since World War II served US grand strategic goals very well and helped the US and the West to win the Cold War, and then maintain relative great power peace and prosperity in the post–Cold War era.[7] Even though they acknowledge that Washington (and its allies) no longer benefit from a

global balance of power dominated by a liberal hegemon, scholars in these two camps nevertheless generally contend that the liberal world order in its core tenets (multilateralism, open trade, democratic solidarity, the rule of law, progressive values, and human rights) can and should be preserved in order to successfully face the illiberal challenges from Beijing and Moscow.

On the other hand, both defensive realists (Charles Glaser, Graham Allison, Patrick Porter) and offensive realists (John Mearsheimer) criticized the US focus on promoting a liberal world order, and disagreed with both the liberal interpretations of its past successes and with its viability in the new strategic era of great power competition.[8] First, they dispute the historical account crediting the liberal order for the outcome of the Cold War: "The claim that the liberal order produced the last seven decades of peace overlooks a major fact: the first four of those decades were defined not by a liberal order but by a cold war between two polar opposites."[9] And as far as the post–Cold War era, they point to the failed wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, NATO's expansion that provoked Russia's current revisionism, and the support given to China's economic rise as examples of the very damaging strategic consequences of pursuing a liberal world order as part of US grand strategy.

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the scholarly debate on the liberal world order quickly moved from academia to the policy world in Washington and Brussels.[10] The Biden administration, together with its NATO partners, framed its vigorous economic, diplomatic, and military response to the war as a defense not primarily of concrete US national interests in the region, but rather as a defense of the so-called rules-based world order: as Biden stated, "I told Putin that if he invaded Ukraine, NATO would not only get stronger but would get more united. And we would see democracies in the world stand up and oppose his aggression and defend the rules-based order. And that's exactly what we're seeing today."[11] This term has been used so often by Western officials that it became almost a cliché, as Peter Beinart noted in the *New York Times*: "It appears twice in Mr. Biden's joint statement with Prime Minister Boris Johnson of Britain, four times each in the communiqués the United States issued with the governments of the Group of 7 and the European Union, and six times in the manifesto produced by NATO."[12] Policy commentators were equally vocal in advocating a strong response: the *Wall Street Journal* published an ominous op-ed by Joshua Moravchik titled "The International Order Is on the Line in Ukraine."[13] A top White House advisor even had an unfortunate viral moment when

he committed what is known as a "Washington gaffe," saying the truth at the wrong time, when he justified continued high gas prices in the US as a necessary cost to defend the liberal world order.[14]

President Biden indeed used the Ukraine crisis to further entrench the defense of the liberal world order and of democracy against authoritarian challengers as the new organizing principle of his foreign policy doctrine. In a major speech in Poland, he described the war as a "great battle for freedom," and called for all democracies to prepare for a "long fight ahead."[15] The initial concerted actions by the United States and European Union countries to severely isolate Russia economically and diplomatically, as well as to provide military assistance to Ukraine, seemed to vindicate the proponents of the liberal world order. In *Foreign Affairs*, Hal Brands and Michael Beckley even raised the notion of a return to Pax Americana:

> Putin's aggression has created a window of strategic opportunity for Washington and its allies. The democracies must now undertake a major multilateral rearmament program and erect firmer defenses—military and otherwise—against the coming wave of autocratic aggression. . . . The invasion of Ukraine signals a new phase in an intensifying struggle to shape the international order.[16]

While conservative internationalists focused more on the military necessities of the US-led liberal order, liberal internationalists proposed to use the crisis in Ukraine to foster more diplomatic international cooperation and faster action on climate change, given Russia's use of gas as a strategic weapon.[17] Despite these nuanced differences, however, both liberal and conservative internationalists agreed the war in Ukraine presents an opportunity to strengthen the liberal world order for defending the interests of the democratic world against authoritarian powers.

But does the war in Ukraine, and the world's response to it, really support the proponents of recommitting America's grand strategy to the liberal world order? As a matter of fact, the international community's reaction to this conflict fits much better with the theoretical expectations of realism than those of liberal internationalism. Rather than reinvigorating the liberal world order, the war in fact confirmed the transition from a hegemonic world order to a multipolar world divided into spheres of influence, as Emma Ashford compellingly argued.[18] The countries most opposed to the invasion and willing to support Ukraine were those European nations most directly threatened by Russia, primar-

ily the Eastern European ones.[19] Western European powers like France and Germany took more convincing given their economic ties with Russia, but eventually joined in a common front with the other EU nations.[20] The hardest decision to explain from a realist perspective is the strong US economic, diplomatic, and military investments, given that such a commitment distracts Washington from the main geopolitical competition against China. But outside of the United States and Europe, with the exception of very close US allies, other major powers like China, India, or Brazil, as well as most countries in the Southern Hemisphere, refused to join the Western nations in defending the so-called liberal world order by sanctioning Russia.[21]

To the dismay of the liberal internationalists in the Biden administration, India's foreign minister, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, pithily justified his country's position in language realists fully expected: "Indian foreign policy decisions are made in Indian national interest, and we are guided by our thinking, our views, our interests."[22] And as the months of the war went on, Russia's initial diplomatic isolation from the world community weakened dramatically outside the West. By July 2022, the *Wall Street Journal* reported, Putin participated at the BRICS summit (alongside China, India, Brazil, and South Africa); his presence thus "demonstrated Russia's strategic importance to disparate corners of the world and the limited appetite among some pivotal nations to join Western boycotts of trade. The Brics grouping represents four of the world's 10 most populous countries as well as four of the biggest 15 economies."[23] Therefore, contrary to the Biden administration's interpretation that the war in Ukraine represents a key battle in the larger grand strategic geopolitical contest between democracies and autocracies, countries outside the West had a much more realist and pragmatic view of this as an essentially regional dispute in Europe. Indian professor and former diplomat Shivshankar Menon summarized this reality in a provocative *Foreign Affairs* essay that perfectly captures the realist interpretation of this crisis:

> The war is no doubt a seismic event that will have profound consequences for Russia, its immediate neighbors, and the rest of Europe. But it will neither reshape the global order nor presage an ideological showdown of democracies against China and Russia. . . . Far from consolidating 'the free world,' the war has underscored its fundamental incoherence. In any case, the future of global order will be decided not by wars in Europe but by the contest in Asia, on which events in Ukraine have limited bearing.[24]

If the war in Ukraine is not bringing about a rebirth of the old *liberal* world order, what are the characteristics of the *realist* world order the US needs to shape in order to serve the goals of a No Peer Rivals grand strategy? First, Washington must make sure its main rival, China, will not succeed in President Xi's ambition of building a Beijing-centric regional, or even world, order that would solidify its own hegemonic status.[25] China has been pursuing a dogged campaign to "exert greater control in the existing international architecture of global institutions";[26] consequently, the US needs to respond to this either by pushing back China's advances in concert with its allies where possible, or by diminishing the importance of those universal institutions now under Beijing's influence through the creation of other regional ones less susceptible to Beijing's infiltration where necessary. China's most important neighbors are naturally suspicious of China's hegemonic ambitions, as balance of power theory expects them to be, and therefore the US should be able to continue working closely with countries like India, Australia, South Korea, and Japan to prevent a Chinese-led regional order from developing. The same is true for the European Union, and increasingly many African and Latin American countries, which despite having extensive increasing economic ties with China, nevertheless do not look favorably to the often heavy-handed approach adopted by Beijing in its dealings.[27] In short, today's multipolar system will make it just as hard for China to impose its own version of a Beijing-led world order as it would for the United States to impose a Washington-led one.

In the absence of a hegemon-led world order, the multipolar realist order emerging will be a "thin" order, as opposed to the "thick" international order favored by liberal internationalists.[28] In practice, cooperation between great powers will be more limited than in the past, and international institutions and agreements will be arenas for intense US-Chinese competition for relative economic, technological, diplomatic, or military advantage. In some areas such as economics, regional orders centered around free trade and investment pacts already generally surpass in importance global agreements, a trend that is only expected to grow in the years to come.[29] In other areas like security, countries like Germany and Japan are taking on more of a leading role in their regions, a trend the US should encourage. Even if that means the US will cede some of its influence and have to treat its allies more as "real stakeholders than junior partners," as the director of the European Council on Foreign Relations, Mark Leonard, pithily put it, that will nevertheless serve US interests better in the long run.[30] Organic regional balances of power developing in East Asia, Europe, and the Middle East will allow

the US to focus its resources where its allies most need it to prevent a regional hegemon, that is, in the Asia-Pacific theater where US allies are most threatened by a would-be hegemon.

The emerging realist order that the US should both adapt to and shape needs to narrow the scope of "global governance" issues favored by liberal internationalists in the areas of the environment or human rights.[31] Instead, it must focus on core concerns like respect for the territorial integrity of states, mutually fair and transparent economic relations, and new domains like cyber and space where great power competition is largely unregulated. And while the new realist world order will certainly not be as deeply institutionalized as the liberal order it is replacing, the more ad-hoc nature of this approach also has its benefits. Flexible but motivated coalitions of states (such as the recent examples of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and the Proliferation Security Initiative) can work quite successfully toward a common goal. Moreover, such "minilateralism" can serve US national interests better than a multilateral approach that is vulnerable to Chinese manipulation at the United Nations.[32]

The new realist order will be shaped toward fostering international stability among the great powers and respect for the sovereignty and diversity of political and economic systems. The best way for the United States to maintain the status quo, where China does not impose a regional hegemonic order in Asia and does not threaten US dominance in the Western Hemisphere or US interests in the Middle East, as well as to curb Russia's revisionist tendencies in Eastern Europe, is to work with local partners based on security and economic common interests, not perceived deviations from modern Western liberal values. Oftentimes, liberal internationalist priorities in terms of advancing liberal social values hurt US influence everywhere except Western Europe, and therefore provide opportunities for America's rivals in Moscow and Beijing to appear more pragmatic and less ideological.[33] Similarly, pressuring developing countries to adopt stringent energy policies to combat climate change is not only not working, it is even counterproductive as it pushes them to rely on dirtier coal technologies from China or on Russian oil and gas instead of the cleaner US energy technology and natural resources.

Regional Diplomacy and US Alliances

If Washington is to foster balances of power in other parts of the world while maintaining its unique hegemonic role in Latin America, US diplomacy must focus on building partnerships and alliances with those

states most threatened by China or Russia. In other words, the No Peer Rivals strategy regards US military alliances as pragmatic, threat-based arrangements meant primarily to contain rival would-be regional hegemons from upsetting the balance of power. While ideally military alliances would be built on common values as well as strategic interests, offensive realists nevertheless are far more likely to ruthlessly prioritize immediate US interests to the detriment of longer-term concerns about any particular institutional arrangement or institution. Just like how early in the Cold War the United States allied itself with authoritarian regimes in Greece, Turkey, and Portugal, and later on with Saudi Arabia, to secure security and economic objectives despite the poor democracy or human rights records of those partners, in today's era of Great Power Competition Washington needs to pragmatically work with a politically diverse group of partners.[34]

The Ukraine crisis only served to reinforce the argument that power, not ideology, shapes a country's actions in today's world, which means that the US needs what Bruce Jones called a "strategy for fence sitters";[35] after all, "less than half the world's partial democracies and hybrid regimes participated in isolation efforts targeting Moscow. Mobilizing a larger coalition to deal with Beijing will be an even taller order for Washington."[36] American and European leaders are deceiving themselves into thinking that their liberal values are universal and that they represent a strategic advantage in the GPC era. Quite the contrary. Rather than gaining friends in the developing world, the West's recent push for spreading its latest version of liberal social and economic values abroad generates pushback for both historical and modern pragmatic reasons. "For many postcolonial countries, the current world order is the latest embodiment of Western hegemony, with its origins in the age of European imperialism. . . . Attempts by Western financial institutions and regulators to block financing for fossil-fuel extraction and refining in developing countries enrage both elites there and the public at large," as Walter Mead observed in an insightful op-ed.[37]

The US won the battle of ideas during the Cold War partly because Washington's emphasis on Western values like political freedom and economic liberty were widely appealing specifically to Eastern European nations subjugated by totalitarian communist systems often supported by the Soviet Union. However, as historian Odd Arne Westad showed, it's important to remember that this particular strategy was far less successful in the Global South, where most of the fight for influence takes place today.[38] Our GPC environment is a very different one, and simplistic par-

allels to a global conflict between "democracy" and "authoritarianism" are hurting more than helping US diplomacy around the world. Therefore, each major region of the world requires tailored diplomatic strategies serving the overall priorities of the No Peer Rivals grand strategy.

ASIA-PACIFIC

The Biden administration's diplomatic approach to the Asia-Pacific region displayed elements of a realist grand strategy at times, but the liberal internationalist tendencies of many of Biden's top officials nevertheless took precedence in shaping the overall direction of US regional diplomacy. On the one hand, the Defense Department is generally more realistic about the challenges posed by Beijing's recent aggressive tendencies, its hegemonic ambitions, and the necessity to prioritize the Asia-Pacific theater above anything else. Secretary Austin used his remarks at the 2022 Shangri-la Dialogue, a regional security conference, to assure everyone that the Indo-Pacific is "our priority theater of operations," "the heart of American grand strategy," and "our center of strategic gravity."[39] He also criticized China for its "coercive and aggressive" recent moves in handling territorial disputes, and signaled US commitment to defending its allies including Taiwan.[40]

On the other hand, the State Department and some White House advisor such as climate envoy John Kerry continue to mistakenly believe that promoting a Western-style regional order based on liberal political and economic principles is the best way to counter China's ambitions, and that Beijing's cooperation is needed to combat the threat of climate change. In a major address on China policy, Secretary of State Blinken summarized some of the administration's recent diplomatic initiatives:

> The President also took part in the leaders' summit of the Quad countries—Australia, Japan, India, the United States. . . . Since he convened the first leaders' meeting last year, the Quad has held four summits. . . . Earlier this month, we hosted the U.S.-ASEAN Summit to take on urgent issues like public health and the climate crisis together. This week, seven ASEAN countries became founding members of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). We're enhancing peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific; for example, with the new security partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, known as AUKUS.[41]

Despite this flurry of new diplomatic initiatives over the past few years, however, Washington's efforts are not enough to contain Beijing's hegemonic plans and ambitions because they are too broadly conceived and lack the harder edge needed in the present GPC era. For example, the Quad organization has focused so far on issues like technological cooperation and public health, rather than strengthening political, security, and military cooperation between its members to facilitate a potential joint response in the case of Chinese military aggression against Taiwan or in the South China Sea, the two most dangerous and likely scenarios threating the balance of power in the region.[42] The same can be said of AUKUS, which provides Australia access in the long run to nuclear-fueled submarines, a useful development, but in the short and medium run does not do enough to deter Chinese aggression particularly in terms of so-called gray zone coercion activities, such as "cyberattacks, economic coercion, hostage diplomacy, information warfare, political interference, and the use of commercial actors for undeclared geopolitical activities."[43] Lastly, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework is but a pale substitute for the abandoned free trade agreement known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership in terms of establishing a US-shaped economic bloc to compete with China's vision for a Beijing-centered regional integration.

Rather than focusing so much energy in these multilateral liberal internationalist initiatives, Washington would be better off narrowing its attention to more pragmatic realpolitik partnerships with key regional powers. The first and arguably most consequential diplomatic partner in the effort to contain China is India, by virtue of its growing power and its geography. The balance of power structural incentives for a counter-Chinese coalition between Washington and New Delhi are very strong given Beijing's rising power and aggressive behavior, including renewed deadly border clashes near the Line of Actual Control in the Himalayas between the two Asian giants.[44] Since as early as the second Bush administration's nuclear deal and strategic partnership with India, American leaders have courted Indian ones and moved the bilateral relationship in a new direction, away from old Cold War tensions.

Unsurprisingly, the US and India in recent years have continued to strengthen their defense and intelligence sharing partnership, and extended it to geospatial cooperation.[45] A few recent events, however, threaten this emerging realist alliance with India.[46] First, as briefly mentioned before, the US reaction to the recent war in Ukraine, combined with India's more reserved attitude on the conflict given their long-

standing close ties with Russia, threaten to distract Washington from the overwhelming priority of securing New Delhi's support for the counterhegemonic coalition against China. Instability in Afghanistan, partly caused by the precipitous US withdrawal, also leaves Washington with some diplomatic ground to make up to alleviate India's concerns that the US is a potentially unreliable ally and even a destabilizing force in the region. Lastly, Biden's newly ideological foreign policy pushing liberal norms in places like Myanmar and even criticizing India's own Hindu nationalist government on human rights grounds are strategically misguided diplomatic pursuits that only serve China's interests in the region by weakening the counterhegemonic coalition.[47]

The other major regional power whose support is vital to effectively balance against China is Japan. Just like Indian leadership under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Japan's government under the late prime minister Shinzo Abe was also acutely aware of the geopolitical necessity of strengthening diplomatic, economic, and military ties with Washington to balance against Beijing's hegemonic ambitions.[48] However, now that Abe is gone and the influence of his disciples is a bit waning, Tokyo's hardline realist foreign policy is being challenged by liberal internationalist pro-business forces who encourage a softer approach to China.[49] It is therefore critical for the United States to do the diplomatic groundwork needed to keep Japan from moving away from the more assertive regional role it embraced over the past decade. Some realist voices inside Tokyo, such as Minister of Defense Nobuo Kishi, have been vocal about the "the need for a U.S.-Japanese plan in case of Chinese aggression against Taiwan," and US diplomatic and military efforts should work to build upon such proposals.[50] Japanese strategists are painfully aware of their country's exposure to such a conflict: "If there is a war in the Taiwan Strait, Japan would almost automatically be involved as Japan accommodates U.S. bases and China would attack them."[51] Some Tokyo leaders, however, now have understandable doubts about US reliability after the botched withdrawal from Afghanistan and about America's commitment to the region after the shift of focus to Ukraine and Eastern Europe.[52] The diplomatic strategy accompanying a No Peer Rivals approach would alleviate these concerns by laser-focusing on the Asia-Pacific theater and assuring Tokyo with not just words but also budgetary decisions that Washington will not waver in the effort to counter China's quest for regional hegemony.

In addition to securing the support of the two major regional powers in New Delhi and Tokyo, a realist diplomatic strategy to counter Chi-

na's hegemonic quest also depends on cultivating US ties and alliances with middle-sized countries (South Korea, Indonesia, Taiwan, Vietnam, Australia) and even smaller but geostrategically important ones such as the South Pacific Island nations like the Solomon Islands where Beijing recently made inroads.[53] Except for defensive realists/restrainers at places like the Quincy Institute, most other grand strategy experts tend to favor maintaining and building closer diplomatic ties to these countries. However, there are two main differences between an offensive realist approach like No Peer Rivals and competing strategies coming from liberal and conservative internationalists. First, diplomatic time and attention must be paid to these countries even if it comes at the expense of lesser priorities in Europe and the Middle East. Indonesian officials, for example, complained recently that, despite US rhetoric about prioritizing the Asia-Pacific and GPC, they still have a hard time "getting top Washington policy makers to take them seriously."[54] On the contrary, China's diplomats "go out of their way to establish cordial relationships" and treat Indonesia like a priority, not "as an afterthought," as they feel is often the case with the Americans.[55] Second, in the case of nations with imperfect democracies or human rights records such as Vietnam, Myanmar, and the Maldives, a realist approach would not let ideological concerns prevent courting the support of these countries in the overall effort to counter Beijing's goals of regional domination.

LATIN AMERICA

In a strategically misguided move, since the end of the Cold War the United States has largely ignored the Central and Latin American countries in its own Western Hemisphere in favor of heavy diplomatic engagement in the Middle East, Europe, and Asia. As a result, while militarily of course the United States still maintains military hegemony in its region, China has made very strong inroads diplomatically, mainly through the use of economic instruments and a pragmatic realist approach devoid of liberal moralizing. Even though the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War caused some mischief in the region by propping up communist regimes and insurgencies in small countries like Cuba or Nicaragua, not since the age of the Monroe Doctrine in the 19th century has an economically and technologically sophisticated great power seriously challenged US hegemonic dominance of its own region the way China is now attempting to do. As Colin Dueck writes, even though the latest *National*

Security Strategy document acknowledges the Western Hemisphere as the region that "most directly impacts" the United States, the Biden administration all but abandoned the realist calculus of the Monroe Doctrine and its specific hardline against allowing a distant great power to interfere in the affairs of this region.[56]

Many in the Washington national security establishment were shocked in 2023 when the *Wall Street Journal* reported on two very worrisome developments in the realm of military and intelligence rivalry against China in America's own backyard. First, the paper revealed a secret agreement for China to establish an electronic eavesdropping facility in Cuba, roughly 100 miles from Florida.[57] Second, Beijing and Havana are also working on setting up a joint military training facility that could host PLA troops and other security and intelligence operations.[58] Combined with the recent inroads of the Chinese intelligence services in Venezuela, this brazen move by the CCP leadership shows their global ambitions and the danger it poses to US national interests. Even a skeptic of the GPC strategic framework, such as Michael Mazarr of RAND, nevertheless observed how "the days of the United States thinking of the China challenge as one limited to the Indo-Pacific, with the U.S. being the one to encroach on the other's region in security terms, those days are over."[59]

If the security competition in the Western Hemisphere is still in the early stages, in the economic realm China is already deeply entrenched in the region and acts as a legitimate peer rival of the United States. In fact, from 2000 to 2021, Chinese trade with Latin America increased from 1.7 percent to 14.4 percent of the region's total trade, and had reached nearly $450 billion by 2021.[60] Moreover, a CFR report states that "economists predict that it could exceed $700 billion by 2035. China is currently South America's top trading partner and the second-largest for Latin America as a whole, after the United States."[61] As it pushes US companies to divest from China and move to friendlier countries, Washington is currently missing a critical strategic opportunity to improve its economic ties with Latin America by not greatly expanding its economic ties to this region first and foremost.[62] As Shannon O'Neill argued recently, "Latin America offers the best hope the United States has to diversify and relocate its vulnerable, highly consequential supply chains for critical minerals, semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, and large-capacity batteries."[63] Moreover, not only would the US economy and national security benefit from building supply chains closer to home and away from China, but this would also provide Latin American countries with an alternative to Beijing's insidious influence.[64] The CCP uses these economic ties not

merely for economic profit, but rather to further advance its military and geopolitical encroachments in Washington's historical sphere of influence, thus raising the specter of a great power rival operating military and intelligence collection installations dangerously close to the US homeland in case of a conflict.

In the diplomatic sphere, there was no more convincing evidence of America's diminished influence in Latin America than the fiasco of the 2022 Summit of the Americas hosted in Los Angeles.[65] In a stinging diplomatic embarrassment for Washington, Mexican president Andrés Manuel López Obrador refused to attend, as did the Central American leaders of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, partly in protest over Biden's decision not to invite the authoritarian governments of Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua.[66] Even the representatives who attended, like the leaders of major regional players Argentina and Brazil, were openly critical of the US administration. Argentina's president, Alberto Fernandez, complained that the host country did not have the power to impose "right of admission" to the conference.[67] Brazil's president, Jair Bolsonaro, only agreed to attend at the last minute, after securing an individual meeting with President Biden.[68] For his part, Biden's remarks were rather vague and focused on long-term liberal priorities like advancing democratic values, climate change, labor rights, and international cooperation on pandemic preparedness.[69] In the end, the summit was a big missed opportunity for the US to reinvigorate its diplomatic leadership of the region, which only helped Beijing portray the US as an unreliable ally. As Arturo Sarukhan, a former Mexican ambassador to the United States, pithily observed: "China's clapping on the sidelines that all of this is happening because it obviously feeds into its very significant investment in public diplomacy and soft power in the region."[70]

In order to reestablish its strategic leadership over Latin America and counter China's encroachments in its own region, US diplomatic efforts must shift in a realist direction in at least two separate but interrelated ways. First, Washington needs to realize that in an era of intense great power competition, economic programs and development funds matter far more than appeals to common values, historical ties, or regional solidarity.[71] Former Chilean ambassador Jorge Heine highlights a recent unfortunate dynamic in the US approach to the region: "In Latin America, people want to have better relations with the United States, but their main concern is development, and on that front, China is delivering. . . . What people find disconcerting is the U.S. approach of telling governments in the region not to do business with China. Their response is, 'Well,

what do you offer?' And for far too long, the U.S. response is, 'We're not offering anything; we're telling you what to do.'"[72] Given Latin's America top-tier priority, the United States should divert financial resources and USAID programs from other parts of the world, particularly the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Africa, and make them available instead to Central and South American countries so that they won't need as much Chinese assistance. In addition to serving its GPC goal of countering China's influence, this move would also benefit US business economically in the postpandemic era of global economic regionalization of supply chains and consumer markets.[73] Given its mix of technological sophistication, natural resource endowments, and younger demographics, a better integrated Western Hemisphere would be very well positioned to economically outcompete the Asia-Pacific and Europe in the new economic world order gravitating around separate regional blocs.[74]

And, second, just like in the Asia-Pacific, American diplomacy in Latin America must adopt a realpolitik mindset devoid of liberal ideological constraints in the choice of regional allies and partners. In recent years, both left- and right-wing populist governments have come to power in major Latin American powers like Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, and Brazil, as well as in small but border-security relevant ones like Honduras and El Salvador.[75] This is partly a reflection of how poor economic performance and corruption led to public dissatisfaction with mainstream politicians and even with the notion of "liberal democracy" itself. As the *Wall Street Journal* reported, "Polls show that only a minority of Latin Americans support democracy. It fell below 50% for the first time in 2020, down from 63% in 2010."[76] Given these trends, and China's pragmatic deals unburdened by ideological considerations, the United States must reluctantly adapt to the new realities of the GPC era and proceed with economic, security, and diplomatic deals based on national interest and strategic needs rather than its neighbors' adherence to liberal values. In the long run, the US may be in a better position to push the region toward ideological alignment with the United States, but for now the urgency of competing with China must take precedence in Washington over concerns about the domestic politics of its regional partners.

EUROPE AND NATO

The transatlantic relationship with NATO allies in Western Europe represented the cornerstone of American diplomacy during the five

decades of the Cold War, and arguably continued to do so in the three decades of the post–Cold War era. While fully understandable when the Soviet Union represented the largest threat to US grand strategy, and somewhat understandable in the Cold War era when no other would-be regional hegemon required containing in the key geopolitical theaters of the world, in today's GPC era Europe needs to be downgraded to a second tier of diplomatic priority behind the Asia-Pacific and Latin America. The challenge of containing Moscow's ambitions in Eastern Europe is a serious one, but one that the European Union, thanks to its superior economic and military power, must handle with only minimal US assistance so as to allow Washington to focus on China and on its own problems in the Western Hemisphere. Therefore, the main goal of US diplomacy in Europe, as well as in regard to the NATO alliance, should be to persuade its partners to pick up the extra financial and military burden needed to contain Russia's adventurism in its near abroad.[77]

The war in Ukraine helped wake up many EU members from their geopolitical complacency of the post–Cold War era, including most importantly Germany.[78] EU's largest economy, and along with France its most influential member, Germany reversed a long trend of insufficient defense spending (much below the 2 percent agreed to by all NATO members) and promised to spend 100 billion euros to upgrade its military.[79] The new chancellor, Olaf Scholz, seemingly also changed Berlin's often friendly tone on China, and he criticized Beijing's human rights record, its support for Moscow, and its transgressions of the rules-based order, thus leading some liberal internationalist analysts to suggest that the US and Germany are likely to work closely in the new GPC era to counter the joint threats from authoritarian regimes in China and Russia.[80] However, such optimism is unwarranted, and realist considerations are likely to come into play as soon as the Ukraine crisis subsides. As Walter Russell Mead reminded his readers in the *Wall Street Journal*, Germany's economic prowess has for a long time been dependent on "a combination of industrial prowess, cheap energy from Russia, and access to global markets, particularly in China."[81]

Therefore, realpolitik structural considerations are likely to push Berlin to attempt to straddle a line between the US on the one hand, and Russia and China on the other, something Washington must be ready to anticipate. Mead further explores this geostrategic dynamic by warning that Germany's economic ties with Russia and China might easily take priority over "common values" between Washington and Berlin.[82] From a realist perspective, the US should push Germany and the EU as a whole

more toward a military self-sufficiency that would allow them to better deter Russia, and also work with the US on diplomatic and economic priorities to assist in countering China's global ambitions. One major European power whose recent foreign policy shifted in a realist direction well suited for the GPC era is the United Kingdom.[83] London's latest grand strategic document, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age*, outlines the contours of a post-Brexit foreign policy adapted to the new geopolitical realities of competition with China and Russia. Similar to American planning documents, it calls for a "tilt" to the Indo-Pacific region, and sets the goal of "establishing a greater and more persistent presence than any other European country" in that region.[84] At the same time, it also prioritizes investments in modernizing and increasing its nuclear deterrent, and in advanced technologies in the realm of cyber, space, and AI.[85] This new, more realist orientation in its foreign policy was evident during the UK's strong response to the Ukraine crisis as well. As Chatham House's Leslie Vinjamuri noticed: "The United Kingdom's emphasis on deterrence stands in stark contrast to France's impulse to negotiate and Germany's ambivalence. There is no doubt which of these powers is Washington's closest European security partner."[86] In the future, American diplomats need to continue to cultivate the US-UK "special relationship," and continue to encourage London's current realist shift in foreign policy that values high-end military power and aims to counter the geopolitical threats from China and Russia.

In addition to these traditional Western European liberal allies, US diplomacy must also deal with some strategically important regional allies whose internal politics are currently more nationalist, countries such as Turkey, Hungary, and Poland. Washington's rivals in Moscow and Beijing have been courting over the past decades the capitals of these Eastern European countries, as well as Istanbul, in their efforts to diminish the influence of the US and the EU in that region, particularly around the geopolitically important Black Sea littoral. For example, China formed a 16+1 partnership with many former members of the Warsaw Pact in Eastern Europe to facilitate economic relations, particularly in infrastructure and technology. Some of these partnerships have not gone very well, something Washington can capitalize on to curtail further Beijing encroachment particularly in the military and technology sectors.[87] Russia, which historically had difficult relations with its neighbors, nevertheless made inroads with Budapest and Ankara in recent years, in no small part as a result of liberal Western criticism of the domestic politics of Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán and Turkish president Recep

Tayyip Erdoğan.[88] In the GPC era, Washington should deal with such nationalist leaders in a pragmatic, nonideological manner given the importance of securing the overall US geopolitical interest in a strong Europe capable of deterring Russian revisionism without significant US military involvement.

Lastly, America's long-standing formal military alliance with its European partners, NATO, also has an important role to play in the GPC era. First, following the Ukraine crisis and the subsequent increase in military spending by its European members, NATO should be in a good position to deter a further Russian attempt to expand its territory by the use of force. The addition of Finland and Sweden to the alliance, two capable militaries, further shifts the balance of power in Europe in a Western direction.[89] More importantly, however, NATO is now in a strong position to negotiate a diplomatic agreement with Moscow for the so-called European gray zone, the countries in-between NATO and Russia such as Ukraine. The best solution for them would be what Charles Kupchan described as "permanent neutrality": these countries should be encouraged to join the EU, but not NATO, thus removing the major irritant in US-Russian relations of the past decades.[90] If the US and its allies were able to achieve this diplomatic feat, Europe's security concerns would be significantly diminished and US-EU-Russian relations thawed, which would in turn allow Washington and NATO to focus more on China. At the 2019 summit, the organization for the first time committed to deal with China's "growing influence."[91] This new direction could really only be pursued more vigorously if NATO's main priority of containing Russia is resolved diplomatically as soon as possible. Whether NATO is the right organization to deal with the Asia-Pacific region is a more debatable proposition, given its Atlanticist geographical focus, but a reinvigorated NATO at the very least can serve to mitigate the need to divert US resources away from the Pacific theater.[92]

Some pro-Atlanticist experts worry that if America abandons its overwhelming military presence and commitment to Europe, how can we be sure those countries will step up militarily and defend themselves? Both conservative and liberal internationalists tend to argue that in order to get the Europeans to contribute more, they would need to be led and organized by the United States through NATO. However, the balance of power logic dictates that as the security threats from Russia in the East and Middle East instability in the Mediterranean/North Africa intensify, and as the US shifts its attention and resources to the Asia-Pacific theater, the EU members will have no realistic choice but to significantly increase

defense spending and military capabilities to counter these threats. In fact, that is exactly what French president Emmanuel Macron advocated when he called for the EU to move toward "strategic autonomy."[93] While this will lead to a relative decrease in US influence in European affairs, this is a price worth paying for being able to shift significant resources toward higher priorities. The EU's economy is roughly comparable to that of the United States, and most countries are solidly democratic and historically allied with the US. As such, Washington can be confident that a more autonomous EU will be both capable and willing to provide for its own defense and also represent a useful partner in dealing with Beijing, Moscow, or Tehran even if the US pulls back some of its Cold War–era military presence on the continent.

THE MIDDLE EAST

After 20 years in which the Middle East served as the main theater of the post-9/11 War on Terror, and consequently the primary strategic theater of operations for the US military, now it is finally time for this important yet troubled region to be relegated to a second-tier priority for US diplomacy. Washington certainly still has some geopolitical, security, and economic interests in the Middle East, namely preventing a hostile power like Iran from becoming a regional hegemon, guaranteeing no disruptions to the flow of energy resources, and providing local allies with the military technology needed to defend themselves. Moreover, in the new era of GPC, China and Russia are aggressively trying to expand their economic and security influence in the Middle East, thus transforming this region in one of the more important arenas of great power competition against the previously dominating United States. Having said that, given Iran's limited overall military and economic power resources compared to its Sunni rivals and Israel, and given the region's diminishing importance as an energy supplier to the United States, it makes perfect strategic sense for Washington to focus its diplomatic efforts on pragmatic and opportunistic partnerships commensurate with the diminished interests, rather than the hegemonic and often ideological goals of the War on Terror period.

Early on, President Biden's diplomatic outreach to Middle Eastern countries, particularly those like Saudi Arabia whom he criticized during the campaign for human rights abuses, proved the administration was indeed moving in a realist direction in dealing with this region in terms

of prioritizing security and economic concerns.[94] However, just like the invasion of Ukraine shifted the administration strategic attention back toward Europe, the October 7 terrorist attack against Israel and the resulting conflicts drew the US military back into the thick of things regionally despite the geopolitical imperative of a pivot to Asia. At first, the US moved naval and other assets in the area to support Israel's war in Gaza and hedge against a potential expansion of the war into a regional conflict. As the US troops located in the region came under increasingly brazen attacks from Iran-sponsored militias, and as international commerce was threatened by the Iran-sponsored Houthi rebels in the Red Sea, the US launched airstrikes inside Yemen at the start of 2024 to "restore deterrence."[95] When one also considers the repeated airstrikes conducted in retaliation for the drone and missile attacks on US bases in Iraq and Syria, the US military finds itself practically once again engaged in a military conflict against Iranian proxies in a region Washington in theory downgraded in priority and swore to not get dragged back in.[96] Therefore, there is a danger that the administration will continue to overemphasize the strategic importance of the Middle East. Instead, the US should empower and incentivize its local allies (Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates in particular) to contain Iranian proxies militarily on their own. Moreover, the EU benefits from Red Sea commerce much more than the US does, which means it has a more immediate economic interest in guarding the sea lanes of communication. The US cannot afford and should not continue being the primary security provider in this region.

Contrary to this recommendation, during one of his trips to the Middle East, President Biden emphatically renewed the US commitment to the region in the context of the GPC era: "We will not walk away and leave a vacuum to be filled by China, Russia or Iran, and we'll seek to build on this moment with active, principled American leadership."[97] The main problem with this diplomatic recommitment to the Middle East is that Washington's other GPC competitors in Beijing and Moscow have arguably stronger economic interests in the oil and gas resources of the region (in the case of China) and closer security and ideological ties (in the case of Russia).[98] For example, the OPEC+ alliance between Russia, Saudi Arabia, and other oil-exporting countries has proven very resilient despite US pressure and market turmoil in recent years, confirming its status as a geopolitical project as much as an economic one.[99] Or, in the case of China (already the largest oil consumer), the neutral stance in the war in Ukraine taken by many Middle Eastern states, despite West-

ern diplomatic pressure, clearly showed Beijing's economic and diplomatic clout in protecting its Russian ally from international opprobrium at the UN. These two instances might be a harbinger of things to come in the region's strategic orientation, and the US should indeed "reevaluate its posture in a region where it provides security guarantees to countries whose central role in the global economy now consists of exporting oil to the United States' primary rival," as Bruce Jones wryly observed.[100]

Even in a GPC environment, it is in many ways perfectly fine from America's perspective for China and Russia to have strong ties with Middle East regimes given the economic connections at play. If such increasing ties lead to the US being able to free up resources for other areas of higher priority (i.e., Asia-Pacific and Latin America), the US could deal with a loss of status as the security hegemon of the Middle East without too much harm to its overall geopolitical standing. In summary, the US could cautiously downscale its Middle East commitments, as long as Iran is not achieving regional hegemonic status and the oil flows go on relatively uninterrupted; both these issues are as important to the EU, China, and Russia as they are to the United States, so there is no reason why the US should be shouldering the majority of the burden in assuring regional stability.

To conclude, the United States needs to adapt its diplomatic alliance partnerships around the world in such a way as to best serve the goal of containing China's ambitions. This means that some regions, like the Asia-Pacific, will receive more of Washington's attention, while others, like Europe and the Middle East, will receive less of it. Another important No Peer Rivals diplomatic priority for the GPC era is adapting to the principles of a realist world order and downplaying the role of liberal concerns such as democracy promotion and human rights in the choice of strategic partners around the world. The most effective strategy in this highly competitive and multipolar world of international diplomacy now involves pragmatic compromises based on common geopolitical and geoeconomic interests, not high-minded rhetoric about universal values and common global challenges.

Conclusion

Counterarguments and the Case for No Peer Rivals

The past few years have witnessed ever more deteriorating diplomatic relations and increasing military and economic tensions between Washington, Beijing, and Moscow. From military maneuvers in Taiwan and the South China Sea in Asia to the actual war in Ukraine, the major powers found themselves involved in what most scholars and government officials now acknowledge as a new era of Great Power Competition. In light of these worrisome developments in great power politics, the position of the United States in the international system is in peril. After three decades of being the only unquestioned regional hegemon and global superpower, and hence benefiting from the geopolitical and financial advantages conferred by this privileged status, a peer rival is now on the horizon. And while conflicts in the Middle East and Russia's war in Ukraine dominate the daily headlines, there should be no higher priority for America's grand strategy in coming years than containing China's quest for regional hegemony and global superpower status.

As outlined in this book, America's great power rivals are acting more in accordance with the principles of offensive realism than in accordance with any of the other three major theoretical contenders (defensive realism, liberal internationalism, and conservative internationalism), and it's past time for Washington to do the same if it wants to succeed in the new world of GPC. The rhetorical commitment to contain China on

the part of both Democrats and Republicans in Washington is worthless, and even dangerous, unless it is accompanied by an overarching offensive realist grand strategy that shapes specific US strategies and policies across military, economic, diplomatic, energy, and technological lines. Such an approach, like the No Peer Rivals framework outlined in this book, is distinctive from competing grand strategies in at least three major ways.

First, it is grounded in a realistic assessment of the most likely courses of action adopted by China, Russia, and other important regional powers. As such, the US will not be surprised by the aggressive and self-centered moves of its GPC competitors on the world stage, as it might be if it adopted a defensive realist or liberal internationalist grand strategy grounded in expectations of more cooperation and restraint on the part of other countries. The evidence of the past decade of intensified GPC shows that the US adversaries in Beijing and Moscow (as well as some friendly counterparts in New Delhi or Tokyo) already have adapted to this new geopolitical reality, and it is high time for Washington to do the same.

Second, unlike the liberal and conservative internationalist grand strategies, it prioritizes great power rivalry over other strategic goals, and it identifies China as the biggest threat to achieve peer rival status and thus a threat to America's unique position in the international system. This ruthless prioritization is needed because the United States now operates in a multipolar world, and while it is still the only superpower by virtue of being the only regional hegemon with global power projection capabilities, it can no longer afford to finance the undisciplined post–Cold War global-ordering internationalist grand strategy. The $30-plus trillion national debt, which is growing every year, necessarily means that hard trade-offs are here for defense and foreign policy budgets. The era when the US military assumed it could prepare to win two simultaneous major wars or that it can conduct long-term counterinsurgency campaigns to defeat terrorist groups is over. A ruthless focus on the most important threat and handing off other priorities to our partners and allies is the only responsible path forward if Washington has any hope of maintaining its peerless superpower status. Similarly, a realist grand strategy makes it easier to form the diplomatic alliances and partnerships around the world needed to prevent China's hegemonic ambitions by prioritizing pragmatic security and economic interests over shared concerns for human rights or other liberal priorities.

Third, the No Peer Rivals grand strategic approach carefully aligns

the domestic sources of national power (economic strength, energy security, and technological prowess) to America's foreign policy and national security objectives. Even though the other approaches in one way or another all want to contain China's ambitions, only a realist approach to industrial policy and international trade, energy production, and technological superiority offers the best chance for developing the "sinews of power" needed to outcompete Beijing in the long run. In the GPC era, the US can no longer afford to keep its grand strategy hostage to partisan political priorities, whether in the area of limiting domestic energy production or catering to a business community asking for more market access to China.

Addressing the Major Counterarguments

There are a few major counterarguments to an offensive realist grand strategy primarily aimed at containing China and shoring up regional hegemony in the Western Hemisphere. In this section, I will address some of the most important ones raised by the proponents of the other schools of thought. First, liberal and conservative internationalists alike argue that the era of GPC is a *conflict of values* between the democratic Western states and authoritarian ones like China and Russia as much (or more) than it is a *struggle for power* as realists claim.[1] Consequently, they argue in favor or renewing efforts to shore up the US-led liberal world order, and are optimistic that the US can maintain a global hegemonic posture due to its combination of resources, values, and allies.[2] President Biden's 2022 *National Security Strategy* also frames the challenge of GPC in highly ideological terms as a contest between autocracies in Beijing and Moscow and democracies in the Western world:

> The most pressing strategic challenge facing our vision is from powers that layer authoritarian governance with a revisionist foreign policy. Autocrats are working overtime to undermine democracy and export a model of governance marked by repression at home and coercion abroad. So, the United States will continue to defend democracy around the world.[3]

This is a highly questionable and even self-defeating conceptualization of the new geopolitical situation, as it shifts the focus from a pragmatic realist understanding of the unsurprising conflicts of security and

economic interests between great powers toward an uncompromising ideological crusade against autocracies. It's no surprise that China, Russia, and Iran, the three major rivals of the US in the key geopolitical theaters of the world, are now working closer than ever before.[4] A successful US grand strategy would seek to prevent adversaries from forming an alliance rather than push them toward it by an ideological conceptualizing of the new strategic era as a Manichean battle between democracies and autocracies.[5] In order to combat this view of a values-driven conflict, we must first examine whether China's and Russia's behaviors are driven more by power-oriented realpolitik concerns (as realists argue), or by an aggressive anti-Western ideological fervor (as conservative internationalists contend, similar to their liberal counterparts). The answer to this question is also fundamental for judging the prospects of the emerging Chinese-Russian partnership: Is it a pragmatic marriage of convenience of two great powers sharing limited common interests, or a strong ideological alliance of authoritarian governments looking to wage a common ideological battle against the liberal democratic Western states?

In keeping with this theory's general focus on the domestic determinants of foreign policy, specifically the type of political system (democracy or autocracy), conservative internationalists argue that ideological differences are enormously important in understanding how a regime such as the Chinese Communist Party acts on the world stage and interacts with the democratic world: "The nature of the regime, as much as the nature of the international system, drives Beijing's conduct," Hal Brands claims.[6] While this may be true in general of dictatorships, particularly small pariah states like North Korea or Cuba, China's interactions with international institutions often are more pragmatic and based purely on material national interests, not ideological commitments. As Harvard professor Alastair Johnston summarized Beijing's positions in a detailed *International Security* article, "at present China's challenge to order is less deep and/or wide than the current narrative suggests. . . . The picture is far more complicated. China interacts differently with different orders, supportive of some, unsupportive of others, and partially supportive of still others."[7] For example, Beijing supports the UN system quite strongly, sometimes they do and sometimes they don't support international trade regulations, and they show the least support for political development orders.[8] Another foreign policy characteristic of authoritarian states highlighted by Brands, "the penchant for imperiousness and unembarrassed bullying," has been similarly disputed recently in an exchange on the pages of *International Security* following a study

by Zhang that concludes "China is a cautious bully; it employs coercion only infrequently; and as it grows stronger, it uses military coercion less often," at least in the case of the South China Sea disputes.[9]

Lastly, realists and liberal/conservative internationalists also differ on the extent to which China's aggressive grand strategy is shaped by Chinese autocracy, history, and strategic culture, as opposed to the classical dynamics of the hegemonic transition theory, which was popularized recently by Graham Allison as the "Thucydides trap."[10] On the one hand, Brands is certainly persuasive in arguing that "when Xi talks about achieving a great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, [he] invokes the idea of a 'community of common destiny' that is global in scope, and speaks of re-creating a world in which China receives the respect and consideration it is due, he is channeling something deeply rooted in Chinese strategic culture—a belief that a larger role in the world is part of China's historical inheritance, not simply a result of its growing power."[11] Similarly, Matthew Kroenig argues that it is the autocratic nature of the CCP leadership that determines the strategic threat from Beijing.[12] The communist regime's disregard for the rules of the liberal international order is the main problem. In the economic realm, for example, the foremost economic concern is not that China is growing wealthy but that it is systematically preying on the global economic system.[13] And in terms of international security threats, China's aggressive regional behavior is also shaped by its domestic politics: "Lacking institutionalized sources of legitimacy, the CCP stokes nationalist sentiment to maintain domestic support, giving assertions of territorial claims against foreign enemies an outsized role in Chinese foreign policy."[14]

On the other hand, there are strong reasons to believe that China's actions are just as easily explainable by a purely realist lens, and, in fact, offensive realists have been predicting for years that China's rise will most likely *not* be peaceful.[15] More importantly, however, a realist approach is more likely to work to contain China's hegemonic ambitions than one that regards Beijing's strategic challenge as heavily ideological. Realists like Elbridge Colby and Robert Kaplan correctly point out that rising powers of various ideologies all pursued a hegemonic agenda: "Nazi Germany and imperial Japan strove for regional hegemony, as did the postwar Soviet Union, post-revolutionary France in the early nineteenth century, and the United States in North America in the nineteenth century. The liberal United Kingdom presided over an empire with a preferential trading system, as did Third Republic France."[16] And as far as not complying with the rules of a capitalist global economy, realists can

point to long-standing US and EU subsidies to industries and tariffs in sectors such as aerospace and agriculture as evidence that all great powers, regardless of democratic status, prioritize their narrow economic interests over free market principles and international law.

How one prioritizes power versus ideology in understanding China's behavior determines the nature of the US strategy to contain Beijing's rise, and both realists and conservative internationalists agree on that point. For Kroenig, downplaying the role of ideology would forfeit a major source of strength for Washington in the GPC era: what internationalists believe is the worldwide appeal of democratic values and of the liberal world order system supported by the United States and its democratic allies, which he credits with the relative peace and prosperity of the post–World War II era. However, there are several practical problems with a containment grand strategy driven by ideological considerations.

First, in order to accomplish its strategic goals against Beijing, the US will have to form a counterhegemonic coalition with many Asian states that may not be democracies. This pragmatic approach to alliance-building and partnerships in the region would be very difficult to pull off if Washington is framing the rivalry with China in stark terms as freedom vs. totalitarianism or good vs. evil: as realists often argue, "It's no use for the United States to have Denmark or the Netherlands onboard but not Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, or Vietnam."[17] And while Kroenig is right that the US made similar compromises during the Cold War, those decisions opened up the US to charges of hypocrisy and hurt America's public standing worldwide, worse than if US leaders would just avoid using lofty rhetoric praising human rights when their actions often fell short of that moral standard.

Second, framing things in black and white terms (autocracy vs. democracy) not only makes it harder to collaborate with autocracies because it further antagonizes them, but it even hurts our relations with other democracies that may not be liberal or progressive, such as India or Hungary, which are sometimes derisively called illiberal democracies. The same is true as far as complicating relations with many countries in the Global South whose commercial interests may make them maintain close trade relations with autocratic states like China or Russia, as was clear during the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Framing international crises as a contest of "freedom versus tyranny," therefore, makes it harder, not easier, for the US to advance its interests.

Third and last, focusing on the domestic nature of the CCP regime as the core of the GPC competition may inadvertently raise the para-

noia in Beijing about US intentions and therefore increase the odds of Chinese aggressive actions against Taiwan and consequently of a catastrophic nuclear conflict. If the US wants to change Chinese behavior, as opposed to the regime itself, it is more productive to focus on the conflict over security or economic interests, not on the intractable ideological differences.

Similar to the debate over the factors shaping Beijing's grand strategy, realists and internationalists also disagree in their understanding of Moscow's recently revisionist actions in the former Soviet space and Eastern Europe. The invasion of Ukraine in 2022, following the annexation of Crimea in 2014, made it clear that under Putin's leadership Russia is back acting as a great power and would-be regional hegemon, at least in its "near abroad" if not yet across all of the old Soviet Union's sphere of influence. Many liberal and conservative internationalist scholars, as well as many Western policymakers, attribute Russia's revisionism to Putin's ideological predispositions, or the ideology of *Putinism*, as former US ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul outlined it in an influential article for *International Security*.[18] But is Russia's revanchist strategy truly a *Putinism* problem? While the Russian president's personality and ideology certainly impact some of Moscow's recent aggressive behavior, they only do so at the margins in terms of tactics and perhaps the timing of certain actions. In fact, Russia's revisionist grand strategic course is mostly explained by an offensive realist understanding of great power politics. Robert Pearson, the author of a new book on Russian grand strategy in the 21st century, convincingly shows that the common perception that Moscow's grand strategy is driven by ideology is actually a myth:

> Rather than ideology, the foundations of Russia's grand strategy can be found in the more universal, if mundane, condition of geopolitical insecurity that informs the realist school of thought. Russia's worldview and grand strategic objectives are the product of a deep and enduring sense of geopolitical insecurity that has conditioned its relationship to the outside world for centuries.[19]

Therefore, the most outrageous case of Russian aggression in 2022, the full-scale military invasion of Ukraine, indeed follows a realist logic that was evident to scholars of offensive realism at least eight years before, when Russia took control of the Crimean Peninsula. At the time, Mearsheimer warned Western liberal internationalist leaders that Moscow operates following a realpolitik mindset, and their protestations that

such actions are outdated "19th century behavior" are not only wrong but dangerous because they are setting the stage for a future crisis of the kind that materialized in 2022: "No Russian leader would tolerate a military alliance that was Moscow's mortal enemy until recently moving into Ukraine. . . . Imagine the outrage in Washington if China built an impressive military alliance and tried to include Canada and Mexico in it."[20] Moreover, even if Putin and his ideology were in fact causing Russia to act more aggressively, and if Putin's regime were to end in the near future, the odds of a fundamental change in Russia's foreign policy are very low.[21] If Putin were to be replaced, Moscow's desire for a sphere of influence will very likely remain the same, as the next leader following such long periods of rule by a dictator is usually someone from the ruling elite who tends to continue the policies of their predecessor.[22] Therefore, Moscow is likely to continue to act in a manner consistent with offensive realism for the foreseeable future.

Just like in the case of building an anti-Chinese coalition, portraying Putin's ideology—what McFaul and others somewhat misleadingly call "conservative nationalism"—as the main global enemy of Western liberal democracy is not only inaccurate, it is outright self-defeating. Such an ideological dichotomy, which is mistakenly seen by these experts as a replay of the communism vs. freedom ideological battle of the Cold War, makes it more difficult to garner the support of important regional allies whose governments are also currently described as nationalist (such as the generally pro-American Viktor Orbán in Hungary and a variety of right-wing parties in Western Europe that are part of governing coalitions). Even more importantly, it would destroy any chance of the required bipartisan domestic support for a long-term US grand strategy because it would surely lose the backing of the roughly half of the US voters who twice supported the Trump administration's foreign policy agenda, which is also described as "conservative nationalist."[23]

Misdiagnosing the sources of Chinese and Russian conduct is a mistake Washington policymakers cannot afford to make. The most dangerous geopolitical development over the past decade for American grand strategy is the emerging alliance between China and Russia, the two main competitors of the United States in the GPC era.[24] While the two countries have developed increasingly closer economic, military, and political ties for over a decade, their mutual relationship took a critical step forward at the beginning of 2022 as exemplified by a couple of key developments. First, on February 4, Putin and Xi signed a long joint statement proclaiming that their relationship "has no limits . . . there

are no 'forbidden' areas of cooperation."[25] There is a strong temptation among many conservative and liberal internationalists alike to portray the growing Russian-Chinese cooperation as an ideology-driven "axis of autocracy," but that would be a mistake.[26] Despite the rhetoric, there are very important geopolitical realities that make Russia and China cooperate in the short run, but the same realities make them suspicious of each other in the long run. The two have been motivated by a common desire to join forces and balance against the United States during the unipolar era, but as we're moving into a multipolar world of great power competition, there are strong reasons to believe that their marriage of convenience could be facing difficulties that the US can and should exploit. Daniel Russel, a former Obama administration official handling Asia issues, rightly observed that "the growing breadth and depth of Sino-Russian cooperation is rooted in sheer pragmatism, not in ideology. . . . Russia and China are making common cause to better defend their respective interests and their authoritarian systems from Western pressure."[27]

If the Russian-Chinese growing partnership were to hold for the foreseeable future, the global balance of power would shift in a direction that would leave the US less secure and less prosperous. However, there are many signs that Moscow and Beijing are in an uneasy partnership, one that is driven not just by common interests on economic/security matters but also by the West's misguided ideological framing of the GPC era as a conflict between freedom and authoritarianism. The more liberal and conservative internationalists define US grand strategic interests in ideological terms as being tied to the promotion of democracy and liberal values, the closer the leaders in Moscow and Beijing will get.[28] Russian analyst Andranik Migranyan correctly observed that "by forming an alliance of democracies against authoritarian states, with China and Russia in mind, Washington and Brussels should be aware that they might well leave Russia no other option than to cooperate more closely with China."[29] And even though, as Kroenig argues, autocracies tend to be unreliable allies and don't form the same kind of strong alliances with each other that democracies tend to do, that doesn't mean Putin and Xi will not form a powerful alliance if they both perceive the US as a common enemy.[30]

Another powerful example of this geostrategic danger of foolishly pushing Russia into China's arms post-Ukraine occurred in the realm of geoeconomics. Washington must counter Moscow's aggression in a way that secures a durable peace in Eastern Europe based on balance

of power considerations, not impose crushing sanctions that could hurt America's global position in the more important competition against China.[31] If Russia becomes almost entirely reliant on the Chinese market, that would push Moscow even more into a state of economic dependency and solidify the already emerging Russian-Chinese alliance. Even worse, the lack of Russian oil and gas in Western markets will continue to cause grave damage to Europe's economy, and by virtue of the US-EU massive trade relations, to the American economy itself. It's worth remembering that the most successful geopolitical move of the Cold War was Richard Nixon's opening to China, a brilliant realist coup that in many ways turned the momentum of that conflict in America's favor.[32] As Xi Jinping biographer Adrian Geiges pithily summarized the current flaw in Western strategy for the *New York Times*, "What the West is doing now is the exact opposite of what Nixon did back then. . . . Russia and China are not natural partners. They are partners because of the common enemy—the United States and Western Europe."[33] This is a grave geopolitical mistake in the current GPC multipolar era, and it makes it a self-fulfilling prophecy that the US will have to confront a powerful alliance of China and Russia for as long as those countries remain authoritarian, which scholarship shows is most likely to be a long time.[34]

In conclusion, the Russian-Chinese partnership is much more of a realist reaction to US hegemonic status and the ideological pressure exerted by Washington through the continued expansion of the liberal world order. As the world now moves into a multipolar balance of power and a competitive realist world order, the United States can and should work to restore its successful Cold War realist strategy of triangulating between its two main great power competitors. As Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger well understood, this is the first lesson of the triangular balance of power: do not let your two adversaries join forces against you. The good news is that Russia is unlikely to settle in the long term into the role of a vassal of China.[35] And even though it may never become a reliable ally of the United States, it can be persuaded to at least play a somewhat neutral role between Washington and Beijing as the rivalry between them will dominate the geopolitical landscape of the GPC era. Some experts like Kroenig have criticized this proposal as unworkable and counterproductive, arguing that Putin would demand "unpalatable concessions such as a sphere of influence in Eastern Europe or limiting US missile defense," and that he couldn't be trusted anyways.[36] These are fair objections, but ultimately from a realpolitik perspective the personality quirks of Russian leaders cannot overtake the logic of the balance of

power, which clearly dictates that Washington has an interest in keeping Moscow at least neutral in its efforts to contain Beijing's rise. And while Putin acted aggressively toward defending what he considers core Russian interests in the "near abroad," he also collaborated with the US in the past in the fight against al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and more recently against the Islamic State in Syria, thus proving that he can be pragmatic on certain issues.

Another counterargument to a No Peer Rivals approach comes from the opposite direction of the spectrum: while liberal and conservative internationalists see the laser-like focus on China as too narrow, defensive realists and other China optimists argue that setting up containment as a grand strategic goal is too aggressive and risks turning the emerging cold war against the CCP into a self-fulfilling prophesy.[37] Feng Zheng and Richard Ned Lebow, for example, begin their book on "taming" the US-China rivalry from the premise that "there is no fundamental conflict of interest between the two nations."[38] A restraint approach, others contend, will reverse the "slide towards crisis and conflict" by reducing "military posturing" and establishing "clear Sino–U.S. understandings to permit mutually productive economic and technological growth."[39] In fact, over the summer of 2023, the Biden administration unfortunately started to move in this conciliatory direction and significantly softened its strategy toward China: "decoupling" the two economies has been downgraded to "de-risking," and senior US leaders traveled to Beijing to improve high-level diplomatic relations and push for more climate cooperation.

All of these efforts were in vain, however, as China's government continued to pursue an aggressive realist approach across a variety of issues: in 2023 alone, the CCP "violated U.S. airspace, increased patrols and unsafe maneuvers in the Taiwan Strait, and placed export restrictions on minerals critical to the United States and allied defense production."[40] Meanwhile, trade and tech disputes continued, and joint climate efforts continued to stall. And as if to further clarify the CCP's global ambitions and anti-American strategy, on July 1, 2023, President Xi promulgated a new law on foreign affairs to legitimize the tough measures that Beijing is taking against the "bullying" of the "hegemonic West."[41] In short, there is very little evidence that Beijing is willing to reciprocate Washington's softer line: as realism predicts, China and the United States find themselves in an intractable geopolitical conflict at this moment in time given the structural incentives of the increasingly multipolar balance of power.

Finally, a different type of counterargument could be that an offensive realist No Peer Rivals approach is not politically realistic in today's

Washington. In particular, is the downgrading of the emphasis put on spreading US values going to make it more difficult to gain the support of the American public? Realist-minded statesmen going back to Henry Kissinger often complained that moderate realpolitik thinking struggles to gain support with the American people who tend to swing wildly in their preferences between isolationist retrenchment and liberal universalist crusades.[42] However, recent opinion polling by the Pew Research Center indicates more support for nationalist/realist positions than liberal or conservative internationalist ones.[43] For example, of the 20 potential foreign policy goals surveyed, promoting democracy ranked dead last at 20 percent, while protecting US jobs from foreign competition ranked first with 75 percent support.[44] Countering China and Russia, as well as getting other countries to assume more of the burden of maintaining the world order, were also in the top half. Some sharp partisan differences are evident when it comes to issues like climate change and immigration, to be sure.[45] But a remarkable bipartisan support has emerged among Americans on the urgency of countering the threat from China more so than threats from any other country or issue.[46]

A Call to Action

Upon leaving his position, former director of national intelligence John Ratcliffe wrote: "If I could communicate one thing to the American people from this unique vantage point, it is that the People's Republic of China poses the greatest threat to America today, and the greatest threat to democracy and freedom world-wide since World War II."[47] In today's era of Great Power Competition and multipolarity, Washington can no longer assume that it can act as a global liberal hegemon and that Beijing will more or less reluctantly integrate into the liberal world order. Quite the contrary. China is now actively working to displace the United States from its global position as the only uncontested regional hegemon with the luxury to interfere in the geopolitics and balance of power of regions other than its own. At the same time, China is also working to displace the US from its global financial role as the holder of the preferred global reserve currency, as well as from its technological and energy superpower status. Therefore, the time has come for Washington to seriously prioritize countering China's ambitions in the military, geopolitics, geoeconomics, and technology space in order to defeat the CCP's quest for regional and eventually global supremacy. The GPC era we are in right now will manifest itself in intense Sino-American rivalries

in all these domains, and Washington cannot afford to ignore any of them in its grand strategy.

In the military sphere, the Pentagon must urgently refocus the bulk of its force posture and defense strategy, as well as its training and doctrine, on the challenge of denying the PLA the ability to establish regional hegemony in East Asia through a conquest of Taiwan or through military aggression in the South China Sea. Modernizing and expanding the US Navy should take precedence over the more land-oriented services, and investing in cyber, space, and AI should take precedence over vulnerable legacy platforms. Lastly, America's nuclear deterrent is also in need of a long-delayed modernization in light of China's massive recent nuclear buildup and Russia's continuing reliance on nuclear threats and upgrades to its own nuclear arsenal.

In the realms of geopolitics and international diplomacy, Washington similarly needs to reorient its foreign policy toward a diplomatic containment of Chinese influence. The overarching goal of US alliances, bilateral diplomacy, and of its participation in international institutions should be to counter Beijing's attempts to co-opt or coerce other countries into its strategic orbit, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, in Latin America, and in the Middle East. During the Cold War, America's global alliance posture revolved around NATO and Europe as the primary focus, given the threat from the Soviet Union, with the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific as secondary but occasionally important theaters. The post–Cold War era saw inertia rather than strategic calculus shaping US foreign policy, until the Global War on Terror eventually focused its orientation toward the Middle East. Today, both the misguided "end of history" hopes for lasting great power peace of the 1990s and the equally naïve hopes for democratizing the Middle East post-9/11 are being replaced by a more somber acknowledgment of intense geopolitical rivalries. Therefore, the alliances in the Asia-Pacific should take priority over Europe and the Middle East, while Latin America should also reclaim a top tier place given that Washington must solidify its endangered regional hegemony in the Western Hemisphere at the same time as it seeks to deny China's quest for regional hegemony in Asia.

The geopolitical competition in the GPC era is as much about geoeconomics as it is about traditional diplomacy and military alliances. China often prefers economic diplomacy and leveraging its investments to obtain geopolitical and strategic benefits from resource-rich countries in the Global South, as well as to integrate itself into the supply chain of Western companies and thus constrain the actions of US policymakers. However, Washington must not let domestic political pressure from a

few large companies get in the way of pursuing a gradual but persistent decoupling of the American economy from the CCP-ruled Chinese one. Only by implementing a clear set of policies aimed at reversing the strategically dangerous integration of the US and Chinese economies that occurred over the 2000s could this decoupling be achieved. Such policies include not just tariffs and subsidies to domestic manufacturing but also "friend-shoring" of key industries to other countries. The global energy market is another area of intense competition where the US is currently faltering by self-sabotaging its own energy industry with onerous and misguided limits on oil and gas production, while China is capturing the global market for rare earth minerals and other key components of alternative energy supply-chains through government-directed strategic investments. The US must adopt an "all of the above" energy policy that doesn't discriminate against fossil fuels, one of America's comparative advantages given its rich endowments in oil and natural gas.

Lastly, the CCP also has a clear plan to dominate the high-tech areas shaping the future, such as AI, semiconductors, nanotechnology, and supercomputers, as well as to make major advances in space. The United States must work with a coalition of like-minded nations to maintain its technological superiority in future decades, and it must particularly focus on countering China's "civil-military fusion" strategy of gaining access to Western technology and using it for military purposes. Washington must therefore launch an aggressive campaign to prevent US tech companies and financial institutions from inadvertently strengthening the PLA, something that already has bipartisan support in Congress and is way overdue.[48]

The United States cannot go back to the uncontested global hegemony it enjoyed during the 1990s. But it can still remain a peerless global power for decades to come, if its leaders follow the right grand strategy and focus like a laser on containing China, its only plausible global contender for hegemonic status. This realist approach may not have the lofty rhetoric or emotional appeal of "defending the liberal world order," but it has the much more important practical long-term benefit of securing the strategic and economic interests of the American people for the next generation. Just as Ronald Reagan warned that freedom is never more than one generation away from being lost, neither is America's global status as a peerless superpower and all the security and economic benefits that come with it.

Notes

Introduction

1. Warren P. Strobel, Gordon Lubold, Vivian Salama, and Michael R. Gordon, "Beijing Plans a New Training Facility in Cuba, Raising Prospect of Chinese Troops on America's Doorstep," *Wall Street Journal*, June 20, 2023.

2. Josh Rogin, "Americans Are Unwittingly Funding China's Military Expansion," *Washington Post*, August 15, 2023, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/08/15/biden-china-investment-technology-restrictions/

3. Joe Parkinson and Drew Hinshaw, "FBI Director Says China Cyberattacks on U.S. Infrastructure Now at Unprecedented Scale," *Wall Street Journal*, February 18, 2024, https://www.wsj.com/politics/national-security/fbi-director-says-china-cyberattacks-on-u-s-infrastructure-now-at-unprecedented-scale-c8de5983

4. "The Iran-Russia Military Axis," *Wall Street Journal*, November 3, 2023; Mark Leonard, "China's Gamble in Gaza," *Foreign Affairs*, January 8, 2024, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/chinas-game-gaza

5. Mari Yamaguchi, "US Indo-Pacific Commander Is 'Very Concerned' about Escalation of China-Russia Military Ties," Associated Press, December 18, 2023, https://apnews.com/article/japan-us-china-russia-commander-military-b8aae52f021dd7f57595512d069797fe

6. Dale Copeland, "When Trade Leads to War," *Foreign Affairs*, August 23, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/when-trade-leads-war-china-russia

7. Michael Beckley and Hal Brands, *Danger Zone: The Coming Conflict with China* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2022).

8. Elbridge A. Colby and Alexander B. Gray, "America's Industrial Base Isn't Ready for War with China," *Wall Street Journal*, August 18, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/americas-industrial-base-isnt-ready-for-war-with-china-weapons-defense-funding-military-war-conflict-taiwan-supplier-11660833718

9. Oriana Skylar Mastro and Derek Scissors, "China Hasn't Reached the Peak

of Its Power," *Foreign Affairs*, August 22, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/china-hasnt-reached-peak-its-power

10. Nan Tian, Diego Lopes da Silva, and Alexandra Marksteiner, "The Great Global Rearmament," *Foreign Affairs*, July 7, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2022-07-07/great-global-rearmament

11. Jessica Chen Weiss, "The China Trap: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Perilous Logic of Zero-Sum Competition," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/china-trap-us-foreign-policy-zero-sum-competition

12. Mike Berardino, "Mike Tyson Explains One of His Most Famous Quotes," *Sun Sentinel*, November 9, 2012, https://www.sun-sentinel.com/sports/fl-xpm-2012-11-09-sfl-mike-tyson-explains-one-of-his-most-famous-quotes-20121109-story.html

13. Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy of the United States*, 2018, https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf

14. Nina Silove, "Beyond the Buzzword: The Three Meanings of 'Grand Strategy,'" *Security Studies* 27, no. 1 (2018): 27–57, https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2017.1360073

15. Richard K. Betts, "The Grandiosity of Grand Strategy," *Washington Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (2019): 7–22, https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2019.1663061

16. Daniel W. Drezner, Ronald R. Krebs, and Randall Schweller, "The End of Grand Strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2020-04-13/end-grand-strategy

17. Ionut Popescu, *Emergent Strategy and Grand Strategy: How American Presidents Succeed in Foreign Policy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017).

18. For recent contributions to the debate on the value of grand strategy and strategic planning, see John Lewis Gaddis, *On Grand Strategy* (New York: Penguin, 2018); Hal Brands, *What Good Is Grand Strategy? Power and Purpose in American Statecraft from Harry S. Truman to George W. Bush* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014); Rebecca Friedman Lissner, "The National Security Strategy Is Not a Strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, December 19, 2017, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2017-12-19/national-security-strategy-not-strategy; John Schuessler and Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shifrinson, "Making Grand Strategy Grand Again," *The National Interest*, July 25, 2018, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/making-grand-strategy-grand-again-26796; Ionut Popescu, *Emergent Strategy and Grand Strategy: How American Presidents Succeed in Foreign Policy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017); Ionut Popescu, "Trump Doesn't Need a Grand Strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, May 21, 2018, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2018-05-21/trump-doesnt-need-grand-strategy; Ionut Popescu, "Grand Strategy Is Overrated," *Foreign Policy*, December 11, 2017, https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/12/11/grand-strategy-is-overrated-trump-national-security-strategy-nss/; Ionut Popescu, "Trump and Emergent Strategy: The First 100 Days," *War on the Rocks*, April 28, 2017, https://warontherocks.com/2017/04/trump-and-emergent-strategy-the-first-100-days/; Richard Fontaine, "The President Doesn't Need a Trump Doctrine," *Politico Magazine*, April 14, 2017, https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/04/trump-doctrine-foreign-policy-215030/; Jordan Tama, "Does Strategic Planning Matter? The Outcomes of US National Security Reviews," *Political Science Quarterly* 130, no. 4 (2015): 735–65, http://www.jstor.org/stable/43828731

19. Foreign Affairs, "Ask the Experts: Did the Unipolar Moment Ever End?," May 23, 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ask-the-experts/did-unipolar-moment-ever-end

20. G. Lowes Dickinson, *The European Anarchy* (New York: Macmillan, 2013), 3.

21. John Herz, *Political Realism and Political Idealism: A Study in Theories and Realities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 24.

22. Sebastian Rosato, "The Inscrutable Intensions of Great Powers," *International Security* 39, no. 3 (2014/15), https://www.jstor.org/stable/24480761

23. Keir Lieber, *War and the Engineers: The Primacy of Politics over Technology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 3–4.

24. The fundamental text of offensive realism is John Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001); other recent works in this school of thought include John Mearsheimer, *Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); John Mearsheimer, "Inevitable Rivalry: America, China, and the Tragedy of Great-Power Politics," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2021-10-19/inevitable-rivalry-cold-war; Ionut Popescu, "American Grand Strategy and the Rise of Offensive Realism," *Political Science Quarterly* 134, no. 3 (2019), https://doi.org/10.1002/polq.12960; Elbridge Colby, *The Strategy of Denial: American Defense in an Age of Great Power Conflict* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021); Elbridge A. Colby and A. Wess Mitchell, "The Age of Great-Power Competition: How the Trump Administration Refashioned American Strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2019-12-10/age-great-power-competition; Colin Dueck, *Age of Iron: On Conservative Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Sebastian Rosato and John Schuessler, "A Realist Foreign Policy for the United States," *Perspectives on Politics* 9, no. 4 (2011), http://www.jstor.org/stable/41623695; Colin Elman, "Extending Offensive Realism: The Louisiana Purchase and America's Rise to Regional Hegemony," *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 4 (2004), https://www.jstor.org/stable/4145325

25. Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 41–42.

26. Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 41.

27. Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 41.

28. Michael Gordon, "The U.S. Is Not Yet Ready for the Era of 'Great Power' Conflict," *Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-military-china-taiwan-russia-great-power-conflict-481f7756

29. Sheena Chestnut Greitens, "Xi Jinping's Quest for Order," *Foreign Affairs*, October 3, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/xi-jinping-quest-order

30. Greitens, "Xi Jinping's Quest for Order."

31. Greitens, "Xi Jinping's Quest for Order."

32. Rush Doshi, "China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order," Brookings Institution, August 2, 2021, https://www.brookings.edu/essay/the-long-game-chinas-grand-strategy-to-displace-american-order/. This is a reprint of the first chapter of Doshi's book, *The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023).

33. Doshi, "China's Grand Strategy."

34. Ivo H. Daalder, "Responding to Russia's Resurgence: Not Quiet on the Eastern Front," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2017, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2017-10-16/responding-russias-resurgence; Michael McFaul, "Russia as It Is: A Grand Strategy for Confronting Putin," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2018, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2018-06-14/russia-it

35. John J. Mearsheimer, "The Inevitable Rivalry: America, China, and the Tragedy of Great-Power Politics," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2021-10-19/inevitable-rivalry-cold-war

Chapter One

1. Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security* 21, no. 3 (1996–97): 5–53.

2. Posen and Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," 6.

3. Posen and Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," 6.

4. Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press, and Harvey M. Sapolsky, "Come Home, America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation," *International Security* 21, no. 4 (1997): 5–48, https://doi.org/10.2307/2539282; Christopher Layne, "From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing: America's Future Grand Strategy," *International Security* 22, no. 1 (1997): 86–124, https://doi.org/10.2307/2539331

5. William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 1996, https://carnegieendowment.org/1996/07/01/toward-neo-reaganite-foreign-policy-pub-276

6. Posen and Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," 53.

7. https://www.hoover.org/research/foreign-policy-autopilot

8. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nssall.html

9. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nssall.html

10. John Ikenberry, "An Agenda for Liberal International Renewal," in Michelle Flournoy and Shawn Brimley, eds., *Finding Our Way: Debating American Grand Strategy* (Center for a New American Security, 2008), 46.

11. Ikenberry, "An Agenda for Liberal International Renewal," 46–47.

12. Ikenberry, "An Agenda for Liberal International Renewal," 46–47.

13. Ikenberry, "An Agenda for Liberal International Renewal," 56.

14. Art, "Selective Engagement after Bush," in Flournoy and Brimley, *Finding Our Way*. For the full treatment of this approach, see also Robert Art, *A Grand Strategy for America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

15. Art, *Grand Strategy for America*, 28.

16. Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for US Grand Strategy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 7.

17. Posen, *Restraint*, xi.

18. Barry R. Posen, "Pull Back: The Case of a Less Activist Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2013, 116, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2013-01-01/pull-back

19. Posen, "Pull Back."

20. Sebastian Rosato and John Schuessler, "A Realist Foreign Policy for the United States," *Perspectives on Politics* 9, no. 4 (2011): 803–19.

21. Rosato and Schuessler, "Realist Foreign Policy," 805–6.

22. Rosato and Schuessler, "Realist Foreign Policy," 806.

23. Rosato and Schuessler, "Realist Foreign Policy," 808.

24. For a summary of these arguments, see Daniel Drezner, "Does Obama Have a Grand Strategy? Why We Need Doctrines in Uncertain Times," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2011, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/does-obama-have-grand-strategy

25. Drezner, "Does Obama Have a Grand Strategy?"

26. Rebecca Lissner and Mira Rapp-Hooper, *An Open World: How America Can Win the Contest for Twenty-First-Century Order* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).

27. Stephen Brooks, John Ikenberry, and William Wohlforth, "Don't Come Home, America: The Case Against Retrenchment," *International Security* 37, no. 3 (2012): 11.

28. Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth, "Don't Come Home America," 32–33.

29. Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth, "Don't Come Home America," 36.

30. Barry R. Posen, "The Rise of Illiberal Hegemony," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2018, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2018-02-13/rise-illiberal-hegemony; Posen, *Restraint*; Posen, "Pull Back; Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007); Paul K. MacDonald and Joseph M. Parent, "The Wisdom of Retrenchment: America Must Cut Back to Move Forward," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 6 (2011): 20–32, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23039627

31. Andrew Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Andrew Bacevich, *The Age of Illusions: How America Squandered Its Cold War Victory* (New York: Metropolitan, 2020); Stephen Wertheim, "The Price of Primacy: Why America Shouldn't Dominate the World," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2020-02-10/price-primacy

32. Posen, "Pull Back."

33. Christopher Layne, "From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing," *International Security* 22, no. 1 (Summer 1997), https://doi.org/10.2307/2539331; Paul MacDonald and Joseph Parent, "The Wisdom of Retrenchment," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2011, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/americas/2011-10-14/wisdom-retrenchment; Stephen Walt, *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005).

34. John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "The Case for Offshore Balancing: A Superior US Grand Strategy." *Foreign Affairs* 95, no. 4 (July/August 2016), 70–83; and H. Brands, P. Feaver, J. J. Mearsheimer, and S. M. Walt, "Should America Retrench: The Battle over Offshore Balancing," *Foreign Affairs* 95, no. 6 (November/December 2016), 164–71.

35. Mearsheimer and Walt, "Case for Offshore Balancing," 75.

36. Christopher A. Preble, *The Power Problem: How American Military Dominance Makes Us Less Safe, Less Prosperous, and Less Free* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019).

37. Mearsheimer and Walt, "Case for Offshore Balancing," 71.

38. Brands, Feaver, Mearsheimer, and Walt, "Should America Retrench," 165, 167–68.

39. Brands et al., "Should America Retrench," 165, 167–68.

40. Brands et al., "Should America Retrench," 169–71.

41. Paul C. Avey, Jonathan N. Markowitz, and Robert J. Reardon, "Disentangling Grand Strategy: International Relations Theory and U.S. Grand Strategy," *Texas National Security Review* 2, no. 1 (November 2018), https://tnsr.org/2018/11/disentangling-grand-strategy-international-relations-theory-and-u-s-grand-strategy/. For some of the most representative works in the four schools analyzed in this article, see John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), for Liberal Internationalism; Henry Nau, *Conservative Internationalism: Armed Diplomacy under Jefferson, Polk, Truman, and Reagan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), for Conservative Primacy; Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for US Grand Strategy* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2004) for Restraint; and Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *America Abroad: The United States' Global Role in the 21st Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), for Deep Engagement.

42. Avey et al., "Disentangling Grand Strategy," 36.

43. Avey et al., "Disentangling Grand Strategy," 45.

44. Dueck, *Age of Iron*, 30–32.

45. Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth, *America Abroad: The United States' Global Role in the 21st Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 68–71.

46. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ask-the-experts/did-unipolar-moment-ever-end

47. Van Jackson, "Left of Liberal Internationalism: Grand Strategies within Progressive Foreign Policy Thought," *Security Studies* 31, no. 4 (2022): 553–92. Robert A. Kupchan, *Isolationism: A History of America's Efforts to Shield Itself from the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

48. Michael Mazarr, "This Is Not a Great-Power Competition," *Foreign Affairs*, May 29, 2019, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/not-great-power-competition

49. Mazarr, "Not Great Power Competition."

50. Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, "Misplaced Restraint: The Quincy Coalition versus Liberal Internationalism," *Survival* 63, no. 4 (2021): 22, https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2021.1956187

51. Daniel H. Nexon, "Against Great Power Competition," *Foreign Affairs*, February 15, 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-02-15/against-great-power-competition. See also Joe Nye, "America's New Great Power Strategy," *Project Syndicate*, August 3, 2021, https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/us-china-new-great-power-strategy-by-joseph-s-nye-2021-08

52. Nye, "America's New Great Power Strategy."

53. Bruce W. Jentleson, "Refocusing US Grand Strategy on Pandemic and Environmental Mass Destruction," *Washington Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (2020): 30, https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2020.1813977

54. G. John Ikenberry, "The Next Liberal Order: The Age of Contagion Demands More Internationalism, Not Less," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August, 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-06-09/next-liberal-order; see also G. John Ikenberry, *A World Safe for Democracy: Liberal Internationalism and the Crises of Global Order* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).

55. G. John Ikenberry, "Liberal Internationalism 3.0: America and the Dilemmas of Liberal World Order," *Perspectives on Politics* 7, no. 1 (2009): 71, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40407217

56. Ikenberry, "Liberal Internationalism 3.0," 84.

57. Ikenberry, *A World Safe for Democracy*; G. John Ikenberry and Anne-Marie Slaughter, *Forging a World of Liberty under Law: U.S. National Security in the 21st Century* (Princeton: Princeton Project on National Security, 2006).

58. Anne-Marie Slaughter, "It's Time to Get Honest about the Biden Doctrine," *New York Times*, November 12, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/12/opinion/biden-foreign-policy.html

59. Major recent contributions for this school of thought include Matthew Kroenig, *The Return of Great Power Rivalry: Democracy versus Autocracy from the Ancient World to the U.S. and China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); Hal Brands, *American Grand Strategy in the Age of Trump* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2018); Paul D. Miller, *American Power and Liberal Order: A Conservative Internationalist Grand Strategy* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2016); Henry Nau, *Conservative Internationalism: Armed Diplomacy under Jefferson, Polk, Truman, and Reagan*

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013); Eliot A. Cohen, *The Big Stick: The Limits of Soft Power and the Necessity of Military Force* (New York: Basic Books, 2017); Robert J. Lieber, *Retreat and Its Consequences: American Foreign Policy and the Problem of World Order* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

60. Walter Russell Mead, "The Return of Geopolitics: The Revenge of the Revisionist Powers," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2014, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2014-04-17/return-geopolitics

61. Hal Brands, "Democracy vs Authoritarianism: How Ideology Shapes Great-Power Conflict," *Survival* 60, no. 5 (October/November 2018): 62–66, https://halbrands.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/60-5-07-Brands.pdf

62. Matthew Kroenig and Dan Negrea, "Why 'Confrontation' with China Cannot Be Avoided," *The National Interest*, November 26, 2021, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/why-'confrontation'-china-cannot-be-avoided-196926

63. Paul C. Avey, Jonathan N. Markowitz, and Robert J. Reardon, "Disentangling Grand Strategy: International Relations Theory and U.S. Grand Strategy," *Texas National Security Review* 2, no. 1 (November 2018): 46–47, http://dx.doi.org/10.26153/tsw/869

64. Hal Brands, "Don't Let Great Powers Carve Up the World: Spheres of Influence Are Unnecessary and Dangerous," *Foreign Affairs*, April 20, 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2020-04-20/dont-let-great-powers-carve-world?utm_campaign=tw_daily_soc&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter_posts

65. Paul D. Miller, "American Power and Liberal Order," *The National Interest*, September 14, 2016, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/american-power-liberal-order-17715; for more details, see Miller, *American Power and Liberal Order*, 3–29.

66. Robert Kagan, "A Superpower, Like It or Not: Why Americans Must Accept Their Global Role," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-02-16/superpower-it-or-not

67. Kagan, "A Superpower, Like It or Not."

68. Richard Fontaine, "What the New China Focus Gets Wrong: Competition Requires Balance," *Foreign Affairs*, November 2, 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2021-11-02/what-new-china-focus-gets-wrong

69. Fontaine, "What the New China Focus Gets Wrong."

70. Hal Brands and Charles Edel, "A Grand Strategy of Democratic Solidarity," *Washington Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (March 2021), https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2021.1893003

71. Brands and Edel, "A Grand Strategy of Democratic Solidarity."

72. Henry R. Nau, "Conservative Internationalism," Hoover Institution, July 30, 2008, https://www.hoover.org/research/conservative-internationalism; for more, see Nau, *Conservative Internationalism*.

73. Nau, "Conservative Internationalism" (Hoover Institution).

74. Kori Schake, "Back to Basics: How to Make Right What Trump Gets Wrong," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2019, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2019-04-16/back-basics

75. John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "The Case for Offshore Balancing: A Superior US Grand Strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2016, https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/case-offshore-balancing-superior-us-grand-strategy

76. Emma Ashford, "Strategies of Restraint: Remaking America's Broken Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-08-24/strategies-restraint

77. For some prominent works along these lines, see Michael Swain and Andrew Bacevich, "A Restraint Approach to US China Relations," *Quincy Institute Paper 11*, April 18, 2023, https://quincyinst.org/report/u-s-relations-with-china-a-strategy-based-on-restraint/; Joshua Shifrinson, "The Rise of China, Balance of Power Theory, and US National Security: Reasons for Optimism?," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 43, no. 2 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2018.1558056; Joshua Shifrinson, "Neo-Primacy and the Pitfalls of US Strategy toward China," *Washington Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2020.1849993; Charles L. Glaser, "A US-China Grand Bargain? The Hard Choice between Military Competition and Accommodation," *International Security* 39, no. 4 (2015), https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00199; Jennifer Link and Daryl G. Press, "Reality Check: American Power in an Age of Constraints," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2020-02-10/reality-check?utm_source=twitter_posts&utm_campaign=tw_daily_soc&utm_medium=social; Stephen Wertheim, "Delusions of Dominance: Biden Can't Restore American Primacy—and Shouldn't Try," *Foreign Affairs*, January 25, 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-01-25/delusions-dominance; Graham Allison, "The New Spheres of Influence: Sharing the Globe with Other Great Powers," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April, 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-02-10/new-spheres-influence; Christopher Layne, "The US–Chinese Power Shift and the End of the Pax Americana," *International Affairs* 94, no. 1 (2018), https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix249; Nuno Monteiro, *Theory of Unipolar Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014); Peter Dombrowski and Simon Reich, *The End of Grand Strategy: U.S. Maritime Operations in the 21st Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018); Benjamin H. Friedman and Trevor Thrall, *US Grand Strategy in 21st Century: The Case for Restraint* (London: Routledge, 2018); Stephen Walt, *The Hell of Good Intentions: America's Foreign Policy Elite and the Decline of U.S. Primacy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018); Patrick Porter, *The False Promise of Liberal Order: Nostalgia, Delusion and the Rise of Trump* (Cambridge: Polity, 2020); Christopher A. Preble, *The Power Problem: How American Military Dominance Makes Us Less Safe, Less Prosperous, and Less Free* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

78. Shifrinson, "The Rise of China," 177–78.

79. Shifrinson, "The Rise of China," 177–78.

80. Glaser, "US-China Grand Bargain," 50.

81. Wertheim, "Delusions of Dominance."

82. Shifrinson, "Neo-Primacy and Pitfalls of US Strategy," 89.

83. Robert Jervis, "The Nuclear Revolution and the Common Defense," *Political Science Quarterly* 101, no. 5 (1986), https://www.jstor.org/stable/2150972

84. Monteiro, *Theory of Unipolar Politics*, 95.

85. Shifrinson, "Neo-Primacy," 93; see also Christopher Layne, "This Time It's Real: The End of Unipolarity and the Pax Americana," *International Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (2012), https://www.jstor.org/stable/41409832. For the offensive realist view, see Daryl G. Liber and Kier A. Lieber, *Myth of Nuclear Revolution: Power Politics in the Atomic Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020).

86. Charles L. Glaser, "A Flawed Framework: Why the Liberal International Order Concept Is Misguided," *International Security* 43, no. 4 (2019), https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00343; Porter, *False Promise of Liberal Order*; Graham Allison, "The Myth of the Liberal Order: From Historical Accident to Conventional Wisdom," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2018, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2018-06-14/myth-liberal-order

87. Layne, "US-China Shift," 108.

88. Will Ruger and Michael Desch, "Conservatism, Realism and Foreign Policy: Kissing Cousins if Not Soulmates," *The National Interest*, June 30, 2018, https://nationalinterest.org/blog/conservatism-realism-and-foreign-policy-kissing-cousins-if-not-soulmates-27242

89. Allison, "New Spheres of Influence."

90. Jennifer Lind and Daryl G. Press, "Reality Check," *Foreign Affairs* 99, no. 2 (2020): 41–48.

91. Lind and Press, "Reality Check."

92. Glaser, "US-China Grand Bargain," 50.

93. Ashford, "Strategies of Restraint." See also Christopher Preble, *The Power Problem: How American Military Dominance Makes Us Less Safe, Less Prosperous, and Less Free* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

94. Ashford, "Strategies of Restraint."

95. Layne, *Peace of Illusions*.

96. Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, *The Myth of the Nuclear Revolution: Power Politics in the Atomic Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020).

97. Paul Avey, "Just Like Yesterday? New Critiques of the Nuclear Revolution," *Texas National Security Review* 6, no. 2 (Spring 2023), https://tnsr.org/2023/04/just-like-yesterday-new-critiques-of-the-nuclear-revolution/

98. Elbridge A. Colby, *Strategy of Denial: American Defense in an Age of Great Power Conflict* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021).

99. John J. Mearsheimer, "Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order," *International Security* 43, no. 4 (2019): 9–12.

100. Noah Barkin, "Germany's Strategic Gray Zone with China," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 25, 2020, https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/03/25/germany-s-strategic-gray-zone-with-china-pub-81360

101. Joseph M. Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (1988): 485–507.

102. Niall Ferguson, "From Trade War to Tech War," *Boston Globe*, February 4, 2019, https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2019/02/04/from-trade-war-tech-war/BEGs9yCDcCZMbMW5j8UhEO/story.html

103. Daniel Drezner, "The Realist Tradition in American Public Opinion," *Perspectives on Politics* 6, no. 1 (2008): 54, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592708080067

104. Jesse Norman, "What Adam Smith Knew about Trade Wars," *Wall Street Journal*, August 25, 2018, https://www.wsj.com/articles/what-adam-smith-knew-about-trade-wars-1535036195

Chapter Two

1. Matthew Kroenig, *Return of Great Power Rivalry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 20.

2. Uri Friedman, "The New Concept Everyone in Washington Is Talking About," *The Atlantic*, August 6, 2019, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2019/08/what-genesis-great-power-competition

3. Jonathan Chang, "China Is Starting to Act Like a Global Power," *Wall Street Journal*, March 22, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-has-a-new-vision-for-itself-global-power-da8dc559

4. Doshi, *The Long Game*, 208.

5. Elizabeth Economy, "Xi Jinping's New World Order," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2021-12-09/xi-jinpings-new-world-order

6. Bonny Lin and Jude Blanchette, "China on the Offensive," *Foreign Affairs*, August 1, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/china-offensive

7. Lin and Blanchette, "China on the Offensive."

8. Jim Garamone, "China Military Power Report Examines Changes in Beijing's Strategy," DOD News, November 29, 2022, https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3230682/china-military-power-report-examines-changes-in-beijings-strategy/

9. Garamone, "China Military Power Report."

10. Nancy A. Youssef, "China Aims to Outpace U.S. Militarily, American Commander Says," *Wall Street Journal*, December 8, 2020, https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-aims-to-outpace-u-s-militarily-american-commander-says-11607459776?page=1&utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2012.09.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief

11. David B. Larter, "In Challenging China's Claims in the South China Sea, the US Navy Is Getting More Assertive," *Defense News*, February 5, 2020, https://www.defensenews.com/naval/2020/02/05/in-challenging-chinas-claims-in-the-south-china-sea-the-us-navy-is-getting-more-assertive/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2002.06.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief

12. Lolita C. Baldor and Matthew Lee, "US Rejects Nearly All Chinese Claims in South China Sea," *Military Times*, July 13, 2020, https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2020/07/13/us-to-reject-nearly-all-chinese-claims-in-south-china-sea/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2007.14.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief

13. Brendan Rittenhouse Green and Caitlin Talmadge, "The Consequences of Conflict: Why Indo-Pacific Power Hinges on Taiwan," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2022-06-16/consequences-conquest-taiwan-indo-pacific

14. Olli Pekka Suorsa and Adrian Ang U-Jin, "Explaining the PLA's Record-Setting Air Incursions into Taiwan's ADIZ," *The Diplomat*, October 14, 2021, https://thediplomat.com/2021/10/explaining-the-plas-record-setting-air-incursions-into-taiwans-adiz/; Chris Buckley and Amy Qin, "In a Surge of Military Flights, China Tests and Warns Taiwan," *New York Times*, October 3, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/03/world/asia/china-taiwan-flights-airspace.html?campaign_id=2&emc=edit_th_20211004&instance_id=41960&nl=todaysheadlines&regi_id=30827009&segment_id=70599&user_id=5df48842560411e6f7d1ec6408309180

15. Oriana Skylar Mastro, "The Taiwan Temptation: Why Beijing Might Resort to Force," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August, 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2021-06-03/china-taiwan-war-temptation

16. Alastair Gale and Nancy Youssef, "China's Military Exercises Showcase Modern Fighting Force Preparing for Possible War in the Taiwan Strait," *Wall Street Journal*, August 7, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/amp/articles/chinas-military-exercises-showcase-modern-fighting-force-preparing-for-possible-war-in-the-taiwan-strait-11659906152

17. David Sanger, Eric Schmitt, and Ben Dooley, "U.S. Insists It Will Operate around Taiwan, Despite China's Pressure," *New York Times*, August 10, 2022, https://

www.nytimes.com/2022/08/10/us/politics/taiwan-china-us.html?action=click&pgtype=Article&state=default&module=styln-china-taiwan&variant=show&region=MAIN_CONTENT_3&block=storyline_top_links_recirc

18. Sanger, Schmitt, and Dooley, "U.S. Insists It Will Operate around Taiwan."

19. Godon Lubold, "U.S. Troops Have Been Deployed in Taiwan for at Least a Year," *Wall Street Journal*, October 7, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-troops-have-been-deployed-in-taiwan-for-at-least-a-year-11633614043?mod=itp_wsj&ru=yahoo

20. Daniel Michaels and Stu Woo, "China Buys Friends with Ports and Roads: Now the U.S. Is Trying to Compete," *Wall Street Journal*, July 15, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/amp/articles/china-buys-friends-with-ports-and-roads-now-the-u-s-is-trying-to-compete-11626363239

21. James T. Areddy and Chun Han Wong, "China's Xi Vows New Direction for 'Belt and Road' after Criticism," *Wall Street Journal*, April 26, 2019, https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-xi-vows-new-direction-for-belt-and-road-after-criticism-11556249652?mod=article_inline

22. Michael Miklauic, "Geoeconomics; Why Now? Because China Is Eating Our Lunch!," *Real Clear Defense*, August 31, 2021, https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2021/08/31/geoeconomics_why_now_because_china_is_eating_our_lunch_792386.html?mc_cid=5486568eaf&mc_eid=185b58d5f0

23. Yuka Hayashi, "U.S. to Take Hard Line on Chinese Trade Practices, Administration Says," *Wall Street Journal*, March 1, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-to-take-hard-line-on-chinese-trade-practices-administration-says-11614625200

24. Saleha Mohsin, Katia Dmitrieva, Jenny Leonard, and Nick Wadhams, "Biden Team Hints at Keeping Trump's Tough Line towards China," *Bloomberg News*, January 19, 2021, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-19/yellen-says-u-s-prepared-to-take-on-china-s-abusive-practices?srnd=markets-vp

25. Gordon Chang, *The Great U.S.-China Tech War* (New York: Encounter Books, 2020); Niall Ferguson, "From Trade War to Tech War to Cold War," Hoover Institution, March 28, 2019, https://www.hoover.org/research/trade-war-tech-war-cold-war

26. Liza Lin, "China Targets AI, Chips among Seven Battlefronts in Tech Race with U.S.," *Wall Street Journal*, March 7, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/amp/articles/china-targets-ai-chips-among-seven-battlefronts-in-tech-race-with-u-s-11615135881

27. Lin, "China Targets AI, Chips."

28. Sha Hua and Daniel Michaels and Valentina Pop, "From Lightbulbs to 5G, China Battles West for Control of Vital Technology Standards," *Wall Street Journal*, February 8, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/amp/articles/from-lightbulbs-to-5g-china-battles-west-for-control-of-vital-technology-standards-11612722698

29. Bob Davis, "U.S. Enlists Allies to Counter China's Technology Push," *Wall Street Journal*, February 28, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-enlists-allies-to-counter-chinas-technology-push-11614524400.

30. Dan Strumpf, "U.S. Set Out to Hobble China's Huawei, and So It Has," *Wall Street Journal*, October 7, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-set-out-to-hobble-chinas-huawei-and-so-it-has-11633617478?mod=itp_wsj&ru=yahoo

31. Steven Fidler, "Covid-19 Heightens U.S.-China Rivalry, New Report Says," *Wall Street Journal*, January 19, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-heightens-u-s-china-rivalry-new-report-says-11611048600

32. Steven Erlanger, "Global Backlash Builds against China over Coronavirus,"

New York Times, May 3, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/03/world/europe/backlash-china-coronavirus.html

33. Erlanger, "Global Backlash Builds against China."

34. Mary Anastasia O'Grady, "Putin Is Already in Cuba and Venezuela," *Wall Street Journal*, January 30, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/putin-is-already-in-cuba-and-venezuela-south-america-influence-western-hemisphere-ukraine-11643567547; Rafael Bernal, "Russia Suggests Military Deployments to Cuba, Venezuela an Option," *The Hill*, January 13, 2022, https://thehill.com/policy/defense/589595-russia-suggests-military-deployments-to-cuba-venezuela-an-option; Jack Nicas and Anton Troianovski, "A World Away from Ukraine, Russia Is Courting Latin America," *New York Times*, February 15 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/15/world/americas/russia-putin-latin-america-bolsonaro.html?campaign_id=2&emc=edit_th_20220216&instance_id=53272&nl=todaysheadlines&regi_id=30827009&segment_id=82883&user_id=5df48842560411e6f7d1ec6408309180

35. Ivo H. Daalder, "Responding to Russia's Resurgence: Not Quiet on the Eastern Front," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2017, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2017-10-16/responding-russias-resurgence; Michael McFaul, "Russia as It Is: A Grand Strategy for Confronting Putin," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2018, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2018-06-14/russia-it

36. Mark Landler and Thom Shanker, "Putin Says U.S. Is Undermining Global Stability," *New York Times*, February 11, 2007, https://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/11/world/europe/11munich.html

37. Landler and Shanker, "Putin Says U.S. Is Undermining Global Stability."

38. John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2014, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault

39. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault."

40. Michael R. Gordon, "Kerry Takes Offer of Aid to Ukraine and Pushes Back at Russian Claims," *New York Times*, March 4, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/05/world/europe/secretary-of-state-john-kerry-arriving-in-kiev-offers-1-billion-in-loan-guarantees-to-ukraine.html

41. Walter Russell Mead, "Putin Is Running Rings around the West," *Wall Street Journal*, January 12, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/putin-is-running-rings-around-the-west-ukraine-kazakhstan-troops-border-invasion-russia-11642008206

42. Ionut Popescu, "It's Time to Get Real about Great Power Politics," *The National Interest*, April 15, 2020 https://nationalinterest.org/feature/its-time-get-real-about-great-power-politics-144742

43. John Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault," *Foreign Affairs*, August 18, 2014, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault; Frank Costigliola, "Kennan's Warning on Ukraine," January 27, 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/george-kennan-warning-on-ukraine

44. Lingling Wei and Marcus Walker, "Xi Jinping Doubles Down on His Putin Bet: 'I Have a Similar Personality to Yours,'" *Wall Street Journal*, December 14, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/xi-jinping-putin-china-russia-relations-11671030896

45. Stephen Fidler and Michael Gordon, "Russia, China Challenge U.S.-Led World Order," *Wall Street Journal*, February 21, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-china-challenge-u-s-led-world-order-3563f41d

46. For some of the justifications for this realist approach, see the series of articles

in the May/June 2023 edition of the journal *Foreign Affairs*, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/content-packages/nonaligned-world. See also Walter Russell Mead, "The World Rejects the Wilsonian Order," *Wall Street Journal*, February 6, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-world-rejects-the-wilsonian-order-global-south-lula-putin-ukraine-international-organizations-woodrow-wilson-united-nations-11675720087

47. This section draws on the arguments first published in Ionut Popescu, "American Grand Strategy and the Rise of Offensive Realism," *Political Science Quarterly* 134, no. 3 (2019): 375–405, https://doi.org/10.1002/polq.12960

48. The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (*NSS*), 2017, now available at https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf; Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy of the United States* (*NDS*), 2018, https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf

49. Richard Haass, "The Age of America First: Washington's Flawed New Foreign Policy Consensus," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-09-29/biden-trump-age-america-first; Joshua Shifrinson and Stephen Wertheim, "Biden the Realist: The President's Foreign Policy Doctrine Has Been Hiding in Plain Sight," *Foreign Affairs*, September 9, 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-09-09/biden-realist

50. Shifrinson and Wertheim, "Biden the Realist."

51. White House, *NSS*.

52. White House, *NSS*, 23.

53. White House, *NSS*, 25.

54. Department of Defense, *NDS*, 2.

55. Jane Perlez, "Pence's China Speech Seen as Portent of 'New Cold War,'" *New York Times*, October 5, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/05/world/asia/pence-china-speech-cold-war.html

56. The White House, *Remarks by Vice President Pence on the Administration's Policy toward China*, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-administrations-policy-toward-china/

57. White House, *NSS*, 25.

58. White House, *NSS*, 25.

59. Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review*, 2018, https://dod.defense.gov/News/SpecialReports/2018NuclearPostureReview.aspx

60. A. Wess Mitchell, *Remarks at the Atlantic Council*, https://lv.usembassy.gov/remarks-at-the-atlantic-council/

61. Conor Sen, "China-U.S. Trade Spat Is Just a Start to the Economic Cold War," *Bloomberg*, August 12, 2018, https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2018-08-13/china-u-s-trade-spat-is-just-a-start-to-the-economic-cold-war

62. Euan Graham, "Mindful Mattis Did Just Fine at Shangri-La Dialogue," *The Interpreter*, June 4, 2018, https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/mindful-mattis-did-just-fine-at-the-shangri-la-dialogue

63. Idrees Ali and Robin Emmott, "U.S. Pushes NATO to Ready More Forces to Deter Russian Threat," *Reuters*, June 5, 2018, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nato-russia/us-pushes-nato-to-ready-more-forces-to-deter-russian-threat-idUSKCN1J11L4

64. Michael Kofman, "Stranger Things in Helsinki," *War on the Rocks*, July 23, 2018, https://warontherocks.com/2018/07/stranger-things-in-helsinki/

65. William Broad and David Sanger, "U.S. to Tell Russia It Is Leaving Landmark

I.N.F. Treaty," *New York Times*, October 19, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/19/us/politics/russia-nuclear-arms-treaty-trump-administration.html

66. Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, "Don't Come Home, America: The Case against Retrenchment," *International Security* 37, no. 3 (2012): 7–51, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41804173

67. Graham Allison, "The Myth of Liberal Order," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2018, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2018-06-14/myth-liberal-order. Other similar arguments include Patrick Porter, "A World Imagined: Nostalgia and Liberal Order," *Cato Institute Policy Analysis No. 483*, June 2018, https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/world-imagined-nostalgia-liberal-order, and Paul Staniland, "Misreading the 'Liberal Order': Why We Need New Thinking in American Foreign Policy," *Lawfare*, July 29, 2018, https://www.lawfareblog.com/misreading-liberal-order-why-we-need-new-thinking-american-foreign-policy For a counterargument, see Rebecca Friedman Lissner and Mira Rapp-Hooper, "The Liberal Order Is More Than a Myth," *Foreign Affairs*, July 31, 2018, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2018-07-31/liberal-order-more-myth

68. Michael Anton, "America and the Liberal International Order," *American Affairs* (2017), https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2017/02/america-liberal-international-order/

69. Anton, "America and the Liberal International Order."

70. Gary Cohn and H. R. McMaster, "American First Doesn't Mean America Alone," *Wall Street Journal*, May 30, 2017, https://www.wsj.com/articles/america-first-doesnt-mean-america-alone-1496187426

71. White House, *NSS*, 40.

72. For an overview of the "milieu-based" grand strategic view of economic international relations that was abandoned by the Trump administration, see G. John Ikenberry, "A World of Our Making," *Democracy*, no. 21 (Summer 2011), https://democracyjournal.org/magazine/21/a-world-of-our-making/

73. Keith Bradsher and Alan Rappeport, "Trump Embarks on Bilateral Trade Talks to Pressure China," *New York Times*, October 17, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/17/us/politics/china-trump-trade-talks.html

74. Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 2.

75. Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 12.

76. Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 46–48.

77. Russell Berman, "President Trump's 'Hard Power' Budget," *The Atlantic*, March 16, 2017, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/03/president-trumps-hard-power-budget/519702/

78. White House, *NSS*, 27.

79. Department of Defense, *NDS*, 6.

80. White House, *UN Remarks*.

81. Anton, "Liberal Order."

82. Richard Haass, "The Age of America First: Washington's Flawed New Foreign Policy Consensus," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-09-29/biden-trump-age-america-first; see also Sumantra Maitra, "Why Biden's Foreign Policy Looks So Similar to Trump's," *The National Interest*, October 2021, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/why-biden's-foreign-policy-looks-so-similar-trump's-194948; and Michael Crowley, "In Biden's Foreign Policy, Friends and Foes Claim Echoes of Trump," *New York Times*, September 23, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/23/us/politics/biden-trump-un-foreign-policy.html

83. The White House, *Interim Security Strategic Guidance 2021*, March 2021, https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf

84. AP News, "Biden: China Should Expect 'Extreme Competition' from US," *AP News*, February 7, 2021, https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-xi-jinping-china-8f5158c12eed14e002bb1c094f3a048a

85. Warren P. Strobel, "CIA Nominee Burns Promises Spying Focus on China, Seeing 'Adversarial, Predatory' Regime," *Wall Street Journal*, February 24, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/cia-nominee-burns-promises-spying-focus-on-china-seeing-adversarial-predatory-regime-11614191079

86. Kris Osborn, "Biden Just Set Up a Task Force to Ensure the Military Is Ready for China," *The National Interest*, February 11, 2021, https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/biden-just-set-task-force-ensure-military-ready-china-178039

87. Zolan Kanno-Youngs and David E. Sanger, "Biden Announces Defense Deal with Australia in a Bid to Counter China," *New York Times*, September 15, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/15/us/politics/biden-australia-britain-china.html

88. Lubold, "U.S. Troops Have Been Deployed."

89. David E. Sanger, "Biden Said the U.S. Would Protect Taiwan: But It's Not That Clear-Cut," *New York Times*, October 22, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/22/us/politics/biden-taiwan-defense-china.html

90. Chris Buckley and Steven Lee Myers, "To China, Afghan Fall Proves U.S. Hubris: It Also Brings New Dangers," *New York Times*, August 18, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/18/world/asia/china-afghanistan-taliban-usa.html

91. Joshua Shifrinson and Stephen Wertheim, "Biden the Realist: The President's Foreign Policy Doctrine Has Been Hiding in Plain Sight," *Foreign Affairs*, September 9, 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-09-09/biden-realist

92. Edward Wong and Ana Swanson, "U.S. Aims to Constrain China by Shaping Its Environment, Blinken Says," *New York Times*, May 26, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/26/us/politics/china-policy-biden.html

93. Department of Defense, "Remarks at the Shangri-La Dialogue by Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III," June 11, 2022, https://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech/Article/3059852/remarks-at-the-shangri-la-dialogue-by-secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iii-a/

94. Gerald F. Seib, "In Biden World, Economic Policy Is National Security Policy," *Wall Street Journal*, February 15, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/in-biden-world-economic-policy-is-national-security-policy-11613403216

95. Alex Leary and Tarini Party, "U.S. and G-7 Allies Detail Infrastructure Plan to Challenge China," *Wall Street Journal*, June 27, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-and-g-7-allies-detail-infrastructure-plan-to-challenge-china-11656255601

96. Edward Wong, Keith Bradsher, and Alan Rappeport, "Biden Bets High-Level Diplomacy Can Cool Fiery Relations with China," *New York Times*, July 10, 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/10/us/politics/biden-china-diplomacy.html

97. Wong, Bradsher, and Rappeport, "Biden Bets High-Level Diplomacy."

Chapter Three

1. The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (*NSS*), 2002, https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf

2. Hal Brands and Charles Edel, "The End of Great Power Peace," *National*

Interest, March 6, 2019, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/end-great-power-peace-46282

3. Robert Burns, "Pentagon Chief Plans to Shift US Focus to China and Russia," *Military Times*, December 8, 2019, https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2019/12/08/pentagon-chief-plans-to-shift-us-focus-to-china-and-russia/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2012.09.19&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief

4. *NDS*, 1.

5. David M. Edelstein, "The Persistence of Great Power Politics," *Texas National Security Review*, February 7, 2019, https://tnsr.org/roundtable/the-persistence-of-great-power-politics/

6. Office of the Director of National Intelligence, "Annual Threat Assesment of the US Intelligence Community," April 9, 2021, https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/ATA-2021-Unclassified-Report.pdf

7. Kurt M. Campbell and Ely Ratner, "The China Reckoning: How Beijing Defied American Expectations," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April, 2018, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-02-13/china-reckoning; Michael McFaul, "Russia as It Is: A Grand Strategy for Confronting Putin," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August, 2018, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2018-06-14/russia-it; Aaron Friedberg, "It's America's Move in Its Competition with China," *War on the Rocks*, June 18, 2018, https://warontherocks.com/2018/06/it-is-americas-move-in-its-competition-with-china/

8. Campbell and Ratner, "The China Reckoning."

9. Rush Doshi, *The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 263.

10. Doshi, *Long Game*; Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005); Aaron Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011); David Shambaugh, *China Goes Global: The Partial Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Michael Pillsbury, The *Hundred Year Marathon: China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015).

11. Rush Doshi, "China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order," Brookings Institution, August 2, 2021, https://www.brookings.edu/essay/the-long-game-chinas-grand-strategy-to-displace-american-order/

12. Doshi, *The Long Game*, 5–7.

13. Thomas Grove and Austin Ramsey, "China, Russia Deliver Broadsides against the West at Brics Summit," *Wall Street Journal*, August 23, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/world/china-russia-deliver-broadsides-against-the-west-at-brics-summit-f8dd0efd

14. Cited in Mike Breast, "China Pursuing 'Largest Military Buildup in History since WWII,' US Commander Says," *Washington Examiner*, June 24, 2022, https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/defense-national-security/chinas-enacting-largest-military-buildup

15. Office of the Secretary of Defense, "Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2021," https://media.defense.gov/2021/Nov/03/2002885874/-1/-1/0/2021-CMPR-FINAL.PDF

16. Office of the Secretary of Defense, "Military and Security Developments."

17. SIPRI, "World Military Expenditure Reaches New Record High as European Spending Surges," April 24, 2023, https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2023/world-military-expenditure-reaches-new-record-high-european-spending-surges

18. SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, accessed July 19, 2023, https://milex.sipri.org/sipri

19. Matthew P. Funaiole, "Understanding China's 2021 Defense Budget," Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 5, 2021, https://www.csis.org/analysis/understanding-chinas-2021-defense-budget

20. Office of the Secretary of Defense, "Military and Security Developments," vi.

21. Emily Fang, "New Pentagon Report Claims China Now Has over 500 Nuclear Warheads," *NPR*, October 19, 2023, https://www.npr.org/2023/10/19/1207156597/new-pentagon-report-claims-china-now-has-over-500-operational-nuclear-warheads

22. William J. Broad and David E. Sanger, "A 2nd New Nuclear Missile Base for China, and Many Questions about Strategy," *New York Times*, July 26, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/26/us/politics/china-nuclear-weapons.html

23. The Policy Planning Staff, Office of the Secretary of State, "The Elements of China Challenge," 15, https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/20-02832-Elements-of-China-Challenge-508.pdf

24. Megan Specia and Mikko Takkunen, "South China Sea Photos Suggest a Military Building Spree by Beijing," *New York Times*, February 8, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/08/world/asia/south-china-seas-photos.html

25. David B. Larter, "In Challenging China's Claims in the South China Sea, the US Navy Is Getting More Assertive," *Defense News*, February 5, 2020, https://www.defensenews.com/naval/2020/02/05/in-challenging-chinas-claims-in-the-south-china-sea-the-us-navy-is-getting-more-assertive/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2002.06.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief

26. Michael E. O'Hanlon, *The Senkaku Paradox: Risking Great Power War over Small Stakes* (Washington, DC: Brooking Institution Press, 2019).

27. For a book-length treatment of this thesis, see Hal Brands and Michael Beckley, *Danger Zone: The Coming Conflict with China* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2022).

28. Chris Buckley and Amy Qin, "In a Surge of Military Flights, China Tests and Warns Taiwan," *New York Times*, October 3, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/03/world/asia/china-taiwan-flights-airspace.html?campaign_id=2&emc=edit_th_20211004&instance_id=41960&nl=todaysheadlines&regi_id=30827009&segment_id=70599&user_id=5df48842560411e6f7d1ec6408309180

29. Oriana Skylar Mastro, "The Taiwan Temptation: Why Beijing Might Resort to Force," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2021-06-03/china-taiwan-war-temptation

30. Brendan Rittenhouse Green and Caitlin Talmadge, "Then What? Assessing the Military Implications of Chinese Control of Taiwan," *International Security* 47, no. 1 (2022): 7–45.

31. Oriana Skylar Mastro, "The Stealth Superpower: How China Hid Its Global Ambitions," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2019, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/china-plan-rule-asia

32. Elizabeth Economy, "Xi Jinping's New World Order," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/xi-jinpings-new-world-order

33. Economy, "Xi Jinping's New World Order."

34. Robert O'Brien, "How China Threatens American Democracy," *Foreign Affairs*, October 21, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2020-10-21/how-china-threatens-american-democracy

35. O'Brien, "How China Threatens American Democracy."

36. Jonathan Cheng, "China Is Starting to Act Like a Global Power," *Wall Street*

Journal, March 22, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-has-a-new-vision-for-itself-global-power-da8dc559

37. A. Wess Mitchell and Christopher Vassallo, *China's 'New' Diplomacy: Opportunities for American Statecraft*, Marathon Initiative, February 20, 2024, https://themarathoninitiative.org//wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Chinas-New-Diplomacy_vF.pdf

38. Mitchell and Vassallo, *China's 'New' Diplomacy*.

39. Rohan Mukherjee, "China's Status Anxiety: Beijing Fights to Be Treated as America's Equal on the World Stage," *Foreign Affairs*, May 19, 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/united-states-china-status-anxiety; James Arredy and Charles Hutzler, "China's Model of a New Diplomacy Scores a Win with Iran-Saudi Deal," *Wall Street Journal*, March 10, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/iran-saudi-deal-scores-a-win-for-chinas-model-of-a-new-diplomacy-bacba072; Austin Ramzey and Samantha Pearson, "China's Xi Jinping, Brazil's Lula Take United Stance against U.S.," *Wall Street Journal*, April 14, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-xi-jinping-brazils-lula-take-united-stance-against-u-s-e8e55c1c; Benjamin Young, "Venezuela Is Becoming a Chinese and Russian Cyber Hub on America's Doorstep," *The National Interest*, June 27, 2022, https://nationalinterest.org/blog/techland-when-great-power-competition-meets-digital-world/venezuela-becoming-chinese-and; Warren Stroebel and Gordon Lubold, "Cuba to Host Secret Chinese Spy Base Focusing on U.S.," *Wall Street Journal*, June 8, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/cuba-to-host-secret-chinese-spy-base-focusing-on-u-s-b2fed0e0

40. Matt Schrader and Michael Cole, "China Hasn't Given Up on the Belt and Road," *Foreign Affairs*, February 7, 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/china-hasnt-given-belt-and-road

41. David Sacks, "Countries in China's Belt and Road Initiative: Who's In and Who's Out," *Council on Foreign Relations*, March 24, 2021, https://www.cfr.org/blog/countries-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-whos-and-whos-out.

42. Economy, "New World Order."

43. Ionut Popescu, Dan Negrea, and James Jay Carafano, "Rare Earths Supply Chains and Confrontation with China," *The National Interest*, March 21, 2023, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/rare-earths-supply-chains-and-confrontation-china-206331

44. Liza Tobin, "China's Brute Force Economics: Waking Up from the Dream of a Level Playing Field," *Texas National Security Review* 6, no. 1 (Winter 2022/2023): 81–98, http://dx.doi.org/10.26153/tsw/44439; Isaac B. Kardon and Wendy Leutert. "Pier Competitor: China's Power Position in Global Ports," *International Security* 46, no. 4 (2022): 9–47.

45. Maha Dahan and Aziz Yaakoubi, "China's Xi Calls for Oil Trade in Yuan at Gulf Summit in Riyadh," *Reuters*, December 9, 2022, https://www.reuters.com/world/saudi-arabia-gathers-chinas-xi-with-arab-leaders-new-era-ties-2022-12-09/

46. Doshi, *The Long Game*, 5–7.

47. Doshi, *The Long Game*, 5–7.

48. Niall Ferguson, "The New Cold War? It's with China, and It Has Already Begun," *New York Times*, December 2, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/02/opinion/china-cold-war.html

49. The Policy Planning Staff, Office of the Secretary of State, "The Elements of China Challenge," 10, https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/20-02832-Elements-of-China-Challenge-508.pdf

50. Jessica Meyers, "How 'Made in China 2025' Became the Real Threat in a

Trade War," *Los Angeles Times*, April 24, 2018, https://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-china-2025-20180424-story.html

51. Policy Planning Staff, Office of the Secretary of State, "The Elements of China Challenge," 11.

52. Policy Planning Staff, Office of the Secretary of State, "The Elements of China Challenge," 11.

53. Angela Stent, "The Putin Doctrine: A Move on Ukraine Has Always Been Part of the Plan," *Foreign Affairs*, January 27, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-01-27/putin-doctrine

54. Stent, "The Putin Doctrine."

55. Stent, "The Putin Doctrine."

56. Candace Rondeaux, "How the Wagner Group Helps Putin Expand—and Inflate—Russia's Influence," *World Politics Review*, November 8, 2019, https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/28329/how-the-wagner-group-helps-putin-expand-and-inflate-russia-s-influence

57. Josef Joffe, "Putin's 'Monroyev Doctrine,'" *Real Clear World*, January 18, 2022, https://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2022/01/18/putins_monroyev_doctrine_812564.html

58. Anton Troianovski, "Vladimir Putin: Crafty Strategist or Aggrieved and Reckless Leader?," *New York Times*, February 18, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/18/world/europe/putin-russia-ukraine.html?campaign_id=2&emc=edit_th_20220219&instance_id=53713&nl=todaysheadlines&regi_id=30827009&segment_id=83302&user_id=5df48842560411e6f7d1ec6408309180

59. Samuel Charap et al., "Russian Grand Strategy: Rhetoric and Reality," RAND, 2021, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR4238.html

60. Olga Oliker, "Will Russia Continue to Play the Role of Spoiler?," Center for Strategic and International Studies, December 15, 2016, https://www.csis.org/analysis/will-russia-continue-play-role-spoiler; and Editors, "Can Putin Change Russia's Role from Spoiler to Global Power," *World Politics Review*, January 14, 2022, https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/insights/27815/russia-s-putin-crafts-an-unusual-role-in-the-global-order

61. Michael Kofman, "Raiding and International Brigandry: Russia's Strategy for Great Power Competition," *War on the Rocks*, June 14, 2018, https://warontherocks.com/2018/06/raiding-and-international-brigandry-russias-strategy-for-great-power-competition/

62. Kofman, "Raiding and International Brigandry."

63. Molly K. Mckew, "The Gerasimov Doctrine," *Politico Magazine*, September/October 2017, https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/09/05/gerasimov-doctrine-russia-foreign-policy-215538/

64. Andrew E. Kramer, Michael Schwirtz, and Anton Troianovski, "Russia's Military, Once Creaky, Is Modern and Lethal," *New York Times*, January 27, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/27/world/europe/russia-military-putin-ukraine.html?campaign_id=2&emc=edit_th_20220127&instance_id=51399&nl=todaysheadlines&regi_id=30827009&segment_id=80882&user_id=5df48842560411e6f7d1ec6408309180

65. Elbridge A. Colby, *The Strategy of Denial: American Defense in an Age of Great Power Conflict* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021); Elbridge Colby and Oriana Skylar Mastro, "Ukraine Is a Distraction from Taiwan," *Wall Street Journal*, February 13, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-is-a-distraction-from-taiwan-russia-china-nato-global-powers-military-invasion-jinping-biden-putin-europe-11644781247

66. Isaac Chotiner, "Why John Mearsheimer Blames the U.S. for the Crisis in Ukraine," *The New Yorker*, March 1, 2022, https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/why-john-mearsheimer-blames-the-us-for-the-crisis-in-ukraine/amp

67. Data from Investopedia, "Top 25 Economies in the World," accessed July 19, 2023, https://www.investopedia.com/insights/worlds-top-economies/

68. Melissa Eddy, "In Foreign Policy U-Turn, Germany Ups Military Spending and Arms Ukraine," *New York Times*, February 27, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/27/world/europe/germany-ukraine-russia.html; Evan Gershkovich, Daniel Michaels, and Sune Engel Rasmussen, "Russia, Out to Contain NATO, Instead Reignites the Alliance," *Wall Street Journal*, March 9, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-ukraine-war-nato-military-11646843371

69. David M. Adamson and Julie DaVanzo, "Russia's Demographic 'Crisis': How Real Is It?," RAND, 1997, https://doi.org/10.7249/IP162

70. Andrea Kendall-Taylor and David O. Shullman, "Navigating the Deepening Russia-China Partnership," Center for a New American Security, January 14, 2021, https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/navigating-the-deepening-russia-china-partnership

71. Andrea Kendall-Taylor and David O. Shullman, "China and Russia's Dangerous Convergence," *Foreign Affairs*, May 3, 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2021-05-03/china-and-russias-dangerous-convergence

72. Kendall-Taylor and Shullman, "China and Russia's Dangerous Convergence."

73. James Areddy and Ann Simmons, "China to Join Russia Military Exercises as US Rivals Deepen Ties," *Wall Street Journal*, August 17, 2022 https://www.wsj.com/amp/articles/china-to-join-russia-military-exercises-as-u-s-rivals-deepen-ties-11660755790#

74. Areddy and Simmons, "China to Join Russia Military Exercises."

75. Gerald Seib, "Putin and Xi's Bet on the Global South," *Wall Street Journal*, July 15, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/putin-and-xis-bet-on-the-global-south-11657897521

76. Seib, "Putin and Xi's Bet on the Global South."

77. Charles A. Kupchan, "The Right Way to Split China and Russia: Washington Should Help Moscow Leave a Bad Marriage," *Foreign Affairs*, August 4, 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-08-04/right-way-split-china-and-russia?utm_source=twitter_posts&utm_campaign=tw_daily_soc&utm_medium=social; for a criticism of this position, see John Ruehl, "The Difficult Task of Exploiting Cracks in the Russia-China Relationship," *The National Interest*, June 19, 2021, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/difficult-task-exploiting-cracks-russia-china-relationship-188023

78. Kupchan, "The Right Way to Split China and Russia."

79. Leon Aron, "Are Russia and China Really Forming an Alliance?," *Foreign Affairs*, April 4, 2019, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2019-04-04/are-russia-and-china-really-forming-alliance

80. Barry Posen, "Ukraine's Implausible Theories of Victory," *Foreign Affairs*, July 8, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-07-08/ukraines-implausible-theories-victory

81. Gordon Lubold, Nancy A. Youssef, and Ben Kesling, "Ukraine War Is Depleting U.S. Ammunition Stockpiles, Sparking Pentagon Concern," *Wall Street Journal*, August 29, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/amp/articles/ukraine-war-depleting-u-s-ammunition-stockpiles-sparking-pentagon-concern-11661792188

82. John J. Mearsheimer, "Playing with Fire in Ukraine," *Foreign Affairs*, August 17, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/playing-fire-ukraine

83. Joe Wallace and Anna Hirtenstein, "Russia Confounds the West by Recapturing Its Oil Riches," *Wall Street Journal*, August 29, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-confounds-the-west-by-recapturing-its-oil-riches-11661781928

84. Data from Families Against Fentanyl, "Fentanyl Poisons Our Communities," accessed July 19, 2023, https://www.familiesagainstfentanyl.org

85. William P. Burr, "The US Must Defeat Mexico's Drug Cartels," *Wall Street Journal*, March 2, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-us-must-defeat-mexicos-drug-cartels-narco-terrorism-amlo-el-chapo-crenshaw-military-law-enforcement-b8fac731

86. Audrey Conklin, "Fentanyl Overdoses Become No. 1 Cause of Death among US Adults, Ages 18–45: 'A National Emergency,'" *Fox News*, December 16, 2021, https://www.foxnews.com/us/fentanyl-overdoses-leading-cause-death-adults

87. US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, "Illicit Fentanyl from China: An Evolving Global Operation," August 24, 2021, 1, https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2021-08/Illicit_Fentanyl_from_China-An_Evolving_Global_Operation.pdf

88. Brian MacQuarrie, "Number of Mass. Fentanyl Deaths Alarms DEA," *Boston.com*, July 27, 2017, https://www.boston.com/news/local-news/2017/07/27/number-of-mass-fentanyl-deaths-alarms-dea/

89. Nathan Rusin, "Illicit Chinese Fentanyl: America's Next National Security Crisis," Naval War College, May 2019, https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/AD1077974. See also Markos Kounalakis, "China Is Using Fentanyl in a Chemical War against America," *Miami Herald*, November 2, 2017, https://www.miamiherald.com/latest-news/article182139826.html. For a rebuttal to this argument, see Xiaobo Su, "Geopolitical Imagination and the US War on Drugs against China," *Territory, Politics, Governance* 8, no. 2 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2018.1554503

90. Vanda Felbab-Brown, "China and Synthetic Drugs: Geopolitics Trumps Counternarcotics Cooperation," *Brookings Institution* (blog), March 7, 2022, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2022/03/07/china-and-synthetic-drugs-geopolitics-trumps-counternarcotics-cooperation/. See also Celina B. Realuyo, "The New Opium War: A National Emergency," *PRISM* 8, no. 1 (2019): 132–42, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26597315

91. Felbab-Brown, "China and Synthetic Drugs."

92. John M. Doyle, "China and International Crime Cartels Threaten U.S. Influence in the Americas, Commanders Say," *Seapower*, April 15, 2021, https://seapowermagazine.org/china-and-international-crime-cartels-threaten-u-s-influence-in-the-americas-commanders-say/; Adam Isacson, "Great-Power Competition Comes for Latin America," *War on the Rocks*, February 24, 2022, https://warontherocks.com/2022/02/great-power-competition-comes-for-latin-america/

93. Doyle, "China and International Crime Cartels."

94. Maggie Haberman, "Trump Proposed Launching Missiles into Mexico to 'Destroy the Drug Labs,' Esper Says," *New York Times*, May 5, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/05/us/politics/mark-esper-book-trump.html

95. William Barr, "The U.S. Must Defeat Mexico's Drug Cartels," *Wall Street Journal*, March 2, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-us-must-defeat-mexicos-drug-cartels-narco-terrorism-amlo-el-chapo-crenshaw-military-law-enforcement-b8fac731

96. Robert Chesney, "Should Mexican Cartels Be Designated as Terrorist Organizations?," *Lawfare*, March 31, 2011, https://www.lawfareblog.com/should-mexic

an-cartels-be-designated-terrorist-organizations; Collin Pruett, "Are Mexican Cartels Terrorist Organizations?," *American Conservative*, March 9, 2022, https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/are-mexican-cartels-terrorist-organizations/

97. Pruett, "Are Mexican Cartels Terrorist Organizations?"

98. Nate Sibley, "Defunding the Deadly Fentanyl Trade," Hudson Institute, April 12, 2023, https://www.hudson.org/drug-policy/defunding-deadly-fentanyl-trade

99. Mark Mazzetti, "Biden Declared the War Over: But Wars Go On." *New York Times*, September 22, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/22/us/politics/biden-war.html?campaign_id=2&emc=edit_th_20210923&instance_id=41108&nl=todaysheadlines&regi_id=30827009&segment_id=69682&user_id=5df48842560411e6f7d1ec6408309180

100. Tom O'Connor, "Biden Seeks to End 'Forever Wars,' but Still Has over 30,000 Troops in Middle East One Year On," *Newsweek*, January 20, 2022, https://www.newsweek.com/biden-seeks-end-forever-wars-still-has-over-30000-troops-middle-east-one-year-1668815

101. Daniel Byman, "The Good Enough Doctrine: Learning to Live with Terrorism," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2021-08-24/good-enough-doctrine

102. Kelley Beacar Vlahos, "Paying the Price for Obama's Drone War," Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, September 20, 2021, https://quincyinst.org/2021/09/20/paying-the-price-for-obamas-drone-war/

103. Mark Landler, "20 Years On, the War on Terror Grinds Along, with No End in Sight," *New York Times*, September 10, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/10/world/europe/war-on-terror-bush-biden-qaeda.html?campaign_id=2&emc=edit_th_20210911&instance_id=40196&nl=todaysheadlines&regi_id=30827009&segment_id=68697&user_id=5df48842560411e6f7d1ec6408309180

104. Landler, "20 Years On, the War on Terror Grinds Along."

105. Andrew Eversden, "SOCOM Head on Global Terrorism: 'I Think It's Spread,'" *Breaking Defense*, November 2, 2021, https://breakingdefense.com/2021/11/socom-head-on-global-terrorism-i-think-its-spread/?mc_cid=4e6bc85acd&mc_eid=185b58d5f0

106. Eversden, "SOCOM Head on Global Terrorism."

107. Trevor Filseth, "Intelligence Chief: U.S. Has Bigger Terror Threats Than Al Qaeda," *The National Interest*, September 15, 2021, https://nationalinterest.org/blog/middle-east-watch/intelligence-chief-us-has-bigger-terror-threats-al-qaeda-193789

108. The White House, "Letter to the Speaker of the House and President Pro Tempore of the Senate Regarding the War Powers Report," June 8, 2021, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/06/08/letter-to-the-speaker-of-the-house-and-president-pro-tempore-of-the-senate-regarding-the-war-powers-report/

109. For the Sagan-Waltz dialogue, see Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995); Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002). Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2012). Realist positions include Barry R. Posen, "A Nuclear-Armed Iran: A Difficult, but Not Impossible Policy Problem," *A Century Foundation Report*, 2006; John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security* 15, no. 1 (Summer 1990): 5–56, https://doi.org/10.2307/2538981; John J. Mearsheimer, "The Case for a Ukrainian

Nuclear Deterrent," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993), http://www.jstor.org/stable/20045622?origin=JSTOR-pdf, 50–66; internationalist positions include Matthew Kroenig, "Beyond Optimism and Pessimism: The Differential Effects of Nuclear Proliferation," *Managing the Atom Working Paper* No. 2009–14, Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard University, November 2009; Peter Douglas Feaver, "Neooptimists and the Enduring Problem of Nuclear Proliferation," *Security Studies* 6, no. 4 (Summer 1997): 126–36.

110. Eliza Gheorghe, "Proliferation and the Logic of the Nuclear Market," *International Security* 43, no. 4 (2019), https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00344, 89; Nicholas L. Miller and Tristan A. Volpe, "The Rise of the Autocratic Nuclear Marketplace," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 3, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01402390.2022.2052725

111. See previous two notes for representative works.

112. Francis J. Gavin, "Strategies of Inhibition: US Grand Strategy, the Nuclear Revolution, and Nonproliferation," *International Security* 40, no. 1 (2015), http://hdl.handle.net/1721.1/100504

113. Matthew Kroenig, "Beyond Optimism and Pessimism: The Differential Effects of Nuclear Proliferation," Belfer Center Paper, November 2009, https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/beyond-optimism-and-pessimism-differential-effects-nuclear-proliferation

114. Kroenig, "Beyond Optimism and Pessimism," 35.

115. John J. Mearsheimer, "The Case for a Ukrainian Nuclear Deterrent," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993), https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/1993-06-01/case-ukrainian-nuclear-deterrent; William J. Broad, "Ukraine Gave Up a Giant Nuclear Arsenal 30 Years Ago: Today There Are Regrets," *New York Times*, February 5, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/05/science/ukraine-nuclear-weapons.html?campaign_id=2&emc=edit_th_20220206&instance_id=52328&nl=todaysheadlines&regi_id=30827009&segment_id=81814&user_id=5df48842560411e6f7d1ec6408309180

116. Farnaz Fassihi, Lara Jakes, and David E. Sanger, "U.S. and Allies Close to Reviving Nuclear Deal with Iran, Officials Say," *New York Times*, January 31, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/31/us/politics/iran-nuclear-deal-biden.html?campaign_id=2&emc=edit_th_20220201&instance_id=51826&nl=todaysheadlines&regi_id=30827009&segment_id=81289&user_id=5df48842560411e6f7d1ec6408309180

117. Michael R. Gordon and Laurence Norman, "Iran Is Assembling Gear Able to Produce Key Nuclear-Weapons Material," *Wall Street Journal*, January 13, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/iran-is-assembling-gear-able-to-produce-material-for-nuclear-weapons-officials-say-11610554933?redirect=amp#click=https://t.co/VzMvApn2lw; Laurence Norman, "Iran U.N. Inspectors Find Radioactive Traces, Raising Fresh Concerns," *Wall Street Journal*, February 5, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/amp/articles/iran-u-n-inspectors-find-radioactive-traces-raising-fresh-concerns-11612567304

118. Laurence Norman, "U.S. Sees Iran's Nuclear Program as Too Advanced to Restore Key Goal of 2015 Pact," *Wall Street Journal*, February 3, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-sees-irans-nuclear-program-as-too-advanced-to-restore-key-goal-of-2015-pact-11643882545

119. Jeffrey Sonnenfeld and Adam Boehler, "As the Israel-Hamas War Governs the World's Attention, Iran Is Quietly Marching towards Nuclear Breakout," *Time* magazine, December 9, 2023, https://time.com/6344430/israel-hamas-war-iran-nuclear-breakout/

120. Matthew Bunn, "America Has No Good Options on Iran: But Reviving the Nuclear Deal Is the Least Bad," *Foreign Affairs*, January 17, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/israel/2022-01-17/america-has-no-good-options-iran

121. Ali Vaez and Vali Nasr, "The Path to a New Iran Deal," *Foreign Affairs*, May 8, 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/iran/path-new-iran-nuclear-deal-security-jcpoa-washington

122. Matthew Kroenig, "Still Time to Attack Iran: The Illusion of a Comprehensive Nuclear Deal," *Foreign Affairs*, January 7, 2014, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2014-01-07/still-time-attack-iran; Eric Edelman and Ray Takeyh, "The Next Iranian Revolution: Why Washington Should Seek Regime Change in Tehran," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2020-04-13/next-iranian-revolution; Mark Dubowitz, "Biden Paints Himself into a Corner on the Iran Nuclear Deal," *Wall Street Journal*, September 28, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/biden-iran-nuclear-deal-jcpoa-amir-abdollahian-tehran-sanctions-maximum-pressure-11632861521?mc_cid=668adb0ae1&mc_eid=185b58d5f0

123. Kenneth N. Waltz, "Why Iran Should Get the Bomb: Nuclear Balancing Would Mean Stability," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2012, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iran/2012-06-15/why-iran-should-get-bomb; Barry R. Posen, "We Can Live with a Nuclear Iran," *New York Times*, February 27, 2006, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/27/opinion/we-can-live-with-a-nuclear-iran.html

124. Sue Mi Terry, "North Korea's Nuclear Family: How the Kims Got the Bomb and Why They Won't Give It Up," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-korea/2021-08-24/north-koreas-nuclear-family

125. Karry Kazianis, "Will North Korea Test a Nuclear Weapon Next?," *Responsible Statecraft*, April 12, 2022, https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2022/04/12/will-north-korea-test-a-nuclear-weapon-next/

126. Victor Cha, "The Last Chance to Stop North Korea? U.S. Aid Could Help Revive Nuclear Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs*, September 22, 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-korea/2021-09-22/last-chance-stop-north-korea

127. Sue Mi Terry, "The New North Korean Threat," *Foreign Affairs*, January 19, 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/north-korea/new-north-korean-threat

128. Daniel Post, "Deterring North Korea," *War on the Rocks*, January 29, 2021, https://warontherocks.com/2021/01/deterring-north-korea/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2002.01.21&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief

129. Sungmin Cho and Oriana Skylar Mastro, "North Korea Is Becoming an Asset for China: Pyongyang's Missiles Could Fracture America's Alliances," *Foreign Affairs*, February 3, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-korea/2022-02-03/north-korea-becoming-asset-china

130. Frank Aum and George A. Lopez, "A Bold Peace Offensive to Engage North Korea," *War on the Rocks*, December 4, 2020, https://warontherocks.com/2020/12/a-bold-peace-offensive-to-engage-north-korea/

Chapter Four

1. Department of Defense, "Fact Sheet: 2022 National Defense Strategy," https://media.defense.gov/2022/Mar/28/2002964702/-1/-1/1/NDS-FACT-SHEET.PDF

2. Elbridge Colby, "America Must Prepare for a War over Taiwan," *Foreign Affairs*, August 10, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/america-must-prepare-war-over-taiwan

3. Colby, "America Must Prepare for a War over Taiwan."

4. Colby, "America Must Prepare for a War over Taiwan."

5. Colby, "America Must Prepare for a War over Taiwan."

6. Dov S. Zakheim, "China and Russia's Better Weapons, Risky Behavior Are Threats We Can't Ignore," *The Hill*, June 9, 2019, https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/447550-China-Russia-better-weapons-risky-behavior-threats-we-cant-ignore/; Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr., "The U.S. Military and the Coming Great-Power Challenge: Can an American-Led Coalition Prevent the Next War?," *Foreign Affairs*, November 17, 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/review-essay/2021-11-17/us-military-and-coming-great-power-challenge

7. Krepinevich, "The U.S. Military and the Coming Great-Power Challenge."

8. Michele A. Flournoy, "American's Military Risks Losing It Edge: How to Transform the Pentagon for a Competitive Era," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-04-20/flournoy-americas-military-risks-losing-its-edge

9. John Tirpak, "Navy Intel Brief Urges Robust Challenge to China," *Air & Space Forces Magazine*, July 6, 2023, https://www.airandspaceforces.com/intel-challenge-china/

10. Seth Jones, *Empty Bins in a Wartime Environment: The Challenge to the U.S. Defense Industrial Base*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 23, 2023, https://www.csis.org/analysis/empty-bins-wartime-environment-challenge-us-defense-industrial-base

11. Seth Jones, "America's Looming Munition Crisis," *Foreign Affairs*, March 31, 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/americas-looming-munitions-crisis

12. Jones, "America's Looming Munition Crisis."

13. Jones, "America's Looming Munition Crisis."

14. Thomas Mahnken, "Could America Win a New World War?," *Foreign Affairs*, October 27, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/could-america-win-new-world-war

15. Elbridge A. Colby, *Strategy of Denial: American Defense in an Age of Great Power Conflict* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), 147–71.

16. Colby, *Strategy of Denial*, 1–37.

17. Mara Karlin, "Policy Roundtable: The Pursuit of Military Superiority," *Texas National Security Review*, June 26, 2018, https://tnsr.org/roundtable/policy-roundtable-the-pursuit-of-military-superiority/#_ftnref37

18. Jim Mitre, "A Eulogy for the Two-War Construct," *Washington Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (2019), http://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2018.1557479

19. Mitre, "A Eulogy for the Two-War Construct," 11.

20. Mitre, "A Eulogy for the Two-War Construct," 20–22.

21. Stephen Wertheim, "The Prince of Primacy: Why America Shouldn't Dominate the World," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2020-02-10/price-primacy; Chris Preble, *The Power Problem: How American Military Dominance Makes Us Less Safe, Less Prosperous, and Less Free* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

22. Hal Brands and Evan Braden Montgomery, "One War Is Not Enough: Strat-

egy and Force Planning for Great-Power Competition," *Texas National Security Review* 3, no. 2 (2020): 80–92.

23. Mahnken, "Could America Win a New World War?"

24. Elbridge A. Colby, "America Can Defend Taiwan," *Wall Street Journal*, January 26, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/america-can-defend-taiwan-11611684038

25. Austin Dahmer, *Resourcing the Strategy of Denial*, The Marathon Initiative, 2023, 10, https://themarathoninitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/FINAL_Resourcing-the-Strategy-of-Denial_Dahmer.pdf

26. Dahmer, *Resourcing the Strategy of Denial*, 11–12.

27. Mark Cancian, Matthew Cancian, and Eric Heginbotham, "The First Battle of the Next War," Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 2023, 3.

28. Cancian, Cancian, and Heginbotham, "The First Battle of the Next War," 4.

29. Michael Brown, "Taiwan's Urgent Task," *Foreign Affairs*, January 25, 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/taiwan-urgent-task-new-strategy-to-keep-china-away

30. Robert C. O'Brien and Alexander B. Gray, "How to Deter China from Invading Taiwan," *Wall Street Journal*, September 15, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-invade-taiwan-strait-pla-missile-mines-counterinsurgency-biden-xi-tsai-ing-wen-11631721031

31. Hal Brands and Michael Beckley, "Washington Is Preparing for the Wrong War with China," *Foreign Affairs*, December 16, 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2021-12-16/washington-preparing-wrong-war-china

32. Joel Wuthnow, "How to Out-Deter China," *Foreign Affairs*, March 24, 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/deter-china-taiwan

33. Cited in Seth Jones, "America's Looming Munition Crisis," *Foreign Affairs*, March 31, 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/americas-looming-munitions-crisis

34. Lingling Wei, "Xi Prepares China for 'Extreme' Scenarios, Including Conflict with the West," *Wall Street Journal*, July 27, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-xi-jinping-plays-up-possibility-of-worsening-tensions-with-the-west-aac2dff8

35. Austin Ramzy, "China Wants U.S. to Feel Risk When Operating in Its Backyard," *Wall Street Journal*, July 27, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-wants-u-s-to-feel-risk-when-operating-in-its-backyard-93cd8950

36. James T. Areddy and Rhiannon Hoyle, "China Signs Solomon Islands Pact, over U.S., Australia Opposition," *Wall Street Journal*, April 19, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-signs-solomon-islands-pact-over-u-s-australia-opposition-11650388369

37. Megan Eckstein, "Navy Secretary's New Strategic Guidance Focuses on Deterring China from Invading Taiwan," *Defense News*, October 5, 2021, https://www.defensenews.com/naval/2021/10/05/navy-secretarys-new-strategic-guidance-focuses-on-deterring-china-from-invading-taiwan/?mc_cid=a8c87455c1&mc_eid=185b58d5f0

38. Brad Lendon and Haley Britzky, "US Can't Keep Up with China's Warship Building, Navy Secretary Says," *CNN*, February 22, 2023, https://www.cnn.com/2023/02/22/asia/us-navy-chief-china-pla-advantages-intl-hnk-ml/index.html

39. Joe Sestak, "The U.S. Navy's Loss of Command of the Seas to China and How to Regain It," *Texas National Security Review* 4, no. 1 (2021): 147–64, https://tnsr.org/2020/11/the-u-s-navys-loss-of-command-of-the-seas-and-how-to-regain-it/

40. Blake Herzinger, "The Budget (and Fleet) That Might Have Been," *War on the Rocks*, June 10, 2021, https://warontherocks.com/2021/06/the-budget-and-fleet-that-might-have-been/

41. Lendon and Britzky, "US Can't Keep Up with China's Warship Building."

42. Philip Davidson, "Advance Policy Questions for Admiral Philip Davidson, USN Expected Nominee for Commander, U.S. Pacific Command," Senate Armed Services Committee, April 17, 2018, https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Davidson_APQs_04-17-18.pdf

43. Bruce Jones, "The Challenge of China's Rising Power on the Seas," *Wall Street Journal*, September 16, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/amp/articles/the-challenge-of-chinas-rising-power-on-the-seas-11631808521#; for more, see Bruce Jones, *To Rule the Waves: How Control of the World's Oceans Shapes the Fate of the Superpowers* (New York: Scribner, 2021).

44. John S. Van Oudenaren, "Contested Waters: Great Power Naval Competition in the 21st Century," *National Interest*, February 4, 2019, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/contested-waters-great-power-naval-competition-21st-century-43247

45. Diana Stancy Correll, "Navy's 30-Year Shipbuilding Plan Offers Three Options to Increase the Size of the Fleet," *Navy Times*, April 21, 2022, https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2022/04/21/navys-30-year-shipbuilding-plan-offers-three-options-to-increase-the-size-of-the-fleet/; for an even more ambitious plan for achieving 500 ships by 2045, see James Holmes, "Battle Force 2045: The U.S. Navy's Bold Plan for a 500-Ship Fleet," *National Interest*, October 7, 2020, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/battle-force-2045-us-navy's-bold-plan-500-ship-fleet-170317

46. Bryan Clark, Mark Gunzinger, David E. Johnson, and Jesse Sloman, "Force Planning for the Era of Great Power Competition," Center for Strategic Budgetary Assessments, October 2, 2017, 10, https://csbaonline.org/research/publications/force-planning-for-the-era-of-great-power-competition

47. "'The Closet Is Bare': Aid to Ukraine Depletes US Weapons Supply," *CNN*, May 3, 2022, https://www.cnn.com/videos/us/2022/05/03/us-weapons-stockpile-shrinking-dnt-lead-marquardt-vpx.cnn

48. Dion Nissenbaum, "U.S. Sending More Warships, Marines to Middle East amid Rising Tensions with Iran," *Wall Street Journal*, July 21, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-sending-more-warships-marines-to-middle-east-amid-rising-tensions-with-iran-dfc3a048

49. Mike Hallagher, "Taiwan Can't Wait: What America Must Do to Prevent a Successful Chinese Invasion," *Foreign Affairs*, February 1, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2022-02-01/taiwan-cant-wait; Alastair Gale and Joyu Wang, "Does Taiwan's Military Stand a Chance against China? Few Think So," *Wall Street Journal*, October 26, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/taiwan-military-readiness-china-threat-us-defense-11635174187

50. Dahmer, "Resourcing the Strategy of Denial," 23–30.

51. Dahmer, "Resourcing the Strategy of Denial," 20.

52. William J. Broad and David E. Sanger, "A New Superpower Competition between Beijing and Washington: China's Nuclear Buildup," *New York Times*, June 30, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/30/us/politics/trump-russia-china-nuclear.html?action=click&module=RelatedLinks&pgtype=Article

53. Emily Fang, "New Pentagon Report Claims China Now Has over 500 Nuclear Warheads," *NPR*, October 19, 2023, https://www.npr.org/2023/10/19/1207156597/new-pentagon-report-claims-china-now-has-over-500-operational-nuclear-warheads

54. Chun Han Wong, "China Appears to Be Building New Silos for Nuclear Missiles, Researchers Say," *Wall Street Journal*, July 27, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-appears-to-be-building-new-silos-for-nuclear-missiles-researchers-say-11627401364?mod=article_inline

55. William J. Broad and David E. Sanger, "A 2nd New Nuclear Missile Base for China, and Many Questions about Strategy," *New York Times*, July 26, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/26/us/politics/china-nuclear-weapons.html

56. Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr., "The New Nuclear Age: How China's Growing Nuclear Arsenal Threatens Deterrence," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2022-04-19/new-nuclear-age

57. Gordon Lubold, "China Expands Nuclear Weapons Arsenal to Better Compete Globally, Pentagon Says," *Wall Street Journal*, November 3, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-expands-nuclear-weapons-arsenal-to-better-compete-globally-pentagon-says-11635957049; and Alastair Gale, "China Is Accelerating Its Nuclear Buildup over Rising Fears of U.S. Conflict," *Wall Street Journal*, April 9, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-is-accelerating-its-nuclear-buildup-over-rising-fears-of-u-s-conflict-11649509201?mod=hp_lead_pos1

58. Gale, "China Is Accelerating Its Nuclear Buildup."

59. Gale, "China Is Accelerating Its Nuclear Buildup."

60. Gale, "China Is Accelerating Its Nuclear Buildup."

61. William J. Broad and David E. Sanger, "China's Weapon Tests Close to a 'Sputnik Moment,' U.S. General Says," *New York Times*, October 27, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/27/us/politics/china-hypersonic-missile.html

62. Broad and Sanger, "China's Weapon Tests."

63. For more background on Russia's new nuclear doctrine, see Matthew Kroenig, "A Strategy for Deterring Russian De-escalation Strikes," Atlantic Council, April 24, 2018, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/a-strategy-for-deterring-russian-de-escalation-strikes/

64. Gordon Corera, "Ukraine War: Could Russia Use Tactical Nuclear Weapons?," *BBC*, April 26, 2022, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-60664169

65. Krepinevich, "The New Nuclear Age." See also Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall, "The Age of Strategic Instability: How Novel Technologies Disrupt the Nuclear Balance," *Foreign Affairs*, July 21, 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2020-07-21/age-strategic-instability

66. Amy Hudson, "Russia, China Push STRATCOM to Reconsider Strategic Deterrence," *Air Force Magazine*, October 21, 2020, https://www.airforcemag.com/russia-china-push-stratcom-to-reconsider-strategic-deterrence/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2010.22.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief

67. Hudson, "Russia, China Push STRATCOM."

68. "The New U.S. Nuclear Strategy Is Flawed and Dangerous: Here's Why," *Arms Control Association* 10, no. 3 (2018), https://www.armscontrol.org/issue-briefs/2018-02/new-us-nuclear-strategy-flawed-dangerous-heres-why

69. U.S. Department of Defense, "Fact Sheet: 2022 Nuclear Posture Review and Missile Defense Review," March 28, 2022, https://media.defense.gov/2022/Mar/29/2002965339/-1/-1/1/FACT-SHEET-2022-NUCLEAR-POSTURE-REVIEW-AND-MISSILE-DEFENSE-REVIEW.PDF

70. Tara Copp, "Biden's Nuke Review Omits 'No First Use', Kills Naval Cruise Missile," *Defense One*, March 30, 2022, https://www.defenseone.com/policy/2022/03/bidens-nuke-review-omits-no-first-use-kills-naval-cruise-missile/363823/

71. David E. Sanger and Anton Troianovski, "Biden and Putin Agree to Extend Nuclear Treaty," *New York Times*, January 26, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/26/world/europe/biden-putin-nuclear-treaty.html

72. Krepinevich, "The New Nuclear Age."

73. Fred Fleitz, "Will Biden Defend America against Surging Missile Threats?," *National Interest*, January 30, 2022, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/will-biden-defend-america-against-surging-missile-threats-200020

74. John D. Maurer, "Maintaining America's Nuclear Deterrent," *War on the Rocks*, March 10, 2022, https://warontherocks.com/2022/03/maintaining-americas-nuclear-deterrent/

75. Kroenig, "Deterring Russian De-escalation."

76. Arthur Herman, "The U.S. Needs a Hypersonic Capability Now," *Wall Street Journal*, December 6, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/amp/articles/america-needs-a-hypersonic-capability-china-xi-beijing-missile-weapons-attack-defense-budget-11638827597

77. Herman, "The U.S. Needs a Hypersonic Capability Now."

78. Patty-Jane Geller, "Like It or Not, the U.S. Is in a Nuclear Arms Race with China," *Wall Street Journal*, February 15, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/like-it-or-not-the-u-s-is-in-an-arms-race-with-china-weapons-icbm-missiles-beijing-war-pentagon-nuclear-power-915d8ae5

79. David E. Sanger and Edward Wong, "U.S. Ends Cold War Missile Treaty, with Aim of Countering China," *New York Times*, August 1, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/01/world/asia/inf-missile-treaty.html

80. Franklin C. Miller, "Outdated Nuclear Treaties Heighten the Risk of Nuclear War," *Wall Street Journal*, April 21, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/outdated-nuclear-treaties-new-start-treaty-russia-putin-china-xi-heighten-risk-nuclear-war-missile-test-ukraine-deterrence-11650575490

81. Miller, "Outdated Nuclear Treaties."

82. Madelyn Creedon et al., "America's Strategic Posture," https://armedservices.house.gov/sites/republicans.armedservices.house.gov/files/Strategic-Posture-Committee-Report-Final.pdf

83. Matthew Kroenig, *The Logic of American Nuclear Strategy: Why Strategic Superiority Matters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

84. Cheryl Pellerin, "Lynn: Cyberspace Is New Domain of Warfare," U.S. Central Command, October 19, 2010, https://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/NEWS-ARTICLES/News-Article-View/Article/884164/lynn-cyberspace-is-new-domain-of-warfare/

85. Adam P. Liff, "Cyberwar: A New 'Absolute Weapon'? The Proliferation of Cyberwarfare Capabilities and Interstate War," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 35, no. 3 (2012): 409–12, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2012.663252; Georgi Kantchev and Warren P. Strobel, "How Russia's 'Info Warrior' Hackers Let Kremlin Play Geopolitics on the Cheap," *Wall Street Journal*, January 2, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-russias-info-warrior-hackers-let-kremlin-play-geopolitics-on-the-cheap-11609592401?mod=itp_wsj&ru=yahoo

86. David E. Sanger, "After Russian Cyberattack, Looking for Answers and Debating Retaliation," *New York Times*, February 23, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/23/us/politics/solarwinds-hack-senate-intelligence-russia.html; Warren P. Strobel, "Computer Hack Blamed on Russia Tests Limits of U.S. Response," *Wall Street Journal*, December 18, 2020, https://www.wsj.com/articles/massive-hack-blamed-on-russia-tests-limits-of-u-s-response-11608309198; Julian E. Barnes and David E. Sanger, "After Biden Meets Putin, U.S. Exposes Details of Russian Hacking Campaign," *New York Times*, July 1, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/01/us/politics/biden-putin-russia-hacking.html

87. Kantchev and Strobel. "Russia's 'Info Warrior.'"

88. Nicole Perlroth, "How China Transformed into a Prime Cyber Threat to the U.S.," *New York Times*, July 19, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/19/technology/china-hacking-us.html; Julian E. Barnes, Nicole Perlroth, and David E. Sanger, "Preparing for Retaliation against Russia, U.S. Confronts Hacking by China," *New York Times*, March 7, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/07/us/politics/microsoft-solarwinds-hack-russia-china.html

89. Damian Paletta, "OPM Breach Was Enormous, FBI Director Says," *Wall Street Journal*, July 8, 2015, https://www.wsj.com/articles/breach-was-enormous-fbi-director-says-1436395157; Julie Hirschfeld Davis and David E. Sanger, "Hacking Linked to China Exposes Millions of U.S. Workers," *New York Times*, June 4, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/05/us/breach-in-a-federal-computer-system-exposes-personnel-data.html; Davlin Barrett and Damian Paletta, "Officials Masked Severity of Hack," *Wall Street Journal*, June 24, 2015, https://www.wsj.com/articles/hack-defined-as-two-distinct-breaches-1435158334

90. David E. Sanger and Zolan Kanno-Youngs, "U.S. Accuses China of Hacking Microsoft," *New York Times*, July 19, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/19/us/politics/microsoft-hacking-china-biden.html; Max Fisher, "Constant but Camouflaged, Flurry of Cyberattacks Offers Glimpse of New Era," *New York Times*, July 20, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/20/world/global-cyberattacks.html; for an excellent overview of China's cyber warfare efforts, see Tai Ming Cheung, Jon R. Lindsay, and Derek S. Reveron, *China and Cybersecurity: Espionage, Strategy, and Politics in the Digital Domain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

91. Richard J. Harknett and Max Smeets, "Cyber Campaigns and Strategic Outcomes," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 45, no. 4 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2020.1732354

92. Jon R. Lindsay, "The Impact of China on Cybersecurity: Fiction and Friction," *International Security* 39, no. 3 (2014/15): 30–31, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24480760

93. Nicole Perlroth, "How China Transformed into a Prime Cyber Threat to the U.S.," *New York Times*, July 19, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/19/technology/china-hacking-us.html

94. Fisher, "Constant but Camouflaged"; Joseph S. Nye Jr., "Deterrence and Dissuasion in Cyberspace," *International Security* 41, no. 3 (Winter 2016/17), https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00266; John Stone, "Cyber War Will Take Place!," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 36, no. 1 (2012), https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2012.730485; Thomas Rid, "Cyber War Will Not Take Place," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 35, no. 1 (2011): 5–32, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2011.608939; Erik Gartzke, "The Myth of Cyberwar: Bringing War in Cyberspace Back Down to Earth," *International Security* 38, no. 2 (2013), http://www.jstor.org/stable/24480930

95. Paul M. Nakasone and Michael Sulmeyer, "How to Compete In Cyberspace: Cyber Command's New Approach," *Foreign Affairs*, August 25, 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-08-25/cybersecurity; Nicole Perlroth and David E. Sanger, "U.S. Escalates Online Attacks on Russia's Power Grid," *New York Times*, June 15, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/15/us/politics/trump-cyber-russia-grid.html

96. Fisher, "Constant but Camouflaged."

97. Perlroth and Sanger, "U.S. Escalates Online Attacks."

98. Nakasone and Sulmeyer, "How to Compete in Cyberspace."

99. Lindsay, "The Impact of China on Cybersecurity."

100. Nye, "Deterrence and Dissuasion in Cyberspace," 45.

101. Michael Sulmeyer, "How the U.S. Can Play Cyber-Offense: Deterrence Isn't Enough," *Foreign Affairs*, March 22, 2018, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2018-03-22/how-us-can-play-cyber-offense

102. Quoted in Michael C. Horowitz, "Artificial Intelligence, International Competition, and the Balance of Power," *Texas National Security Review* 1, no. 3 (2018): 38, 45–47, https://doi.org/10.15781/T2639KP49. Eric Schmidt, "Innovation Power," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/eric-schmidt-innovation-power-technology-geopolitics

103. Schmidt, "Innovation Power," 47.

104. Scott Cuomo, Benjamin Jensen, and Chris Whyte, "Wargaming with Athena: How to Make Militaries Smarter, Faster, and More Efficient with Artificial Intelligence," *War on the Rocks*, June 5, 2018, https://warontherocks.com/2018/06/wargaming-with-athena-how-to-make-militaries-smarter-faster-and-more-efficient-with-artificial-intelligence/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=ebb%206-6&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief

105. Schmidt, "Innovation Power."

106. Department of Defense, "Summary of the 2018 Department of Defense Artificial Intelligence Strategy: Harnessing AI to Advance Our Security and Prosperity," https://media.defense.gov/2019/Feb/12/2002088963/-1/-1/1/SUMMARY-OF-DOD-AI-STRATEGY.PDF

107. Hans Lauzen and Connor S. Mclemore, "The Dawn of Artificial Intelligence in Naval Warfare," *War on the Rocks*, June 12, 2018, https://warontherocks.com/2018/06/the-dawn-of-artificial-intelligence-in-naval-warfare/

108. Ryan Fedasiuk and Alex Stephenson, "How AI Would—and Wouldn't—Factor into a U.S.-Chinese War," *War on the Rocks*, May 3, 2022, https://warontherocks.com/2022/05/how-ai-would-and-wouldnt-factor-into-a-u-s-chinese-war/

109. Michael C. Horowitz, Lauren Kahn, and Laura Resnick Samotin, "A Force for the Future: A High-Reward, Low-Risk Approach to AI Military Innovation," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2022-04-19/force-future

110. Sharon Weinberger, Robert Wall, and Doug Cameron, "Pentagon Woos Silicon Valley to Join Ranks of Arms Makers," *Wall Street Journal*, March 26, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/pentagon-woos-silicon-valley-to-join-ranks-of-arms-makers-38b1d4c0

111. Weinberger, Wall, and Cameron, "Pentagon Woos Silicon Valley."

112. Robert McMillan, Dustin Volz, and Aruna Viswanatha, "China Is Stealing AI Secrets to Turbocharge Spying, U.S. Says," *Wall Street Journal*, December 25, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/tech/ai/china-is-stealing-ai-secrets-to-turbocharge-spying-u-s-says-00413594

113. Bill Drexel and Hannah Kelley, "China Is Flirting with AI Catastrophe," *Foreign Affairs*, May 30, 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/china-flirting-ai-catastrophe

114. Drexel and Kelley, "China Is Flirting with AI Catastrophe."

115. Fedasiuk and Stephenson, "How AI Would—and Wouldn't—Factor into a U.S.-Chinese War."

116. Paul Scharre, "America Can Win the AI Race," *Foreign Affairs*, April 4, 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/ai-america-can-win-race

117. Elbridge Colby, "From Sanctuary to Battlefield: A Framework for a U.S. Defense and Deterrence Strategy for Space," Center for a New American Security, January 27, 2016, 4–5, https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/from-sanctuary-to-battlefield-a-framework-for-a-us-defense-and-deterrence-strategy-for-space

118. Colby, "From Sanctuary to Battlefield."

119. John J. Klein, "The Creation of a U.S. Space Force: It's Only the End of the Beginning," *War on the Rocks*, January 2, 2020, https://warontherocks.com/2020/01/the-creation-of-a-u-s-space-force-its-only-the-end-of-the-beginning/

120. Daniel R. Coats, "Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community," 16, https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/2019-ATA-SFR—SSCI.pdf

121. Sandra Erwin, "Pentagon Report: China Amassing Arsenal of Anti-Satellite Weapons," *Space News*, September 1, 2020, https://spacenews.com/pentagon-report-china-amassing-arsenal-of-anti-satellite-weapons/

122. Brad Dress, "China Space Threat Growing at 'Breathtaking Pace': Space Command Chief," *The Hill*, March 1, 2024, https://thehill.com/policy/defense/4500420-china-threat-space-command/

123. Michael Sheetz, "U.S. Commits to Ending Anti-Satellite Missile Testing, Calls for Global Agreement," *CNBC*, April 18, 2022, https://www.cnbc.com/2022/04/18/us-to-end-anti-satellite-asat-testing-calls-for-global-agreement.html

124. Megan Eckstein, "CNO Richardson Calls for Tougher Actions in Gray Zone Conflicts with Russia, China," *USNI News*, February 6, 2019, https://news.usni.org/2019/02/06/cno-richardson-calls-tougher-actions-gray-zone-conflicts-russia-china

125. Kris Osborn, "The U.S. Military Is Preparing for an 'Irregular' War," *The National Interest*, October 7, 2020, https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/us-military-preparing-irregular-war-170222

126. Barnett S. Koven and Chris Mason, "Back to the Future: Getting Special Forces Ready for Great-Power Competition," *War on the Rocks*, May 4, 2021, https://warontherocks.com/2021/05/back-to-the-future-getting-special-forces-ready-for-great-power-competition/

127. Melissa M. Lee, "Subversive Statecraft: The Changing Face of Great-Power Conflict," *Foreign Affairs*, December 4, 2019, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2019-12-04/subversive-statecraft

Chapter Five

1. John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688–1783* (London: Routledge, 2002).

2. Edward N. Luttwak, "From Geopolitics to Geo-Economics: Logic of Conflict, Grammar of Commerce," *The National Interest*, no. 20 (1990): 17–23, http://www.jstor.org/stable/42894676; Michael Miklaucic, "Geoeconomics; Why Now? Because China Is Eating Our Lunch!," *Real Clear Defense*, August 31, 2021, https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2021/08/31/geoeconomics_why_now_because_china_is_eating_our_lunch_792386.html?mc_cid=5486568eaf&mc_eid=185b58d5f0

3. Jack Snyder, "Trade Expectations and Great Power Theory," *International Security* 40, no. 3 (2016), https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_r_00229

4. Mariya Grinberg, "Wartime Commercial Policy and Trade between Enemies," *International Security* 46, no. 1 (2021): 51.

5. Yuka Hayashi, "U.S. Says It Is Realigning Its China Trade Policy," *Wall Street Journal*, March 1, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-says-it-is-realigning-its-chi

na-trade-policy-11646150650; Greg Ip, "Western Sanctions Bite Russian Economy, but Pose Unpredictable Risks," *Wall Street Journal*, March 1, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/western-sanctions-bite-russian-economy-but-pose-unpredictable-risks-11646143908

6. Miklaucic, "Geoeconomics."

7. James M. Cunningham, Charles E. Luftig, and David H. McCormick, "Economic Might, National Security, and the Future of American Statecraft," *Texas National Security Review* 3, no. 3 (2020), http://dx.doi.org/10.26153/tsw/10222

8. Greg Ip, "How the West Can Win a Global Power Struggle," *Wall Street Journal*, March 18, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-the-west-can-win-a-global-power-struggle-11647615557

9. Liza Tobin, "China's Brute Force Economics: Waking Up from the Dream of a Level Playing Field," *Texas National Security Review* 6, no. 1 (Winter 2022/2023): 81–98, http://dx.doi.org/10.26153/tsw/44439

10. Tobin, "Brute Force Economics."

11. Dani Rodrik, "Globalization's Wrong Turn: And How It Hurt America," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2019, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2019-06-11/globalizations-wrong-turn

12. Rana Foroohar, "After Neoliberalism," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/after-neoliberalism-all-economics-is-local-rana-foroohar

13. Yuka Hayashi, "U.S. to Take Hard Line on Chinese Trade Practices, Administration Says," *Wall Street Journal*, March 1, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-to-take-hard-line-on-chinese-trade-practices-administration-says-11614625200

14. Yuka Hayashi, "U.S. Says It Is Realigning Its China Trade Policy," *Wall Street Journal*, March 1, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-says-it-is-realigning-its-china-trade-policy-11646150650

15. Lingling Wei, "China Puts Spymaster in Charge of U.S. Corporate Crackdown," *Wall Street Journal*, May 18, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-crackdown-foreign-companies-chen-yixin-9b403893

16. Wei, "China Puts Spymaster in Charge of U.S. Corporate Crackdown."

17. Alexander William Salter, "Trade Less, Raid Less: Decoupling Lowers the Risk of War with China," *Fortune*, February 3, 2022, https://fortune.com/2022/02/03/trade-less-raid-less-decoupling-lowers-the-risk-of-war-with-china-usa-biden-policy-international-a-w-salter/

18. Peter Baker and Zolan Kanno-Youngs, "Biden to Begin New Asia-Pacific Economic Bloc with a Dozen Allies," *New York Times*, May 23, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/23/world/asia/biden-asian-pacific-bloc.html

19. Baker and Kanno-Youngs, "Biden to Begin New Asia-Pacific Economic Bloc."

20. Ip, "Western Sanctions Bite Russian Economy."

21. Barry Eichengreen, *Exorbitant Privilege: The Rise and Fall of the Dollar and the Future of the International Monetary System* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

22. Henry J. Farrell and Abraham L. Newman, "The U.S. Is the Only Sanctions Superpower: It Must Use That Power Wisely," *New York Times*, March 16, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/16/opinion/us-russia-sanctions-power-economy.html?smtyp=cur&smid=tw-nytimes

23. Bryan Early and Keith Preble, "The Past, Present, and Future of U.S. Sanctions Enforcement," *War on the Rocks*, February 23, 2021, https://warontherocks.com/2021/02/the-past-present-and-future-of-u-s-sanctions-enforcement/

24. Daniel W. Drezner, "The United States of Sanctions: The Use and Abuse of

Economic Coercion," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-08-24/united-states-sanctions

25. Drezner, "The United States of Sanctions."

26. Peter Harrel, "The Limits of Economic Warfare," *Foreign Affairs*, March 27, 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/limits-economic-warfare

27. Thomas J. Duesterberg, "What Janet Yellen Gets Right about the World Economic Order," *Wall Street Journal*, April 20, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/what-janet-yellen-world-economic-order-trade-agreements-allies-free-trade-uk-britain-five-eyes-tpp-trans-pacific-partnership-cptpp-wto-11650462595

28. Duesterberg, "What Janet Yellen Gets Right."

29. Ella Koeze, "Boycotts, Not Bombs: Sanctions Are a Go-To Tactic, with Uneven Results," *New York Times*, March 11, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/03/11/world/economic-sanctions-history.html

30. Rob Garver, "Russia's Economy Grows in 2023, despite War and Sanctions," *Voice of America*, February 8, 2024, https://www.voanews.com/a/russia-economy-grew-in-2023-despite-war-and-sanctions/7478952.html

31. Akhil Ramesh, "Are We Witnessing the Beginning of De-dollarization?," *The Hill*, April 9, 2022, https://thehill.com/opinion/international/3262514-are-we-witnessing-the-beginning-of-de-dollarization/

32. Agathe Demarais, "The End of the Age of Sanctions?," *Foreign Affairs*, December 27, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/end-age-sanctions

33. Stella Yiefan Xie, "Chinese Exports Surge as Trade with Russia and Southeast Asia Jumps," *Wall Street Journal*, April 13, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinese-exports-surge-as-trade-with-russia-and-southeast-asia-jumps-9c745ff1

34. Ruchir Sharma, "The Comeback Nation: U.S. Economic Supremacy Has Repeatedly Proved Declinists Wrong," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-03-31/comeback-nation

35. Zongyuan Zoe Liu and Mihaela Papa, "The Anti-Dollar Axis: Russia and China's Plans to Evade U.S. Economic Power," *Foreign Affairs*, March 7, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/2022-03-07/anti-dollar-axis

36. Carla Norrlöf, "The Dollar Still Dominates," *Foreign Affairs*, February 21, 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/dollar-still-dominates

37. Quoted in David M. Dickson, "China's Economic 'Bargaining Chip'," *Washington Times*, July 27, 2008, http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/jul/27/chinas-economic-bargaining-chip/

38. Quoted in Chad P. Bown and Douglas A. Irwin, "Trump's Assault on the Global Trading System: And Why Decoupling from China Will Change Everything," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2019, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2019-08-12/trumps-assault-global-trading-system?utm_medium=newsletters&utm_source=fatoday&utm_content=20190831&utm_campaign=FA%20Today%20/%20Weekend%20083119%20Weekend%20Read:%20Trump's%20Assault%20on%20the%20Global%20Trading%20System&utm_term=FA%20Today%20-%20112017

39. Jake Sullivan, "The Biden Administration's International Economic Agenda: A Conversation with National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan," April 27, 2023, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/es_20230427_sullivan_intl_economic_agenda_transcript.pdf

40. Greg Ip, "Bidenomics and Its Contradictions," *Wall Street Journal*, June 8, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/bidenomics-and-its-contradictions-4d76ee7d

41. Sullivan, "The Biden Administration's International Economic Agenda."

42. Sullivan, "The Biden Administration's International Economic Agenda."

43. Trevor Hunnicutt and Jeff Mason, "G7 Aligns on Shared 'De-risk, Not Decouple' Approach to China," *Reuters*, May 20, 2023, https://www.reuters.com/world/white-house-says-g7-will-align-shared-de-risk-not-decouple-approach-china-2023-05-20/

44. Evelyn Cheng, "As Growth Stalls for the U.S. and China, Blinken Talked up Economic Ties in High-Stakes Beijing Trip," *CNBC*, June 20, 2023, https://www.cnbc.com/2023/06/21/blinken-talked-up-us-china-economic-ties-in-high-stakes-beijing-trip.html; Mike Gallagher, "Zombie Engagement with Beijing," *Wall Street Journal*, June 14, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/zombie-engagement-with-beijing-biden-xi-spy-cuba-tech-human-rights-b79bc890

45. Oren Cass and Gabriella Rodriguez, "The Case for a Hard Break with China," *Foreign Affairs*, July 25, 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/case-for-hard-break-with-beijing-economic-derisking

46. Oren Cass, "Reactions to Sullivan Speech at Brookings," https://www.brookings.edu/articles/reactions-to-national-security-advisor-jake-sullivans-brookings-speech/

47. William Inboden and Adam Klein, "Judge the CHIPs Act as Defense Policy, Not Industrial Policy," *The Hill*, March 20, 2022, https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/598783-judge-the-chips-act-as-defense-policy-not-industrial-policy/

48. Yuka Hayashi, "Nations Aim to Secure Supply Chains by Turning Offshoring into 'Friend-Shoring,'" *Wall Street Journal*, May 15, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/nations-aim-to-secure-supply-chains-by-turning-offshoring-into-friend-shoring-11652612580

49. John Keilman, "U.S. Manufacturers Seek China Alternatives as Tensions Rise," *Wall Street Journal*, May 31, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-manufacturers-seek-china-alternatives-as-tensions-rise-3cf539fa

50. Edward White and Sun Yu, "Xi Dreams of Military Industrial Complex," *Financial Times*, June 18, 2023, https://www.ft.com/content/6f388e4b-9c4e-4ca3-8040-49962f1e155d?shareType=nongift

51. Michael R. Pompeo, "China and Economic Security in the Shadow of Ukraine," *The National Interest*, June 14, 2022, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/china-and-economic-security-shadow-ukraine-202946?page=0%2C1

52. Pompeo, "China and Economic Security in the Shadow of Ukraine."

53. Pompeo, "China and Economic Security in the Shadow of Ukraine."

54. Kate O'Keeffe, "China Investment in U.S. Plane Maker Draws FBI, National-Security Reviews," *Wall Street Journal*, January 18, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinese-investment-in-u-s-plane-maker-draws-fbi-national-security-reviews-11642507206

55. Stella Yiefan Xie, "U.S. Companies Are Finding It Hard to Avoid China," *Wall Street Journal*, December 12, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/world/china/u-s-companies-are-finding-it-hard-to-avoid-china-213997b7?mod=djem10point

56. Xie, "U.S. Companies Are Finding It Hard."

57. Xie, "U.S. Companies Are Finding It Hard."

58. Kate O'Keeffe and Aruna Viswanatha, "A DuPont China Deal Reveals Cracks in U.S. National-Security Screening," *Wall Street Journal*, August 12, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-dupont-china-deal-reveals-cracks-in-u-s-national-security-screening-665cb50c

59. Neill Ferguson, "From Trade War to Tech War to Cold War," *Strategika*, Hoover Institution, March 18, 2019, https://www.hoover.org/research/trade-war-tech-war-cold-war

60. Eric Schmidt, "Innovation Power," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2023.

61. Schmidt, "Innovation Power."

62. Quoted in Graham Allison and Eric Schmiedt, "China Will Soon Lead the U.S. in Tech," *Wall Street Journal*, December 7, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-will-soon-lead-the-us-in-tech-global-leader-semiconductors-5g-wireless-green-energy-11638915759

63. Allison and Schmiedt, "China Will Soon Lead the U.S. in Tech."

64. Mohammed Soliman, "Tech Containment Is Core to Washington's Cold War 2.0 Strategy," *The National Interest*, October 27, 2022, https://nationalinterest.org/blog/techland-when-great-power-competition-meets-digital-world/tech-containment-core-washington's

65. Jasper Hansen, "Techno-Nationalism: An Industrial Policy for the Twenty-First Century," *The National Interest*, February 20, 2023, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/techno-nationalism-industrial-policy-twenty-first-century-206230; Dan Wang, "China's Tech Revolution," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/chinas-hidden-tech-revolution-how-beijing-threatens-us-dominance-dan-wang

66. Quoted in Lingling Wei, "China Spends Far More Than Others to Help Favored Industries, Report Finds," *Wall Street Journal*, May 23, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-spends-far-more-than-others-to-help-favored-industries-report-finds-11653235200

67. Wei, "China Spends Far More Than Others."

68. Wei, "China Spends Far More Than Others."

69. White and Yu, "Xi Dreams of Military Industrial Complex."

70. Adam Segal, "The Coming Tech Cold War with China: Beijing Is Already Countering Washington's Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, September 9, 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-america/2020-09-09/coming-tech-cold-war-china?utm_campaign=tw_daily_soc&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter_posts

71. Segal, "The Coming Tech Cold War with China."

72. James Mulvenon, "A World Divided: The Conflict with Chinese Techno-Nationalism Isn't Coming—It's Already Here," *War on the Rocks*, January 28, 2021, https://warontherocks.com/2021/01/a-world-divided-the-conflict-with-chinese-techno-nationalism-isnt-coming-its-already-here/; Maya Wang, "China's Techno-Authoritarianism Has Gone Global: Washington Needs to Offer an Alternative," *Foreign Affairs*, April 8, 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2021-04-08/chinas-techno-authoritarianism-has-gone-global.

73. Paul Dabbar, "How the Chinese Communist Party Steals U.S. Technology," *Wall Street Journal*, August 17, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/amp/articles/a-thousand-talents-is-999-too-many-energy-department-china-technology-transfer-research-innovation-national-lab-conflict-of-interest-appropriation-11659980858

74. White and Yu, "Xi Dreams of Military Industrial Complex."

75. Stu Woo and Daniel Michaels, "China's Newest Weapon to Nab Western Technology—Its Courts," *Wall Street Journal*, February 20, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-china-technology-disputes-intellectual-property-europe-e749a72e?mod=hp_lead_pos5

76. For more details on government reforms aimed at supporting a new "innovation strategy" along these lines, see James M. Cunningham, Charles E. Luftig, and David H. McCormick, "Economic Might, National Security, and the Future of American Statecraft," *Texas National Security Review* 3, no. 3 (2020), https://tnsr.org/2020/05/economic-might-national-security-future-american-statecraft/#_ftnref21

77. Greg Ip, "'Industrial Policy' Is Back: The West Dusts Off Old Idea to Counter China," *Wall Street Journal*, July 29, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/subsidies-chips-china-state-aid-biden-11627565906?st=dozhbafwuamuio8&reflink=article_email_share

78. Ip, "'Industrial Policy' Is Back."

79. Ip, "'Industrial Policy' Is Back."

80. Graham Allison and Eric Schmidt, "Semiconductor Dependency Imperils American Security," *Wall Street Journal*, June 20, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/semiconductor-dependency-imperils-american-security-chip-manufacturing-technology-sector-11655654650

81. The White House, "Building Resilient Supply Chains, Revitalizing American Manufacturing, and Fostering Broad-Based Growth," June 2021, https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/100-day-supply-chain-review-report.pdf

82. Yuka Hayashi and Asa Fitch, "U.S. Aims to Chart New Course for Chip Industry," *Wall Street Journal*, February 28, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/chips-act-is-bounty-for-semiconductor-companieswith-many-strings-attached-6e72fd67

83. Hayashi and Fitch, "U.S. Aims to Chart New Course."

84. Matt Cole and Chris Nicholson, "DEI Killed the CHIPS Act," *The Hill*, March 7, 2024, https://thehill.com/opinion/4517470-dei-killed-the-chips-act/

85. Farah Stockman, "The U.S. Is Behind in the Competition for the 'Oil' of the 21st Century," *New York Times*, July 25, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/25/opinion/america-tech-visas.html?campaign_id=2&emc=edit_th_20220725&instance_id=67618&nl=todaysheadlines&regi_id=30827009&segment_id=99566&user_id=5df48842560411e6f7d1ec6408309180

86. Stockman, "The U.S. Is Behind."

87. Hayashi, "Nations Aim to Secure Supply Chains."

88. Chris Miller, "How Silicon Valley Lost the Chips Race," *Foreign Affairs*, October 19, 2023,
https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/how-silicon-valley-lost-chips-race

89. John McKinnon and Asa Fitch, "U.S. Restricts Semiconductor Exports in Bid to Slow China's Military Advance," *Wall Street Journal*, October 7, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-restricts-semiconductor-exports-in-bid-to-slow-chinas-military-advance-11665155702; Ian Talley and Sabrina Sidiqqui, "Biden Administration Considers Cutting Off Huawei from U.S. Supplier," *Wall Street Journal*, January 31, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/biden-administration-considers-cutting-off-huawei-from-u-s-suppliers-11675129479

90. Chad Bown, "The Return of Export Control," *Foreign Affairs*, January 24, 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/return-export-controls?utm_medium=newsletters&utm_source=fatoday&utm_campaign=The%20Return%20of%20Export%20Controls&utm_content=20230124&utm_term=FA%20Today%20-%20112017

91. Liza Lin and Dan Strumf, "China's Top Nuclear-Weapons Lab Used American Computer Chips Decades after Ban," *Wall Street Journal*, January 29, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-top-nuclear-weapons-lab-used-american-computer-chips-decades-after-ban-11674990320

92. Yuka Hayashi, "U.S. to Allow South Korean, Taiwan Chip Makers to Keep Operations in China," *Wall Street Journal*, June 12, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-to-allow-south-korean-taiwan-chip-makers-to-keep-operations-in-china-5d7d72cc?mod=e2tw

93. Brayden Helwig, Arthur Herman, and Nadia Schadlow, "Powering Innovation: A Strategic Approach to America's Advanced Battery Technology," Hudson Institute, https://www.hudson.org/research/17333-powering-innovation-a-strategic-approach-to-america-s-advanced-battery-technology

94. Keith Bradsher and Michael Forsythe, "Why a Chinese Company Dominates Electric Car Batteries," *New York Times*, December 22, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/22/business/china-catl-electric-car-batteries.html?campaign_id=2&emc=edit_th_20211222&instance_id=48394&nl=todaysheadlines&regi_id=30827009&segment_id=77622&user_id=5df48842560411e6f7d1ec6408309180

95. Bradsher and Forsythe, "Why a Chinese Company Dominates Electric Car Batteries."

96. Bradsher and Forsythe, "Why a Chinese Company Dominates Electric Car Batteries."

97. This paragraph draws on Ionut Popescu, Dan Negrea, and James Jay Carafano, "Rare Earths Supply Chains and Confrontation with China," *The National Interest*, March 21, 2023, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/rare-earths-supply-chains-and-confrontation-china-206331

98. Jennifer Griffin and Liz Friden, "The Fight for Rare Minerals," *Fox News Online*, June 3, 2022, https://www.foxnews.com/world/fight-rare-earth-minerals

99. Marina Yue Zhang, "Will China Seek to Exploit Its Rare-Earth Dominance?," *The National Interest*, November 26, 2022, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/will-china-seek-exploit-its-rare-earth-dominance-205944?page=0%2C1

100. Chris Buckley, "China's Dream for Rare Earths Rests on Grim Costs," *Reuters*, November 3, 2010, https://www.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-52646020101103

101. Chris Johnson and Elias Groll, "China Raises Threat of Rare-Earths Cutoff to U.S.," *Foreign Policy*, May 21, 2019, https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/05/21/china-raises-threat-of-rare-earth-mineral-cutoff-to-us/

102. Bloomberg Opinion, "Ending China's Chokehold on Rare-Earth Minerals," AEI, September 18, 2020, https://www.aei.org/op-eds/ending-chinas-chokehold-on-rare-earth-minerals/

103. For an excellent scholarly overview of BRI, see Eyck Freymann, *One Belt One Road: Chinese Power Meets the World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center).

104. Markus Brunnermeier, Rush Doshi, and Harold James, "Beijing's Bismarckian Ghosts: How Great Powers Compete Economically," *Washington Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (2018), https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2018.1520571

105. Jennifer Hillman and David Sacks, "China's Belt and Road: Implications for the United States," *Council on Foreign Relations*, no. 79, March 2021, 3, https://www.cfr.org/report/chinas-belt-and-road-implications-for-the-united-states/

106. Hillman and Sacks, "China's Belt and Road," 4.

107. Patrick Cronin, "How to Asymmetrically Out-Compete Xi Jinping's One Belt One Road Initiative," *War on the Rocks*, March 2, 2021, https://warontherocks.com/2021/03/how-to-asymmetrically-out-compete-xi-jinpings-one-belt-one-road-initiative/

108. Charles Kenny and Scott Morris, "America Shouldn't Copy China's Belt and Road Initiative: Washington Must Invest in Multilateral Institutions, Not Infrastructure," *Foreign Affairs*, June 22, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2022-06-22/america-shouldnt-copy-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative

109. Cronin, "How to Asymmetrically Out-Compete."

110. Maria Abi-Habib, "China's 'Belt and Road' Plan in Pakistan Takes a Military

Turn," *New York Times*, December 19, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/19/world/asia/pakistan-china-belt-road-military.html

111. Niharika Mandhana and Chun Han Wong, "China to Upgrade Ream Naval Base in Cambodia, Fueling U.S. Concerns," *Wall Street Journal*, June 8, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-to-upgrade-ream-naval-base-in-cambodia-fueling-u-s-concerns-11654674382; Patricia M. Kim, "Does the China–Solomon Islands Security Pact Portend a More Interventionist Beijing?," *Brookings Institution* (blog), May 6, 2022, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2022/05/06/does-the-china-solomon-islands-security-pact-portend-a-more-interventionist-beijing/

112. Cronin, "How to Asymmetrically Out-Compete."

113. Sha Hua, Daniel Michaels, and Valentina Pop, "From Lightbulbs to 5G, China Battles West for Control of Vital Technology Standards," *Wall Street Journal*, February 8, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/amp/articles/from-lightbulbs-to-5g-china-battles-west-for-control-of-vital-technology-standards-11612722698

114. Brunnermeier, Doshi, and James, "Beijing's Bismarckian Ghosts," 164.

115. Hua, Michaels, and Pop, "From Lightbulbs to 5G."

116. Hua, Michaels, and Pop, "From Lightbulbs to 5G."

117. Dan Strumpf, "U.S. Set Out to Hobble China's Huawei, and So It Has," *Wall Street Journal*, October 7, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-set-out-to-hobble-chinas-huawei-and-so-it-has-11633617478?mod=itp_wsj&ru=yahoo

118. Greg Ip, "How the West Can Win a Global Power Struggle," *Wall Street Journal*, March 18, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-the-west-can-win-a-global-power-struggle-11647615557; Bob Davis, "U.S. Enlists Allies to Counter China's Technology Push," *Wall Street Journal*, February 28, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-enlists-allies-to-counter-chinas-technology-push-11614524400

119. Simone Gao, "Why China Will Never Lead on Tech," *Wall Street Journal*, January 30, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/why-china-will-never-lead-on-tech-semiconductor-chip-communism-innovation-west-corruption-economy-technology-11675114520

120. Jason Bordoff and Meghan L. O'Sullivan, "The New Energy Order: How Governments Will Transform Energy Markets," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/energy/2022-06-07/markets-new-energy-order; Editorial Board, "A Lesson in Energy Masochism," *Wall Street Journal*, March 1, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-lesson-in-energy-masochism-europe-natural-gas-russia-vladimir-putin-11646170129?reflink=desktopwebshare_twitter; Benoit Faucon, Christopher M. Matthews, and Summer Said, "The End of Energy Free Trade," *Wall Street Journal*, June 3, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-end-of-energy-free-trade-oil-and-gas-sanctions-russia-war-ukraine-putin-11654262659?mod=e2tw

121. Holman W. Junkins Jr., "Post-Ukraine Climate Realism," *Wall Street Journal*, June 3, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/post-ukraine-climate-realism-lobby-groups-scientists-energy-fossil-fuel-electric-cars-wind-farms-global-warming-11654281026

122. Department of Energy, "The New Energy Realism: Secretary Perry Remarks at CERA Week—as Prepared for Delivery," March 7, 2018, https://www.energy.gov/articles/new-energy-realism-secretary-perry-remarks-cera-week-prepared-delivery

123. Don Ritter, "The Dominant Global Security Issue Is Still Fossil Fuels," *The National Interest*, March 22, 2023, https://nationalinterest.org/blog/dominant-global-security-issue-still-fossil-fuels-206336

124. Bernard L. Weinstein, "Only America Can Ensure Global Energy Security," *The Hill*, March 27, 2022, https://thehill.com/opinion/energy-environment/599726-only-america-can-ensure-global-energy-security/

125. Faucon et al., "The End of Energy Free Trade"; Katrin Bennhold and Jim Tankersley, "Ukraine War's Latest Victim? The Fight against Climate Change," *New York Times*, June 26, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/26/world/europe/g7-summit-ukraine-war-climate-change.html?smtyp=cur&smid=tw-nytimes

126. Niall Ferguson and Kenneth C. Griffin, "How to Beat Putin with Natural Gas," *Wall Street Journal*, February 23, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/putin-green-energy-price-independence-gas-lng-fracking-russia-ukraine-invasion-europe-germany-nord-stream-11645650131.

127. Sha Hua and Brian Spegele, "U.S. Gas Sales to China Dry Up as Ukraine War Disrupts Energy Trade," *Wall Street Journal*, June 23, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-gas-sales-to-china-dry-up-as-ukraine-war-disrupts-energy-trade-11655988154

128. Dan Negrea, Sam Buchen, and Nick Loris, "On Energy Policy, All-of-the-Above Is the Only Sensible Choice," *The National Interest*, September 16, 2022, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/energy-policy-all-above-only-sensible-choice-204826?page=0%2C1

129. Jason Furman and Jim Stock, "New Report: The All-of-the-Above Energy Strategy as a Path to Sustainable Economic Growth," The White House, May 29, 2014, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2014/05/29/new-Report-all-above-energy-strategy-path-sustainable-economic-growth; "President Donald J. Trump Has Unleashed American Producers and Restored Our Energy Dominance," The White House, July 29, 2020, https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-unleashed-american-producers-restored-energy-dominance/

130. Editorial Board, "John Kerry's Ukraine Emissions," *Wall Street Journal*, February 24, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/john-kerrys-ukraine-emissions-climate-russia-vladimir-putin-11645736997

131. Bjorn Lomborg, "Climate Change Calls for Adaptation, Not Panic," *Wall Street Journal*, October 21, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/climate-change-adaptation-panic-exaggerating-disaster-11634760376

132. Emma Newburger, "Biden Pauses New Oil and Gas Leases amid Legal Battle over Cost of Climate Change," *CNBC*, February 24, 2022, https://www.cnbc.com/2022/02/24/biden-administration-pausing-new-oil-and-gas-leases-amid-legal-battle-.html; Editorial Board, "Biden's U.S. Oil Embargo," *Wall Street Journal*, March 8, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/joe-bidens-u-s-oil-embargo-russia-energy-natural-gas-vladimir-putin-ukraine-11646780609; Lisa Friedman, "Biden Administration Cancels Drilling Sales in Alaska and Gulf of Mexico," *New York Times*, May 12, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/12/climate/biden-oil-gas-lease-sales.html

133. Morgan Chalfant and Rachel Frazin, "Biden Warns of 'Existential' Climate Threat at Glasgow Summit," *The Hill*, November 1, 2021, https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/579403-biden-calls-for-collective-action-at-glasgow-climate-summit

134. David Gattie, "US Hyperfocus on Decarbonization Creates Geopolitical Blind Spots," *The Hill*, March 7, 2023, https://thehill.com/opinion/energy-environment/3887287-us-hyperfocus-on-decarbonization-creates-geopolitical-blind-spots/

135. Michael Crowley, "Biden Calls for a Mix of Competition and Cooperation with China," *New York Times*, October 20, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/20/us/politics/burns-china.html; Sha Hua, "China Gives Itself Wiggle Room on Climate Change ahead of COP26," *Wall Street Journal*, October 29, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-gives-itself-wiggle-room-on-climate-change-goals-11635538164?mod=world_major_1_pos3

136. Steven E. Koonin, "Climate Change Brings a Flood of Hyperbole," *Wall Street Journal*, August 10, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/intergovernmental-panel-climate-change-ipcc-un-united-nations-global-warming-floods-wildfire-stevens-palmer-koonin-11628631428.

137. Bjorn Lomborg, "Climate Change Calls for Adaptation, Not Panic," *Wall Street Journal*, October 21, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/climate-change-adaptation-panic-exaggerating-disaster-11634760376

138. Bjorn Lomborg, "We're Safer from Climate Disasters Than Ever Before," *Wall Street Journal*, November 3, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/climate-activists-disasters-fire-storms-deaths-change-cop26-glasgow-global-warming-11635973538

139. Todd Royal, "Why Climate Panic Is Unfounded Hysteria," *The National Interest*, April 4, 2021, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/why-climate-panic-unfounded-hysteria-181741

140. For a sample of such studies, see Dan Negrea and Nick Loris, "Facts, Not Fear, Should Drive Biden's Climate Policies," *The National Interest*, October 28, 2021, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/facts-not-fear-should-drive-biden's-climate-change-policies-195453

141. Negrea and Loris, "Facts, Not Fear."

142. Steven E. Koonin, "Climate Change Brings a Flood of Hyperbole," *Wall Street Journal*, August 10, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/intergovernmental-panel-climate-change-ipcc-un-united-nations-global-warming-floods-wildfire-stevens-palmer-koonin-11628631428

143. Koonin, "Climate Change Brings a Flood."

144. Lisa Friedman, "John Kerry, U.S. Climate Envoy, Tells Top Polluters 'We Must All Move Faster,'" *New York Times*, January 27, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/27/climate/john-kerry-climate-emissions.html

145. "Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5 Degrees Celsius: Summary for Policy Makers," IPCC, https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/spm/; quoted in Kate Aronoff's "We've Opened the Door Too Wide for Oil and Gas Companies," *New York Times*, April 29, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/29/opinion/energy-crisis-oil-gas-climate-change.html?campaign_id=2&emc=edit_th_20220430&instance_id=60093&nl=todaysheadlines&regi_id=30827009&segment_id=90904&user_id=5df48842560411e6f7d1ec6408309180

146. Bjorn Lomborg, "The Rich World's Climate Hypocrisy," *Wall Street Journal*, June 20, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-rich-worlds-climate-hypocrisy-energy-fossil-fuel-wind-solar-panel-india-poverty-power-battery-storage-11655654331

147. Lomborg, "The Rich World's Climate Hypocrisy."

148. Lomborg, "The Rich World's Climate Hypocrisy."

149. Jason Bordoff and Meghan L. O'Sullivan, "The Age of Energy Insecurity," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/world/energy-insecurity-climate-change-geopolitics-resources; Kelly Sims Gallagher, "The Coming Carbon Tsunami," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2021-12-14/coming-carbon-tsunami

150. Holman Jenkins, "Why Are Carbon Emissions Up?," *Wall Street Journal*, August 15, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/carbon-emissions-up-inflation-reduction-act-biden-climate-change-renewable-green-energy-subsidy-b5d90085

151. Julian E. Barnes et al., "Climate Change Poses a Widening Threat to National Security," *New York Times*, October 21, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/21/climate/climate-change-national-security.html

152. Nadia Schadlow, "The Distracted Defense Department," *Wall Street Journal*,

October 21, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/distracted-defense-department-china-instability-military-climate-race-11634848224

153. Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Climate Risk Analysis October 2021*, https://media.defense.gov/2021/Oct/21/2002877353/-1/-1/0/DOD-CLIMATE-RISK-ANALYSIS-FINAL.PDF; National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2040: A More Contested World*, 30–41, https://www.dni.gov/index.php/gt2040-home/gt2040-structural-forces/environment

154. Lisa Friedman and Brad Plumer, "Negotiators Strike a Climate Deal, but World Remains Far from Limiting Warming," *New York Times*, November 13, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/13/climate/cop26-glasgow-climate-agreement.html?campaign_id=2&emc=edit_th_20211114&instance_id=45391&nl=todaysheadlines&regi_id=30827009&segment_id=74380&user_id=5df48842560411e6f7d1ec6408309180

155. Stewart M. Patrick, "The International Order Isn't Ready for the Climate Crisis: The Case for a New Planetary Politics," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2021-10-19/climate-crisis-international-order-isnt-ready

156. Keith Bradsher and Lisa Friedman, "China's Power Crunch Exposes Tensions ahead of Key U.N. Climate Summit," *New York Times*, October 7, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/07/climate/china-cop26-blackouts-coal.html; Jason De Sena Trennert, "Climate-Change 'Solutions' That Are Worse Than the Problem," *Wall Street Journal*, April 6, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/climate-change-life-expectancy-carbon-netural-oil-coal-fossil-fuels-ukraine-war-russia-china-fossil-fuels-carbon-emissions-mining-pollution-electric-car-vehicle-11649258860.

157. Sha Hua, "John Kerry Seeks China's Climate Cooperation, Gets an Earful on Fraying Ties," *Wall Street Journal*, September 2, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-warns-kerry-climate-cooperation-depends-on-overall-ties-11630602892

158. Editorial Board, "China's Coal Power Boom," *Wall Street Journal*, September 12, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-coal-power-boom-beijing-xi-jinping-climate-energy-biden-administration-11650480857

159. Sha Hua, "China Gives Itself Wiggle Room on Climate Change Ahead of COP26," *Wall Street Journal*, October 29, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-gives-itself-wiggle-room-on-climate-change-goals-11635538164?mod=world_major_1_pos3; Brad Plumer, "Fossil Fuel Drilling Plans Undermine Climate Pledges, U.N. Report Warns," *New York Times*, October 20, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/20/climate/fossil-fuel-drilling-pledges.html

160. A. Wess Mitchell, "Biden's Climate Diplomacy Is a Gift to China," *Foreign Policy*, December 17, 2021, https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/12/17/biden-kerry-climate-china-build-back-better/

161. Stuart Gottlieb, "Biden's Climate Plans Are Unsustainable," *Wall Street Journal*, July 31, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/bidens-unsustainable-climate-plans-environment-climate-change-policy-green-energy-fossil-fuels-initiatives-11659286021

162. Samuel Buchan and Carla Sands, "The United States Can Still Be a Leader on Natural Gas," *The National Interest*, November 7, 2022, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/united-states-can-still-be-leader-natural-gas-205749

163. Editorial Board, "American's Energy Gift to Dictators," *Wall Street Journal*, June 9, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/americas-energy-gift-to-dictators-11623279139

164. Joe Wallace and Anna Hinterstein, "Russia Confounds the West by Recaptur-

ing Its Oil Riches," *Wall Street Journal*, August 29, 2020, https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-confounds-the-west-by-recapturing-its-oil-riches-11661781928?mod=itp_wsj&ru=yahoo

165. Andrew E. Kramer, "How Russia Is Cashing In on Climate Change," *New York Times*, October 22, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/22/world/europe/russia-arctic-climate-change-putin.html

166. Bjorn Lomborg, "The Inflation Reduction Act Does Little to Reduce Climate Change," *Wall Street Journal*, August 23, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-inflation-reduction-act-does-little-to-reduce-climate-change-global-warming-carbon-emissions-legislation-temperatures-11661288454

167. Dan Negrea and Nick Loris, "Facts, Not Fear, Should Drive Biden's Climate Change Policies," *The National Interest*, October 28, 2021, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/facts-not-fear-should-drive-biden's-climate-change-policies-195453

Chapter Six

1. John J. Mearsheimer, "Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order," *International Security* 43, no. 4 (2019), https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00342

2. Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 49.

3. G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 23.

4. Charles L. Glaser, "A Flawed Framework: Why the Liberal International Order Concept Is Misguided," *International Security* 43, no. 4 (2019): 55.

5. Mearsheimer, "Bound to Fail," 8.

6. John Bew, "World Order: Many-Headed Monster or Noble Pursuit?," *Texas National Security Review* 1, no. 1 (November 2017), https://tnsr.org/2017/11/world-order-many-headed-monster-noble-pursuit/

7. For different versions of this argument, see G. John Ikenberry, "The Plot against American Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2017, https://scholar.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/gji3/files/may-june_2017_foreign_affairs.pdf; Rebecca Lissner and Mira Rapp-Hooper, *An Open World: How America Can Win the Contest for Twenty-First-Century Order* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020); Michael J. Mazarr, "The Real History of the Liberal Order: Neither Myth nor Accident," *Foreign Affairs*, August 7, 2018, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2018-08-07/real-history-liberal-order?cid=soc-tw&pgtype=hpg; Hal Brands, "American Grand Strategy and the Liberal Order," RAND Corporation, 2016, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE200/PE209/RAND_PE209.pdf; Hal Brands, "To Compete with China, We Need the Liberal International Order," *American Purpose*, October 28, 2020, https://www.americanpurpose.com/articles/compete-china-liberal-international-order/; Michael Beckley, "Enemies of My Enemy: How Fear of China Is Forging a New World Order," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2021-02-14/china-new-world-order-enemies-my-enemy; Eliot A. Cohen, "America's Long Goodbye: The Real Crisis of the Trump Era," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2019, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/long-term-disaster-trump-foreign-policy

8. Charles L. Glaser, "A Flawed Framework: Why the Liberal International Order Concept Is Misguided," *International Security* 43, no. 4 (2019), https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00343; Stephen Wertheim, "Paeans to the 'Postwar Order' Won't Save Us,"

War on the Rocks, August 6, 2018, https://warontherocks.com/2018/08/paeans-to-the-postwar-order-wont-save-us/; Graham Allison, "The Myth of the Liberal Order: From Historical Accident to Conventional Wisdom," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2018, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2018-06-14/myth-liberal-order; Patrick Porter, "A World Imagined: Nostalgia and Liberal Order," Cato Institute, June 5, 2018, https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/world-imagined-nostalgia-liberal-order#; Paul Staniland, "Misreading the 'Liberal Order': Why We Need New Thinking in American Foreign Policy," *Lawfare*, July 29, 2018, https://www.lawfareblog.com/misreading-liberal-order-why-we-need-new-thinking-american-foreign-policy; John J. Mearsheimer, "Bound to Fail."

9. Allison, "The Myth of the Liberal Order." See also Mearsheimer, "Bound to Fail," 8.

10. Damien Cave, "The War in Ukraine Holds a Warning for the World Order," *New York Times*, March 4, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/04/world/ukraine-russia-war-authoritarianism.html

11. "Remarks by President Biden in Press Conference," The White House, June 30, 2022, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/06/30/remarks-by-president-biden-in-press-conference-madrid-spain/

12. Peter Beinart, "The Vacuous Phrase at the Core of Biden's Foreign Policy," *New York Times*, June 22, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/22/opinion/biden-foreign-policy.html

13. Joshua Muravchik, "International Order Is on the Line in Ukraine," *Wall Street Journal*, March 30, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-liberal-international-order-ukraine-russia-invasion-war-xi-putin-taiwan-china-peace-talks-turkey-defense-spending-budget-negotiations-global-power-11648660753?mod=latest_headlines

14. Zoe Strozewski, "Video of Biden Adviser Defending 'Liberal World Order' Viewed over 1M Times," *Newsweek*, July 1, 2022, https://www.newsweek.com/video-biden-adviser-defending-liberal-world-order-viewed-over-1m-times-1721022

15. "Biden Says War in Ukraine Is a Test for Democracies and That Putin 'Cannot Remain in Power,'" *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, March 26, 2022, https://www.rferl.org/a/biden-ukrainian-refugees-putin-butcher/31771985.html

16. Michael Beckley and Hal Brands, "The Return of Pax Americana? Putin's War Is Fortifying the Democratic Alliance," *Foreign Affairs*, March 14, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2022-03-14/return-pax-americana. See also Michael Beckley, "Enemies of My Enemy: How Fear of China Is Forging a New World Order," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2021-02-14/china-new-world-order-enemies-my-enemy

17. Michael J. Mazarr, "How to Save the Postwar Order: The United States Should Rethink Its Defense of the System," *Foreign Affairs*, May 6, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2022-05-06/how-save-postwar-order; Philip Zelikow, "The Hollow Order: Rebuilding an International System That Works," *Foreign Affairs*, July./August 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2022-06-21/hollow-order-international-system

18. Emma Ashford, "Ukraine and the Return of the Multipolar World," *The National Interest*, July 4, 2022, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/ukraine-and-return-multipolar-world-203276

19. Michal Kranz, "How the Russia-Ukraine Crisis Is Turning Poland into a Strategic Player," *Foreign Policy*, February 23, 2022, https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/02/23/poland-ukraine-russia-crisis-nato-strategic-role-military-diplomacy-war/

20. Judy Dempsey, "Europe's Fading Unity over Ukraine," *Carnegie Europe*, April 21, 2022, https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/86948

21. Juan Forera, David Luhnow, and Joe Parkinson, "Anti-Russia Alliance Is Missing a Big Bloc: The Developing World," *Wall Street Journal*, April 14, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/anti-russia-alliance-is-missing-a-big-bloc-the-developing-world-11649950913

22. Forera, Luhnow, and Parkinson, "Anti-Russia Alliance Is Missing a Big Bloc."

23. James T. Areddy, "Russia's Welcome at Brics Summit Shows Disconnect with West," *Wall Street Journal*, June 23, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/russias-welcome-at-brics-summit-shows-disconnect-with-west-11656020361

24. Shivshankar Menon, "The Fantasy of the Free World: Are Democracies Really United against Russia?," *Foreign Affairs*, April 4, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2022-04-04/fantasy-free-world

25. Elizabeth Economy, "Xi Jinping's New World Order: Can China Remake the International System?," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2021-12-09/xi-jinpings-new-world-order

26. Economy, "Xi Jinping's New World Order."

27. Economy, "Xi Jinping's New World Order."

28. Mearsheimer, "Bound to Fail," 44.

29. Shannon K. O'Neil, "The Myth of the Global: Why Regional Ties Win the Day," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2022-06-21/myth-global-regional-ties-win.

30. Mark Leonard, "The Real End of Pax Americana: Germany and Japan Are Changing—and So Is the Postwar Order," *Foreign Affairs*, June 13, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/japan/2022-06-13/real-end-pax-americana

31. For a full-fledged liberal internationalist take on the need for more internationalism, not less, in the future, see G. John Ikenberry, "The Next Liberal Order: The Age of Contagion Demands More Internationalism, Not Less," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-06-09/next-liberal-order

32. Colin Dueck, "The Fallacy of Joe Biden's 'Bank of Multilateral Goodwill,'" *National Interest*, October 14, 2021, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/fallacy-joe-biden's-'bank-multilateral-goodwill'-195076

33. Walter Russell Mead, "Wokeness Is Putin's Weapon," *Wall Street Journal*, July 11, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/amp/articles/wokeness-is-putins-weapon-ukraine-western-values-abortion-climate-change-human-rights-protectionism-decadence-xi-jinping-revisionist-powers-11657569787

34. Peter Slezkine, "The Trouble with 'the Free World': Why It's a Bad Idea to Revive a Cold War Concept," *Foreign Affairs*, May 6, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2022-05-06/trouble-free-world.

35. Bruce Jones, "A Strategy for the Fence Sitters: Learning to Live with Countries That Refuse to Take Sides on Ukraine," *Foreign Affairs*, June 15, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2022-06-15/strategy-fence-sitters

36. Jones, "A Strategy for the Fence Sitters."

37. Walter Russell Mead, "Wokeness Is Putin's Weapon," *Wall Street Journal*, July 11, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/amp/articles/wokeness-is-putins-weapon-ukraine-western-values-abortion-climate-change-human-rights-protectionism-decadence-xi-jinping-revisionist-powers-11657569787

38. Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

39. U.S. Department of Defense, "Remarks at the Shangri-La Dialogue by Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III (as Delivered)," June 11, 2022, https://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech/Article/3059852/remarks-at-the-shangri-la-dialogue-by-secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iii-a/

40. U.S. Department of Defense, "Remarks at the Shangri-La Dialogue."

41. U.S. Department of State, "The Administration's Approach to the People's Republic of China," May 26, 2022, https://www.state.gov/the-administrations-approach-to-the-peoples-republic-of-china/.

42. Dhruva Jaishankar and Tanvi Madan, "The Quad Needs a Harder Edge: It's Time for the Group to Prioritize Its Security Agenda," *Foreign Affairs*, May 19, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2022-05-19/quad-needs-harder-edge

43. Thomas Lonergan, Ashley Townshend, and Toby Warden, "The U.S.-Australian Alliance Needs a Strategy to Deter China's Gray-Zone Coercion," *War on the Rocks*, September 29, 2021, https://warontherocks.com/2021/09/the-u-s-australian-alliance-needs-a-strategy-to-deter-chinas-gray-zone-coercion/. See also Chris Buckley and Damien Cave, "Why Australia Bet the House on Lasting American Power in Asia," *New York Times*, September 16, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/16/world/australia/australia-china-submarines.html?campaign_id=2&emc=edit_th_20210917&instance_id=40607&nl=todaysheadlines&regi_id=30827009&segment_id=69150&user_id=5df48842560411e6f7d1ec6408309180

44. Jeff M. Smith, "Don't Let Putin's War in Ukraine Damage U.S.-India Ties," *Real Clear World*, March 22, 2022, https://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2022/03/22/dont_let_putins_war_in_ukraine_damage_us-india_ties_823147.html

45. Vivek Raghuvanshi, "India, US Sign Intel-Sharing Agreement amid Tension with Neighboring China," *Defense News*, October 28, 2020, https://www.defensenews.com/space/2020/10/28/india-us-sign-intel-sharing-agreement-amid-tension-with-neighboring-china/

46. Walter Russell Mead, "Putin's Ukraine War Roils U.S.-India Ties," *Wall Street Journal*, April 11, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/putin-war-america-india-ties-china-quad-afghanistan-taliban-pakistan-terrorism-solomon-islands-taiwan-himalaya-border-clash-11649706899?mod=opinion_featst_pos1

47. Mead, "Putin's Ukraine War Roils U.S.-India Ties."

48. Brad Glosserman and Akira Igata, "Japan Is Indispensable Again: The Need for Economic Security Is Reviving Washington's Alliance with Tokyo," *Foreign Affairs*, July 15, 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-07-15/japan-indispensable-again

49. Richard J. Samuels, "After Abe, Japan Tries to Balance Ties to the U.S. and China," *Wall Street Journal*, July 28, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/after-abe-japan-tries-to-balance-ties-to-the-u-s-and-china-11659023711

50. Sheila A. Smith, "Japan's Hard Choices: What the Election Will Mean for the Country's Defense Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, October 28, 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/japan/2021-10-28/japans-hard-choices

51. Mark Leonard, "The Real End of Pax Americana: Germany and Japan Are Changing—and So Is the Postwar Order," *Foreign Affairs*, June 13, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/japan/2022-06-13/real-end-pax-americana

52. Leonard, "The Real End of Pax Americana."

53. Damien Cave, "Why China Is Miles Ahead in a Pacific Race for Influence," *New York Times*, May 31, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/31/world/australia/china-united-states-pacific.html

54. Walter Russell Mead, "Indonesia Tunes Out the U.S.," *Wall Street Journal*, June 13, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/indonesia-america-foreign-policy-indo-pacific-china-jakarta-democracy-asia-11655150933

55. Mead, "Indonesia Tunes Out the U.S."

56. Colin Dueck, "Why the Monroe Doctrine Still Matters," *AEI Report*, March 2023, https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/why-the-monroe-doctrine-still-matters/

57. Warren Strobel and Gordon Lubold, "Cuba to Host Secret Chinese Spy Base Focusing on U.S.," *Wall Street Journal*, June 8, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/cuba-to-host-secret-chinese-spy-base-focusing-on-u-s-b2fed0e0

58. Warren Strobel, Gordon Lubold, Vivian Salama, and Michael Gordon, "Beijing Plans a New Training Facility in Cuba, Raising Prospect of Chinese Troops on America's Doorstep," *Wall Street Journal*, June 20, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/beijing-plans-a-new-training-facility-in-cuba-raising-prospect-of-chinese-troops-on-americas-doorstep-e17fd5d1?mod=article_inline

59. Charles Hutzler and Kejal Vyas, "Cuba Spy Station Brings China Rivalry to America's Doorstep," *Wall Street Journal*, June 9, 2023,
https://www.wsj.com/articles/cuba-spy-station-brings-china-rivalry-to-americas-doorstep-21c86073

60. Matthew Kendrick, "Biden's Pivot to Asia Has a Crucial Latin American Component That's at Risk of Neglect," *Morning Consult*, May 31, 2022, https://morningconsult.com/2022/05/31/bidens-china-pivot-and-latin-america/

61. Diana Roy, "China's Growing Influence in Latin America," Council on Foreign Relations, April 12, 2022, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-influence-latin-america-argentina-brazil-venezuela-security-energy-bri

62. Shannon O'Neill, "The United States' Missed Opportunity in Latin America," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2024, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/united-states-missed-opportunity-latin-america

63. O'Neill, "The United States' Missed Opportunity."

64. O'Neill, "The United States' Missed Opportunity."

65. Trevor Hunnicutt, Matt Spetalnick, and Humeyra Pamuk, "Biden Rebuked over Guest List at Americas Summit He Is Hosting," *Reuters*, June 10, 2022, https://www.reuters.com/world/biden-faces-rebukes-over-guest-list-americas-summit-he-is-hosting-2022-06-10/

66. Hunnicutt, Spetalnick, and Pamuk, "Biden Rebuked over Guest List."

67. Hunnicutt, Spetalnick, and Pamuk, "Biden Rebuked over Guest List."

68. Samantha Pearson and Ken Thomas, "Biden Pushes Back against Waning U.S. Influence in Latin America at Summit," *Wall Street Journal*, June 9, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/biden-pushes-back-against-waning-u-s-influence-in-latin-america-at-summit-11654816507

69. Pearson and Thomas, "Biden Pushes Back against Waning U.S. Influence."

70. Kendrick, "Biden's Pivot to Asia."

71. Mary Anastasia O'Grady, "How China Took Latin America," *Wall Street Journal*, July 31, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-china-took-latin-america-beijing-nancy-pelosi-expansionism-taiwan-regimes-south-america-11659289457

72. O'Grady, "How China Took Latin America."

73. Shannon K. O'Neil, "The Myth of the Global: Why Regional Ties Win the Day," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2022-06-21/myth-global-regional-ties-win

74. O'Neill, "America's Missed Opportunity in Latin America."

75. Jose de Cordoba and David Luhnow, "Nicaragua's Shift toward Dictatorship Is Part of a Latin American Backslide," *Wall Street Journal*, November 9, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/amp/articles/nicaraguas-shift-towards-dictatorship-is-part-of-a-latin-american-backslide-11636476080#

76. De Cordoba and Luhnow, "Nicaragua's Shift toward Dictatorship."

77. Stephen Fidler, "Summits Set Stage for Europe's New Reality: Long-Term Confrontation with Russia," *Wall Street Journal*, July 1, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/summits-set-stage-for-europes-new-reality-long-term-confrontation-with-russia-11656678747?mod=e2tw

78. Wolfgang Ischinger, "Germany's Ukraine Problem: Europe's Largest Country Needs Time to Adjust to a Dangerous New World," *Foreign Affairs*, August 10, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/germany/germanys-ukraine-problem

79. Daniela Schwarzer, "Will Germany Stay the Course? How Biden Can Keep Berlin Focused on Defense," *Foreign Affairs*, March 30, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/germany/2022-03-30/will-germany-stay-course

80. Ian Johnson, "Has China Lost Europe? How Beijing's Economic Missteps and Support for Russia Soured European Leaders," *Foreign Affairs*, June 10, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2022-06-10/has-china-lost-europe

81. Walter Russell Mead, "End of the German Idyll," *Wall Street Journal*, June 27, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/germanys-economic-miracle-ebbs-olaf-scholz-g7-world-leaders-security-rearm-foreign-policy-11656361529

82. Mead, "End of the German Idyll."

83. Sumantra Maitra, "Realpolitik Returns to British Grand Strategy," *The National Interest*, March 21, 2021, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/realpolitik-returns-british-grand-strategy-180810

84. Prime Minister's Office, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*, March 2021, 62, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975077/Global_Britain_in_a_Competitive_Age-_the_Integrated_Review_of_Security__Defence__Development_and_Foreign_Policy.pdf

85. *Global Britain in a Competitive Age*, 40–44, 70–76.

86. Leslie Vinjamuri, "The Myth of Global Britain: Brexit Left London Even More Dependent on Washington," *Foreign Affairs*, February 15, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2022-02-15/myth-global-britain

87. Johnson, "Has China Lost Europe?"

88. Asli Aydintasbas, "Turkey Will Not Return to the Western Fold: Ankara's Assertive Foreign Policy Is Here to Stay," *Foreign Affairs*, May 19, 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2021-05-19/turkey-will-not-return-western-fold; Peter Kreko, "Viktor Orban Is the West's Pro-Putin Outlier," *Foreign Policy*, March 20, 2022, https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/03/20/viktor-orban-is-the-wests-pro-putin-outlier/

89. Carl Bildt, "NATO'S Nordic Expansion: Adding Finland and Sweden Will Transform European Security," *Foreign Affairs*, April 26, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/europe/2022-04-26/natos-nordic-expansion.

90. Charles A. Kupchan, "NATO'S Hard Road Ahead: The Greatest Threats to Alliance Unity Will Come after the Madrid Summit," *Foreign Affairs*, June 29, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-06-29/natos-hard-road-ahead

91. Lindsey W. Ford and James Goldgeier, "Retooling America's Alliances to Manage the China Challenge," Brookings Institution, January 25, 2021, https://www.brookings.edu/research/retooling-americas-alliances-to-manage-the-china-challenge/

92. Colin Dueck and Mike Gallagher, "The Conservative Case for NATO," *National Review*, January 30, 2019, https://www.nationalreview.com/2019/01/nato-western-military-alliance-bolsters-american-interests/

93. Artin Dersimonian, "Macron Knows That Europe Needs to Stand on Its Own Two Feet," *Responsible Statecraft*, August 20, 2023, https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2023/08/03/macron-knows-that-europe-needs-to-stand-on-its-own/

94. F. Gregory Gause III, "America's New Realism in the Middle East: Biden's Saudi Trip Reflect an Acceptance of the Region as It Is," *Foreign Affairs*, July 6, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2022-07-06/americas-new-realism-middle-east

95. Nancy A. Youssef, Benoit Faucon, Costas Paris, and Saleh al-Batati. "U.S.-Led Coalition Launches Strikes on Multiple Houthi Rebel Targets in Yemen," *Wall Street Journal*, January 11, 2024, https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/middle-east-braces-for-u-s-strikes-on-houthis-aa943b13

96. Jennifer Kavanagh and Frederic Wehrey, "Washington's Looming Middle East Quagmire," *Foreign Affairs*, November 24, 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/washingtons-looming-middle-eastern-quagmire

97. Stephen Kalin, Catherine Lucey, and Andrew Restuccia, "Biden Lays Out a U.S. Middle East Vision Heavy on Diplomacy," *Wall Street Journal*, July 16, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/biden-to-define-u-s-middle-east-vision-heavy-on-diplomacy-11657959946?mod=hp_lead_pos4

98. Benoit Faucon, Georgia Kantchev, and Summer Said, "Biden to Visit a Saudi Arabia That Is Closer to Russia Than Ever," *Wall Street Journal*, July 12, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/biden-to-visit-a-saudi-arabia-that-is-closer-to-russia-than-ever-11657633689

99. Faucon, Kantchev, and Said, "Biden to Visit."

100. Bruce Jones, "A Strategy for the Fence Sitters: Learning to Live with Countries That Refuse to Take Sides on Ukraine," *Foreign Affairs*, June 15, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2022-06-15/strategy-fence-sitters

Conclusion

1. For two recent representative examples in each camp, see G. John Ikenberry, "Why American Power Endures," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/why-american-power-endures-us-led-order-isnt-in-decline-g-john-ikenberry; Michael Beckley and Hal Brands, "The Return of Pax Americana?," *Foreign Affairs*, March 14, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2022-03-14/return-pax-americana

2. Beckley and Brands, "Return of Pax Americana?"

3. White House, *National Security Strategy*, 2022, 8.

4. David Cloud, "Iran's New Friends: Russia and China," *Wall Street Journal*, May 5, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/irans-new-friends-russia-and-china-4b2f1f00; Dion Nissenbaum and Chun Han Wong, "China, Russia, Iran Hold Joint Military Drills in Gulf of Oman," *Wall Street Journal*, March 15, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-russia-iran-hold-joint-military-drills-in-gulf-of-oman-aba5f55e

5. Ionut Popescu, "Only Offensive Realism Can Contain China," *The National Interest*, December 7, 2022, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/only-offensive-realism-can-contain-china-205988

6. Hal Brands, "Regime Realism and Chinese Grand Strategy," American Enterprise Institute, November 13, 2020, https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/regime-realism-and-chinese-grand-strategy/

7. Alastair Iain Johnston, "China in a World of Orders: Rethinking Compliance and Challenge in Beijing's International Relations," *International Security* 44, no 2 (Fall 2019): 12, https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00360

8. Johnston, "China in a World of Orders," 56.

9. Ketian Zhang, "Cautious Bully: Reputation, Resolve, and Beijing's Use of Coercion in the South China Sea," *International Security* 44, no. 1 (Summer 2019): 119, https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00354. See also a criticism of this argument in Tongfi Kim, Andrew Taffer, and Ketian Zhang, "Correspondence: Is China a Cautious Bully?," *International Security* 45, no. 2 (2020): 187–93, https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_c_00386

10. Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017).

11. Brands, "Regime Realism."

12. Matthew Kroenig, "The Power Delusion," *Foreign Policy*, November 11, 2020, https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/11/11/china-united-states-democracy-ideology-competition-rivalry-great-powers-power-delusion/

13. Kroenig, "The Power Delusion."

14. Kroenig, "The Power Delusion."

15. John J. Mearsheimer, "Can China Rise Peacefully?," *National Interest*, October 25, 2014, https://nationalinterest.org/commentary/can-china-rise-peacefully-10204?page=0%2C2

16. Elbridge Colby and Robert D. Kaplan, "The Ideology Delusion: America's Competition with China Is Not about Doctrine," *Foreign Affairs*, September 4, 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-09-04/ideology-delusion

17. Colby and Kaplan, "The Ideology Delusion."

18. Michael McFaul, "Putin, Putinism, and the Domestic Determinants of Russian Foreign Policy," *International Security* 45, no. 2 (2020): 98, https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00390; for more on this view, see Brian D. Taylor, *The Code of Putinism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Walter Laqueur, *Putinism: Russia and Its Future with the West* (London: Thomas Dunne, 2015); M. Steven Fish, "The Kremlin Emboldened: What Is Putinism?," *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 4 (October 2017), doi.org/10.1353/jod.2017.0066

19. "Four Myths about Russian Grand Strategy," Center for Strategic and International Studies, September 22, 2020, https://www.csis.org/blogs/post-soviet-post/four-myths-about-russian-grand-strategy

20. John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2014, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault

21. Andrea Kendall-Taylor and Michael Kofman, "The Myth of Russian Decline: Why Moscow Will Be a Persistent Power," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2021-10-19/myth-russian-decline

22. Kendall-Taylor and Kofman, "The Myth of Russian Decline."

23. Colin Dueck, *Age of Iron: On Conservative Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Osita Nwanevu, "Conversative Nationalism Is Trumpism for Intellectuals," *The New Yorker*, July 21, 2019, https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/conservative-nationalism-is-trumpism-for-intellectuals

24. For an extensive scholarly overview of the Russian-Chinese partnership drawing not only on Western but also Russian and Chinese perspectives, see Alexander Lukin, *Russia and China: The New Rapprochement* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2018).

25. Chao Deng, Ann M. Simmons, Evan Gershkovitch, and William Mauldin, "Putin, Xi Aim Russia-China Partnership against U.S.," *Wall Street Journal*, February 4, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/russias-vladimir-putin-meets-with-chinese-leader-xi-jinping-in-beijing-11643966743

26. Joshua Kurlantzick, "A New Axis of Autocracy," *Wall Street Journal*, March 29, 2013, https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324685104578388550346881268

27. Deng et al., "Putin, Xi."

28. Farah Stockman, "This Is the Russia-China Friendship That Nixon Feared," *New York Times*, February 20, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/20/opinion/nixon-china.html

29. Andranik Migranyan, "Why Russia and China Are Cooperating More Than Ever," *The National Interest*, July 9, 2021, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/why-russia-and-china-are-cooperating-more-ever-189435; for another recent perspective from a Russian scholar, see Lukin, *The New Rapprochment*.

30. For an argument against trying to prevent a closer Russian-Chinese alliance, see Matthew Kroenig, "The United States Should Not Align with Russia against China," *Foreign Policy*, May 13, 2020, https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/05/13/united-states-should-not-align-russia-against-china-geopolitical-rivalry-authoritarian-partnership/

31. Seth Cropsey, "Russia's Failure Is China's Gain," *Wall Street Journal*, March 9, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-failure-china-gain-ukraine-nato-geopolitical-competition-cold-war-allies-beijing-invasion-expansion-war-11646834842

32. David Ignatius, "Nixon's Great Decision on China, 40 Years Later," *Washington Post*, February 10, 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/nixons-great-decision-on-china-40-years-later/2012/02/10/gIQAtFh34Q_story.html

33. Stockman, "Russia-China Friendship."

34. Kendall-Taylor and Kofman, "Myth of Russian Decline."

35. Dmitri Alperovitch and Sergey Radchenko, "Another Russia Is Possible," *Foreign Affairs*, August 29, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/another-russia-possible

36. Kroenig, "US Shouldn't Ally with Russia against China."

37. Richard Ned Lebow and Feng Zhang, *Taming Sino-American Rivalry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

38. Lebow and Zhang, *Taming Sino-American Rivalry*, 3.

39. Michael Swayne and Andrew Bacevich, "A Restraint Approach to U.S.–China Relations: Reversing the Slide toward Crisis and Conflict," *Quincy Paper*, no.11, April 18, 2023, https://quincyinst.org/report/u-s-relations-with-china-a-strategy-based-on-restraint/

40. Aleksandra Tarziu and Amy Mitchell, "Playing to Europe, Biden's Thaw Is Emboldening the CCP," *The National Interest*, July 24, 2023, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/playing-europe-biden's-"thaw"-emboldening-ccp-206659#google_vignette

41. Willy Wo-Lap Lam, "Xi Jinping's Hidden Goals for the PRC Law on Foreign Relations," *China Brief* 23, no. 12, Jamestown Foundation, July 2023, https://jamestown.org/program/xi-jinpings-hidden-goals-for-the-prc-law-on-foreign-relations/

42. For a book-length treatment of this idea, see Christopher Hemmer, *American*

Pendulum: Recurring Debates in US Grand Strategy (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

43. Bruce Drake, "Americans Put Low Priority on Promoting Democracy Abroad," Pew Research Center, March 2, 2021, https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/03/02/americans-put-low-priority-on-promoting-democracy-abroad-2/

44. Drake, "Americans Put Low Priority on Promoting Democracy."

45. Gordon Friedrichs and Jordan Tama, "Polarization and US Foreign Policy: Key Debates and New Findings," *International Politics* 59 (2022): 767–85. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-022-00381-0

46. Mohamed Younis, "Americans Continue to View China as the U.S.'s Greatest Enemy," Gallup, March 6, 2023, https://news.gallup.com/poll/471494/americans-continue-view-china-greatest-enemy.aspx; Laura Silver, Christine Huang, Laura Clancy, and Moira Fagan, "Americans Are Critical of China's Global Role—as Well as Its Relationship with Russia," Pew Research Center, April 12, 2023, https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2023/04/12/americans-are-critical-of-chinas-global-role-as-well-as-its-relationship-with-russia/

47. Nancy A. Youssef, "China Aims to Outpace U.S. Militarily, American Commander Says," *Wall Street Journal*, December 8, 2020, https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-aims-to-outpace-u-s-militarily-american-commander-says-11607459776?page=1&utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2012.09.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief

48. "Reset, Prevent, Build: A Strategy to Win America's Competition with the Chinese Communist Party," US House of Representatives Select Committee on the CCP, December 12, 2023, https://selectcommitteeontheccp.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/selectcommitteeontheccp.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/reset-prevent-build-scc-report.pdf

Index