### 1NC – OFF

#### Interp: The affirmative must defend the ban of private actor appropriation of Outer Space - not a reduction.

#### Unjust means dialectically contrary to law – only ban does that.

The Law Dictionary, ND, Def of Unjust, URL: <https://thelawdictionary.org/unjust/#:~:text=Contrary%20to%20right%20and%20justice,conduct%20furnished%20by%20the%20laws>, KR

Contrary to right and justice, or to the enjoyment of his rights by another, or to the standards of conduct furnished by the laws.

#### Unjust means opposed to law.

FreeDictionary [TheFreeDictionary, Unjust, xx-xx-xxxx,https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Unjust, 12-17-2021 amrita]

**UNJUST.** That which is done against the perfect rights of another; that which **is against the established law**; that which is opposed to a law which is the test of right and wrong.

#### Violation: They defend a reduction - that’s not oppositional to the law because it means that there’s a world where the law would permit private appropriation

#### Standards:

#### 1 -- Predictable Limits and Shiftiness – there’s hundreds of other ways in which the affirmative can defend the restriction of private entities in Outer space – they can make some fines, etc, which makes it impossible for the negative to predict what process the affirmative is going to defend to mandate a ban of private actor appropriation of space. Our interp is the most predictable because it’s grounded in the topic wording. Your model of debate is one in which debaters can spike out of certain arguments based on the definition of restrict, which kills nuanced engagement.

#### 2 -- Topic ed – Bans are one of the most common and is most germane to the literature – increases the amount of ground and ability to have deep debates on the model which the majority of the literature is centered around as opposed to an irrelevant model that kills critical thinking abilities.

#### Fairness and education are voters – debate’s a game that needs rules to evaluate it and education gives us portable skills for life like research and thinking.

#### Drop the debater – a) they have a 7-6 rebuttal advantage and the 2ar to make args I can’t respond to, b) it deters future abuse and sets a positive norm.

#### Use competing interps – reasonability invites arbitrary judge intervention since we don’t know your bs meter

#### No RVIs—it’s your burden to be fair and T—same reason you don’t win for answering inherency or putting defense on a disad.

### 1NC – OFF

#### Be skeptical of cooperation optimists --- Chinese military doctrines emphasize dominance of space --- we can only lose ground and tech to China by working with them

Talent, 15 – Fmr Senator, COMMISSIONER, U.S.-CHINA ECONOMIC AND SECURITY REVIEW COMMISSION

Senator Jim Talent, “JEFFREY L. FIEDLER AND SENATOR JAMES M. TALENT HOLD A HEARING ON CHINA'S SPACE AND COUNTERSPACE PROGRAMS, PANEL 1,” CQ Transcriptions. February 18, 2015

TALENT: Thank you all to -- for being here today and for those who are returning. And Mr. Pollpeter, I have to say that your study -- forthcoming study is extremely thorough, and I think provide a important contribution to the analysis and discussion of these areas. So thank you.

Let me ask you, Dr. Johnson-Freese. I was a little surprised, I have to say, by your testimony and you take some time to address Congress -- former Congressman Wolf's activities in this area.

In some ways, your testimony seems to be swimming against the tide, shall we say, in the terms of the view that while the fruits of engagement were expected to be robust after China's WTO -- entry into the WTO with rising cybersecurity concerns with attribution sets that clearly link in indictments, now open indictments et cetera.

Mr. Cheng relayed a number of open source writings as to Chinese doctrinal approaches on space that cooperation doesn't seem to be yielding many benefits for the United States, but the benefits seemed to be outweighed, or not outweighed, tilted towards China.

So, the cooperation seems to be fueling assisting their, not acceleration, their movement along the spectrum of becoming a major spacepower. They now rank close to Russia in terms of the number of satellites that are deployed.

They've clearly shown through actions and doctrine that space, to quote Star Trek, is the final frontier and they hope to dominate it.

And when one looks at their doctrinal writings relating to asymmetric warfare where the United States has assets that are robust, aircraft carriers, missiles, et cetera that they realized that we are dependent on space informationalized war fighters. And so, this is an area, as is cyber, where they want to dominate and deny the U.S. the ability to advance its own interest.

Help me understand why you're such an optimist about cooperation and what it should yield, and why those who are cautious as Mr. Wolf is, has been and then many others why we should be, I guess, in my view, ignoring some of their most recent activities. And would like to hear from the other panelists as well.

Why optimism when history seems to say that things are going in the opposite direction?

#### U.S. space and tech lead now, but cooperation causes tech theft that causes us to lose the race – the plan is coop through a TRUST DOCTRINE!!!

Autry, 19

Greg Autry, Director of the Southern California Commercial Spaceflight Initiative at the University of Southern California. He served on the Trump transition team at NASA and is the co-author of Death by China (with Peter Navarro). “Beijing’s Fight for the Final Frontier,” Foreign Policy, April 2, 2019. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/04/02/beijing-is-taking-the-final-frontier-space-china/>

--China inevitably will try to take over our space industry – from infiltrating California commercial firms to the space race – they invest to gain majority ownership, then let the companies get hacked and transfer to China – solar power industry proves

--UQ – we have the lead now but it could be gone in 18 months if we hand the crown jewel to our adversary

--China is revisionist and the relationship should be treated as adversarial

--All Chinese firms are government-backed – ExPace builds rockets and is through Chinese Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation which is state-owned, and their main satellite company is party-owned

--Key to military superiority – Gulf War proves it’s key to battlefield tactics and controlling the skies

--Legitimates HR abuses – China will use GPS to hide abuses in Tibet

--We must completely block out the Chinese government from our industry – blacklisting them under ITAR with CFIUS screening to make sure the gov isn’t financing deals – wall blocking investments should be seen in orbit

While the eyes of the world were focused on China’s Chang’e 4 lunar lander this January, Beijing was also quietly establishing a beachhead in America’s booming commercial space sector. Chinese attempts to steal U.S. space tech go back to the [space shuttle](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1578449/US-Space-Shuttle-secrets-were-given-to-China.html), but their systematic efforts to infiltrate California’s commercial space firms beat anything I’ve seen in my 17 years of researching the new space industries. Attending a recent launch at Vandenberg Air Force Base, I asked a highly regarded new space executive if he had noticed China’s predatory behavior. He looked straight at me and said, “Absolutely. We could lose this industry in 18 to 36 months.”

This industry leader and others have shared their fear that the United States is handing another promising industry and its latest technological jewel over to its most dangerous global adversary. They have done so privately and asked for anonymity because they are afraid of being identified by venture capital firms they believe are increasingly beholden to Chinese partners. If this continues, tens of thousands of space careers may go the way of American PC, semiconductor, telecom, and solar manufacturing jobs.

U.S. President Donald Trump [has declared](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/speaking-of-science/wp/2018/06/18/trump-says-hes-directing-pentagon-to-create-a-new-space-force/) that, “It is not enough to have an American presence in space—we must have American dominance in space.” At this moment in history, that dominance is America’s to lose. Its military space capabilities are peerless. NASA’s robotic craft have explored the entire solar system from Mercury to [Ultima Thule](http://pluto.jhuapl.edu/), and the agency will launch its fifth Mars rover next year. The next few years will see the deployment of no less than five new U.S. orbital and suborbital human-rated spacecraft, four of them commercial.

It’s hard to overstate the activity in the U.S. commercial space world today. Just down the road from my office in Los Angeles there’s Elon Musk’s SpaceX as well as a bevy of advanced small launch firms including Virgin Orbit (in Long Beach), Rocket Lab (Huntington Beach), and Relativity Space (El Segundo). These firms, several of them with foreign principals, have chosen to place their headquarters and manufacturing in the United States. They provide thousands of high-paying jobs for engineers, machinists, accountants, and support staff. There are also hundreds of U.S. satellite and space data firms receiving angel and venture-capital funding. According to [Space Angels](https://www.spaceangels.com/post/space-investment-quarterly-q4-2018), $18 billion has been invested in entrepreneurial space firms by 534 companies. The value of successful space start-up exits also reached $40 billion. [Bank of America predicts](https://www.cnbc.com/2017/10/31/the-space-industry-will-be-worth-nearly-3-trillion-in-30-years-bank-of-america-predicts.html) that the space economy will reach $2.7 trillion in 30 years.

The Trump administration is well aware of the commercial and international factors in the space dominance equation. The 2017 [First Space Policy Directive](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/presidential-memorandum-reinvigorating-americas-human-space-exploration-program/)requires the government to “Lead an innovative and sustainable program of exploration with commercial and international partners to enable human expansion across the solar system and to bring back to Earth new knowledge and opportunities.” Vice President Mike Pence [speaks regularly](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-future-u-s-military-space/) on this topic. The United States should welcome genuine space competitors from Japan, Israel, the United Kingdom, and other free nations. However, nominally commercial efforts from China [are very concerning](https://www.cnbc.com/2017/03/28/chinas-secret-plan-to-crush-spacex-and-the-us-space-program.html). They are often pawns in a wider government push by Beijing to dominate space, with the [encouragement](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-space-launch-china-onespace/china-launches-first-rocket-designed-by-a-private-company-idUSKCN1II0FK) of President Xi Jinping. It is no surprise when nations favor their national space champions, but when Beijing’s frames state-backed firms using military technology as private enterprises, it should be concerning.

I recently attended a workshop composed of thought leaders from industry, military, intelligence, and academia, where many anxieties were raised. The group was concerned that nearly every Chinese space “start-up” is either a state-owned operation, state-controlled spinoff from a state enterprise, or a virtual proxy of the Chinese army. For example, the new “commercial” line of Kuaizhou launch vehicles developed by the supposed start-up [ExPace](http://www.parabolicarc.com/2017/12/20/expace-raises-182-million-small-satellite-launchers/), billed as the first Chinese private rocket company, are actually built by the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation, a state-owned company that is a key part of China’s defense industry. Their rockets are multistage solid rocket systems launched from transportable erector launchers, basically mobile intercontinental ballistic missile [systems](https://www.globalsecurity.org/space/world/china/kz.htm) but with economic payloads and targets. ExPace announced they will set launch prices for the new Kuaizhou 11 at just $5,000 per kilogram, about 20 percent of the prevailing market rate for small launchers. While nobody seriously believes ExPace can make money at that price, state-owned enterprises don’t need to. Their low prices may, however, scare investors out of backing Western start-ups. There are several ExPace look-alikes in the works, including OneSpace, Ispace, and Landspace. Given the rampant security paranoia in China at the moment, where even knives are given RFID tags to track them, I can’t believe that the Chinese government would allow truly independent actors to build missiles.

China’s space aspirations are not limited to launch vehicles. They also have an ambitious supposedly commercial satellite program. Among these projects is the Jilin-1 constellation of Earth observation satellites from the “[first](https://www.cgsatellite.com/about-us/) commercial remote sensing satellite company in China,” Chang Guang Satellite Technology. The firm plans to image every location on Earth every 10 minutes at better than one meter resolution and provide the data for cheap, challenging U.S. start-ups like [Planet](https://www.planet.com/) and [BlackSky](https://www.blacksky.com/). According to the party-run newspaper Global Times, Chang Guang [belongs](https://gbtimes.com/jilin-1-chinas-first-commercial-remote-sensing-satellites-aim-fill-void) to the Changchun Institute of Optics, Fine Mechanics, and Physics under the Chinese Academy of Sciences. This supposedly commercial firm’s [website](http://www.charmingglobe.com/EWeb/party1.aspx?id=47) reports that it’s led by loyal members of the Communist Party and brags that as a firm “the proportion of Party members is about 43%.” The site also notes, “It is a young and vigorous Communist Party member team with high fighting capacity.” In today’s politically paranoid China, even genuinely private enterprises sometimes resort to such language, but its ownership clearly indicates state control.

At the same time, Chinese investors, often covertly backed by their government, are lining up to invest in U.S. satellite firms. This may be part of a multipronged strategy used very successfully in the solar power industry. China invested in U.S. solar firms, many of which had large subsidies from federal, state, and local renewable energy programs, gaining access to the companies. A unit of the Chinese military then [hacked](http://www.csri.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/wp-operation-shady-rat1.pdf) those firms and transferred their technology to the Chinese competitors. According to the U.S. International Trade Commission, Chinese firms then [dumped](https://www.usitc.gov/trade_remedy/731_ad_701_cvd/investigations/2017/Crystalline%20Silicon%20Photovoltaic%20Cells%20and%20Modules%20From%20China/First%20Review%20(Full)/fr-notice-final_determination-itc.pdf) cells and modules onto the global market far below cost. The Chinese could then buy up the firms’ assets at auction in bankruptcy.

Global IP, a California satellite operator that holds some valuable orbital slots, recently suffered a hard lesson in Chinese investment strategy. The founders of Global IP [allege](https://www.morningstar.com/news/dow-jones/TDJNDN_201901118277/us-probes-failed-boeing-satellite-deal-backed-by-chinaupdate.html) in a January lawsuit that a nominally private Hong Kong investment group approached the firm with a funding scheme that resulted in China Orient Asset Management Co., a Chinese government entity, taking control of their board of directors via shell companies in the British Virgin Islands. Boeing, which had been manufacturing the high-tech satellites, was caught by surprise and [pulled out](https://spacenews.com/boeing-dropping-global-ip-satellite-order/) of the contract.

[Cloud Constellation](https://spacenews.com/cloud-constellation-lines-up-100-million-investment/), another Southern California firm, has recently accepted $100 million in investment from another Hong Kong private investment firm to build its SpaceBelt network of secure data storage satellites. According to a report from SpaceNews, Cloud Constellation CEO Cliff Beek said that his company “will retain majority ownership of itself and is not worried about having Chinese investment.” Those who assume such commercial transactions are always benign should consider the Hong Kong entrepreneur named Xu Zengping, who in 2002 purchased an incomplete Soviet aircraft carrier, promising to repurpose it into a floating casino. Instead it was handed over to the Chinese navy and refitted, and it is now busy intimidating China’s Asian neighbors. Today, Xu [openly brags in interviews](https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2107370/how-hong-kong-luxury-home-was-used-cover-deal-chinas) about his deception, saying, “Now everyone knows the floating casino is also a cover behind the stealth operation … I needed to try every means to let the outside world believe the deal was just a pure personal investment.”

In the 1990 to 1991 Gulf War, the dramatic demonstrations of GPS-guided munitions and armored divisions equipped with satellite reconnaissance and communications made it clear that U.S. superiority in space had rendered its troops, planes, ships, and missiles peerless on the battlefield. China’s military has been clear in its determination to [remove that advantage](https://spacenews.com/pentagon-report-chinas-space-program-continues-to-mature-rapidly/).

Whoever controls the Earth imaging and communications satellite constellations will monitor and control who sees what, and who says what to whom. If the U.S.-based Planet or BlackSky provide global imaging services, you’ll likely see almost everything going on around the Earth, and the democratic, albeit imperfect, U.S. government will call the shots on national security choices. If the data is misused by governmental agencies, there will be functional legal channels to challenge and correct that, and free press outlets to cover it. If the Chinese Communist Party runs the eyes in the sky, you will not see what is going on in Tibet or the re-education camps where a million or more members of mostly Muslim ethnic minorities are locked up in Xinjiang. That’s good reason to fear the Chinese party-state running the globe’s space-based data networks or directing the emerging “internet of things” satellites that will eventually control everything from your toaster to your pacemaker.

The U.S. government must be stalwart in its commitment to maintaining absolute superiority in space launch, satellite manufacturing, orbit operations, and human spaceflight, whatever that requires. Congress must recommit to that goal in a bipartisan show of support for U.S. national security, civil rights, and the future of our species. Maintaining control of America’s own companies is fundamental to that. Congress must pass legislation blacklisting any investment of any amount from aggressor states and their citizens into the commercial space sector.

The countries listed under International Traffic in Arms Regulations 126.1, including China, Iran, North Korea, and Syria, are a good start for the blacklist—even as the United States recognizes that the major threat is China. The restriction must also identify any entity controlled by or possibly controlled by one of these governments through domestic or international proxies. Congress should also establish a white list of countries where investment, cooperation, and partnering is permitted. Given the past record, every Chinese space investment should be referred to the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States for a careful review to ensure that the Chinese government is not behind the deal. Countries wishing to be assigned to the white list must agree to identify and shut down Chinese proxies (such as the British Virgin Islands firms used to ensnare Global IP) operating under the laws of their nation in exchange for more ready access to the U.S. market and governmental space contracts. Previous efforts to control technology transfer were often failures. Well-intentioned laws must not drive others into China’s arms in the process of strengthening U.S. resolve. Until recently, the items on the United States Munitions List have been too broadly interpreted and too slow to be updated. The inability for many countries to access U.S. satellite and launch technology in an efficient and responsive manner was credited with stimulating China’s own satellite-building business. The system must be simple, enforceable, and dynamic, which can be achieved by frequently scheduled reviews of what technologies are restricted, as well as of countries on the black and white lists.

The United States must also encourage domestic funds to spend their money at home and not support China’s plans for space hegemony. This involves education as well as favorable tax treatments, such as the often-proposed [Zero G, Zero Tax](https://space.nss.org/zero-g-zero-tax/) initiative. It must also encourage foreign investments that align with its national goals and [guide start-ups](https://spacenews.com/op-ed-commercial-space-startups-should-be-wary-of-some-foreign-investment/) to select capital that will allow them and their investors full participation in U.S. government-led business opportunities. As Mike Gold of Maxar, a U.S. space technology firm with strong Canadian connections, suggested, “When it comes to investment controls, the government should erect higher walls around smaller areas.” The wall around Chinese investments in U.S. commercial space firms should be visible from orbit.

#### Nearly a thousand docs prove China’s offensive view of space

Pollpeter, 15 – DEPUTY DIRECTOR, STUDY OF INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY IN CHINA, INSTITUTE ON GLOBAL CONFLICT AND COOPERATION

Kevin Pollpeter, “JEFFREY L. FIEDLER AND SENATOR JAMES M. TALENT HOLD A HEARING ON CHINA'S SPACE AND COUNTERSPACE PROGRAMS, PANEL 1,” CQ Transcriptions. February 18, 2015

POLLPETER: Yes, I just want to add that what we don't see -- we see -- I looked at over 800 or maybe 900 sources on China space program, Chinese sources. And we see a lot of writings on the offensive side how China should be trying to seize control space. But what we don't see is a recognition that as China becomes more invested in space, that they take on the same vulnerabilities as the U.S.

And so there is no recognition yet at least on the part of Chinese military writers that they may be taking on some of these vulnerabilities, and some of the things that they want to do in space may be actually bad for them as well.

And whether they will maybe eventually come along to that understanding, whether we can help them out, remains to be seen, but it certainly something that we need to be concerned about both from the offensive side because a far so offensive oriented. And these norms that Senator Talent has referred to, they seem to still be very much underdeveloped with at least within the Chinese military community writing on space.

#### Chinese tech theft escalates flashpoints and crushes US leadership --- causes US-China war

Heath and Thompson, 18

Timothy R. Heath is a RAND Senior Defense and International Analyst, William R. Thompson is a Political Science Professor Emeritus at Indiana University, “Avoiding U.S.-China Competition is Futile: Why the Best Option is to manage Strategic Rivalry,” Asia Policy; Vol 13 No 2; pg 91-120; April 2018.

This article argues that the structural drivers of U.S.-China competition are too deep to resolve through cooperative engagement and that policymakers must instead accept the reality of strategic rivalry and aim to manage it at a lower level of intensity. main argument Rising tensions between China and the U.S. have spurred fears that the two countries could end up in conflict or recreate the Cold War. To avoid these outcomes, analysts have proposed ways to defuse competition and promote cooperation. However, because these arguments do not address the structural drivers underpinning U.S.-China competition, such proposals are unlikely to end the rivalry. Conflict is not inevitable, however, and aggressive strategies that unnecessarily aggravate the sources of rivalry are likely to prove dangerously counterproductive. The best option at this point is, paradoxically, for the U.S. to accept the reality of the growing strategic rivalry and manage it at a lower level of intensity. policy implications • Maintaining a technological edge is critical for the U.S. to successfully manage the rivalry with China. Policies should be pursued to ensure that the U.S. continues to attract and nurture the best science and technology talent and retains its status as the global leader in technology. • To compete with China’s narrative about leading regional integration, the U.S. should both put forth a compelling vision for the region that encompasses widely held economic, security, and political values and continue to bolster its diplomatic and military positions in Asia. • To maintain the U.S.-China rivalry at a stable level, policymakers in both countries should prioritize measures that discourage the mobilization of popular sentiment against the other country and encourage cultural exchanges. • U.S.-China competition will likely become increasingly entwined with rivalries between China and U.S. allies and partners such as Japan and India. U.S. policymakers will need to take into account the independent dynamics of those separate rivalries when managing relations with China. The United States and China find themselves increasingly enmeshed in a strategic rivalry, the basic nature of which remains poorly understood in the United States. To be sure, disagreements between the two countries have gained widespread attention. Disputes involving Chinese confrontations with U.S. allies and partners such as Japan, the Philippines, and Taiwan have frequently grabbed the headlines. At other times, disagreements over Chinese trade practices and U.S. military activities in the South China Sea have occasioned discord. All these sources of conflict are genuine, but they mask the main drivers of rivalry, which are twofold. First, the United States and China are locked in a contest for primacy—most clearly in Asia and probably globally as well. The United States has been the dominant power, and China seeks to eventually supplant it. By definition, two different states cannot simultaneously share primacy at either the regional or global level. Second, economic, demographic, and military trajectories suggest that China has the potential to contend in a significant way for leadership at the global systemic level. At this level, the most decisive competition will be for technological leadership. Should China supplant the United States as the world’s premier country in terms of technology, its claim to regional and global supremacy will be difficult to deny. And once it has gained that supremacy, China will be well positioned to restructure institutional arrangements to privilege itself and disadvantage the United States. Although this competition is occurring simultaneously at both levels, observers have focused primarily on the struggle for primacy at the regional level and overlooked or downplayed the competition at the global systemic level.1 To counter China’s pursuit of regional primacy, the United States has bolstered its alliances in Asia (albeit inconsistently), expanded diplomatic outreach to China and rising powers in Southeast Asia, and revised its military posture—efforts captured by President Barack Obama’s “rebalance to Asia.” President Donald Trump may have abandoned the rebalance, but many of the related initiatives remain more or less in place.2 China’s challenge at the global systemic level, especially in the field of technology, has received less attention. Confidence in the proven U.S. ability to produce new technologies and facile assumptions about the difficulties China will face in promoting innovation in new industries have led many to dismiss the challenge posed by China. But the contest for technological leadership is actually even more consequential than that for regional primacy. Should China succeed in surpassing the United States as the world’s technological leader, U.S. diplomacy and military power will not suffice to hold the line either in Asia or around the globe. Under those conditions, countries throughout the world, including U.S. allies in Asia, will be forced to come to terms with the new leading economy. Military power projection could be far less relevant as China moves to consolidate its leading status at both the regional and global levels in such a scenario. Accordingly, although the United States cannot abandon its efforts to bolster its diplomatic and military position in Asia, the country must step up its efforts to strengthen its faltering lead in new technology development. While China clearly grasps the stakes, it is not clear that the United States does. For example, China’s government has promoted R&D into quantum computing. The investment appears to be paying off, as the country has leaped ahead of the United States in developing quantum communications.3 Similarly, the U.S. Congress has proposed to dispense with subsidies for the purchase of electric vehicles, even as China pushes ahead in its plan to become the lead producer of this technology.4 And while the U.S. government seeks to restrict immigration and discourage foreign students from attending U.S. universities (and staying after they receive their advanced training), China has revised its policies to welcome foreigners, prioritizing those with science and technology expertise. Moreover, Chinese investment in basic R&D is rapidly catching up to that of the United States.5 Studies have also noted a shrinking U.S. lead in science and technology as such investment is beginning to bear fruit.6 Similarly, the United States has lost its once-undisputed lead in the per capita number of engineers and scientists.7 Understanding the nature of the U.S.-China rivalry at the regional and global systemic levels, as well as how these two levels interact with one another, is essential if the United States is to successfully manage the challenge posed by China in a manner that avoids war. This study aims to contribute to that understanding. The article is organized into the following sections: u pp. 95–102 provide an overview of the growing rivalry between China and the United States, including a discussion of the meaning and role of strategic rivalry in interstate conflict and a comparison with the U.S.-China rivalry during the Cold War. u pp. 102–4 review the dynamics of the rivalry at the regional systemic level. u pp. 104–10 analyze the dynamics of the rivalry at the global systemic level. u pp. 110–15 examine why proposals to avoid rivalry through cooperation or aggressive competition are unlikely to succeed. u pp. 115–19 discuss the idea of strategic rivalry management and offer recommendations on ways to sustain the rivalry at a lower level of intensity the growing rivalry between the united states and china Strains between China and the United States have deepened in the past few years over a proliferating array of issues. President Trump has stepped up accusations against China of unfair trade practices and inadequate pressure on North Korea. He also provoked controversy early in his term when he floated the idea of increasing official contacts with Taiwan, which Beijing considers a renegade province.8 These disputes add to tensions that had expanded under President Obama, who moved to strengthen U.S. alliances in Asia, promote a regional trade pact, criticize Chinese behavior in the cyber and maritime domains, and shift more military assets to the Asia-Pacific as part of the rebalance to Asia strategy.9 China has in turn dismissed U.S. concerns about the construction of artificial islands in the South China Sea, intensified its criticism of U.S. security leadership in Asia, and tightened its grip on disputed maritime territories.10 The baleful state of bilateral relations has spurred plenty of finger-pointing. On the Chinese side, officials denounce the United States’ “Cold War mindset” and warn of conflict if Washington does not adjust its policies.11 A 2015 defense white paper described an “intensifying competition” between the great powers.12 Military officials and many Chinese analysts regard increasing tension between the two countries as unavoidable, although they do not regard war as likely. People’s Liberation Army (PLA) deputy chief of staff Qi Jianguo commented that “no conflict and no confrontation does not mean no struggle” between China and the United States.13 According to Chinese official media, polls in China suggest a large majority believes that the United States intends to pursue a containment policy.14 Reflecting this point of view, Niu Xinchun, a scholar at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, argued that the “greatest obstacle to the further integration of emerging countries such as China into the international system comes from the United States.”15 Western officials and commentators tend to blame China for current strains. Senior U.S. leaders have criticized “assertive” Chinese behavior, while some analysts blame Xi Jinping for pushing a more confrontational set of policies.16 Other Western observers worry that a further souring of relations could lead to conflict.17 But even if war remains unlikely, the deepening tensions increase the risks of miscalculation, crises, and potential military clashes involving the world’s two largest powers. Echoing a view widely held among U.S. foreign policy experts and officials, former CIA director General Michael Hayden has warned that mishandling the U.S.-China relationship could be “catastrophic.”18 Rivalry at the Heart of the U.S.-China Relationship This widespread concern reflects a realistic appraisal of the dangers inherent in the U.S.-China relationship. But developing successful policies to manage an increasingly sensitive and complex situation requires an accurate assessment of the phenomenon of interstate rivalry that lies at the heart of that relationship. Rivalry is a concept that, while widely acknowledged, remains poorly understood. To be sure, most experts take for granted the idea that powerful nations compete for status and influence, and they acknowledge the danger posed by a rising power’s challenge to a status quo power. Yet investigation into the phenomenon of rivalry too often stops at these well-trodden findings. Less often discussed are the conclusions regarding the dynamics of rivalry that experts on conflict studies have arrived at within the past few years. Much of this scholarship draws from improvements to the analyses and data regarding interstate crisis and conflict.19 This research has generated useful and interesting insights regarding the start and conclusion of rivalries, crises, and war, although these remain largely unexplored outside academic circles. Analysts have established, for example, that rivalry is perhaps the most important driver of interstate conflict. As defined by political scientists, “rivals” are states that regard each other as “enemies,” sources of real or potential threat, and as competitors. At the root of rivalries thus lie disputes over incompatible goals and perceptions that countries possess both the ability (real or potential) and the intention to harm each other. Wars have historically tended to be fought by pairings of these states and their allies. Rivals have opposed each other in 77% of wars since 1816 and in over 90% of wars since 1945.20 Not only are rivals more likely to fight than non-rivals, but rivals also have a tendency to be recidivists because they are unable to resolve their political differences on the battlefield. Yet that does not always discourage them from trying to do so repeatedly. Rivals that cannot prevail due to parity frequently compete for advantage by building internal strength through arms racing or by leveraging external power through the strengthening of alliances and partnerships. Rivals are also prone to serial militarized crises. Mutual perceptions of each other as hostile enemies and the inconclusive outcome of previous militarized disputes typically fuel a pattern of recurrent crises characterized by deepening resentment, distrust, and growing willingness to risk escalation. Studies have also established that the risk of conflict increases sharply after three episodes of militarized crises.21 Rivalries do not progress in a linear direction, however. Their intensity can wax and wane in response to shocks and other important developments. Periods of relative stability can alternate with turbulent periods of tension and conflict. Similarly, cooperative activities can be interspersed with periods of acute tension and hostility. Nevertheless, the link between rivalry, crises, and interstate conflict is pervasive. Drawing from these sources, one can describe the Sino-U.S. relationship as a rivalry characterized as a competition between two major powers over incompatible goals regarding their status, leadership, and influence over a particular region—in this case principally the Asia-Pacific. The dynamics of this type of strategic rivalry differ in significant ways from the far more numerous rivalries over territory that have characterized conflict between so many countries, especially weaker and poorer ones. In contrast with rivalries over territories, strategic rivals do not necessarily share borders, although allies of one power may be engaged in a territorial dispute with the other major power. Strategic rivalries among major powers tend to be especially long-lived, with the average enduring for about 55 years.22 Strategic rivalries are incredibly complex phenomena that include overlapping and often reinforcing layers of disputes over leadership, status, and territory between the principal rivals and their allies. Such rivalries are almost always multilateral affairs that also involve allies and partners, some of which have their own rivalries with the other side. Competition in the economic, political, and military domains can serve as expressions as well as drivers of rivalry, as can sports and cultural competition. Strategic rivalries can be confined to one region, with the basic conflict reducible in some respects to which rival will occupy the top rung of the regional hierarchy. In other cases, however, a rivalry can span regional and global domains either sequentially or simultaneously. The U.S.-China rivalry, for instance, is already both a regional and, to a lesser extent, a global rivalry, but there is still considerable room for competition to expand. The complex and overlapping nature of the disputes makes strategic rivalries extremely crisis- and conflict-prone. Strategic rivalries come in a grim package deal that includes strained and hostile relations, serial crises, and in some cases wars. The comprehensive and multifaceted nature of the disputes also explains why such rivalries have proved so durable and why their wars have been so devastating. Conflict between strategic rivals has historically occasioned the most destructive wars, of which World Wars I and II are the most recent examples. The fact that experts at the time of each historic episode of systemic conflict consistently underestimated the duration or extent of war offers cold comfort to analysts today who seek to predict the trajectory of any conflict that might involve China and the United States. Comparisons of the Current Environment with the U.S.-China Rivalry during the Cold War How did the two countries arrive at this position? The most widely accepted narrative argues that China’s rapid economic growth has provided the resources with which it can press demands on long unresolved issues such as unification with Taiwan. China and the United States may have enjoyed stable relations in the 1980s when they cooperated on a limited basis against the Soviet Union, but that foundation of cooperation eroded considerably once the Soviet bloc dissolved in the early 1990s. Moreover, China’s rapid growth in economic power has given the country fresh resources to press its own demands on the United States and U.S. allies. By 2010, China’s economy had outpaced that of Japan to become the second-largest in the world.23 The persistence of long-standing sources of antagonism, such as the U.S. security partnership with Taiwan, has both reflected and aggravated a broader competition for leadership. For its own reasons, Washington has resisted Beijing’s demands, and the result has been growing fear and distrust.24 The intensifying rivalry between the rising power and the status quo leader is as old as antiquity itself. Indeed, Graham Allison coined the term “Thucydides trap” to describe such a situation, a term that he subsequently applied to the current U.S.-China situation.25 The popular narrative is not entirely incorrect, yet in some ways it remains incomplete. A closer look at history reminds us that antagonism between China and the United States is not unprecedented. In the 1950s and 1960s, the two countries engaged in an intense strategic competition for status and influence in Asia, one that occasionally burned hot, as it did when they clashed on the Korean Peninsula or more indirectly in Vietnam. This Cold War–era rivalry saw a complex network of competing alliances and partnerships, principally in Asia. The United States supported Taiwan and South Korea in bitter disputes with China and its allies, North Korea and the Soviet Union. This rivalry terminated in the 1970s primarily due to Beijing’s decision to counter a growing Soviet menace and the United States’ decision to pursue China as a potential partner for its own rivalry with the Soviet Union. But the existence of a period of intense U.S.-Chinese tension and competition provides a helpful baseline of comparison. What requires explanation is not the fact that the United States and China are engaged in a rivalry but the difference between today’s rivalry and that of the Cold War. What distinguishes the rivalry today from that of the earlier period is both the closer parity in relative power—albeit still more potential than real—between the two countries and the comprehensiveness, complexity, and systemic nature of the disputes between them. Paradoxically, these features make the current rivalry potentially far more threatening to the United States, despite the fact that so far U.S.-China relations have remained peaceful, and even though the U.S. and Chinese militaries fought each other in the Korean War. The dangerous potential of the current rivalry ultimately owes to the risk that China could rise to the position of global system leader and subordinate the United States accordingly. As has happened in previous power transitions, China as a system leader could exploit existing arrangements to its benefit and to the detriment of the outgoing leader, the United States. Due to the enormous rewards that accrue to a systemic leader and the high costs for the state that loses this position, struggles for global leadership have historically proved to be especially destructive. The possibility that China and the United States could find themselves in a similar struggle, while unlikely at this point, cannot be ruled out given the reality of the relative decline in U.S. power and the concomitant increase in Chinese comprehensive national power. At the most basic level, this fact may be measured superficially by the U.S. share of world GDP, which eroded from 40% in 1950 to 16% in 2014, adjusted for purchasing power parity. Over the same period, China’s share expanded from around 5% to 17%.26 An important consequence of the narrowing of the gap in comprehensive power has been an intensifying competition for leadership in the international economic and political order. In this way, the popular discussion of the Thucydides trap correctly recognizes the dangers of the U.S.-China competition. This feature contrasts sharply with the previous episode of rivalry. In the 1950s and 1960s, the asymmetry in power meant that the United States and China competed for influence and even clashed militarily in countries along China’s borders, but rarely elsewhere. As a largely rural, impoverished country, China had little stake in the system of global trade promoted by the industrialized West. Excluded from the United Nations, Maoist China also lacked the institutional ability to influence geopolitics and project power much beyond its immediate environs—and even that capability was sorely handicapped. Outside Asia, the United States faced minimal competition from China and generally regarded the Soviet Union as a more pressing threat. By contrast, the current competition features a China fully enmeshed in a political and economic order led by the United States. While generally supportive of this order, China is also seeking to revise aspects of the regional and international order that it regards as obstacles to the country’s revitalization as a great power. The main theater of this competition for influence and leadership is the Asia-Pacific, as it was in the Cold War, but U.S.-China rivalry increasingly is expanding globally. Moreover, unlike the largely military, regional, and ideological Cold War competition, the current contest is far more multifaceted and comprehensive in nature; it includes military, economic, technological, and political dimensions. The following two sections review the state of the competition at both the regional and the global systemic levels. the u.s.-china rivalry at the regional level At the regional level, U.S.-China competition spans the political, economic, and military realms. Politically, the two countries have feuded over the role of liberal values and ideals, a dispute that widened after the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. However, the 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis elevated the potential threat of conflict between the two countries and may therefore be regarded as the starting point of the current rivalry. Coinciding with impressive gains in China’s economic and military power following two decades of market reforms, the standoff saw Washington and Beijing deploy military assets to back up their respective positions regarding Taiwan’s right to hold a presidential election, elevating the risk of a clash. Since then, the competition for political influence and leadership has intensified. In 2011, the United States announced its rebalance to Asia, which was aimed in part at shoring up U.S. alliances, partnerships, and influence.27 Although on the surface Washington has abandoned the effort, the Trump administration has reintroduced a vision for Asia’s economic and security order premised on values favorable to U.S. interests.28 The 2017 National Security Strategy stated, for example, that the United States upholds a “free and open Indo-Pacific.”29 Beijing, by contrast, has increased its efforts to advance a vision for a regional order premised on Chinese leadership. In recent years, China has promoted major economic and geostrategic initiatives to deepen Asia’s economic integration through the Belt and Road Initiative, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and other initiatives.30 In 2017, China for the first time issued a white paper that outlined the government’s vision for Asia-Pacific security. The paper stated that China takes the advancement of regional prosperity and stability “as its own responsibility.”31 These policies build on directives issued by Xi Jinping in 2013, when he called for policies to bolster China’s attractiveness as a regional leader.32 Economically, the two countries are competing over the evolution of Asia’s economic future—a region anticipated to drive global growth in coming decades. Both countries are also competing to shape the terms of trade. President Trump may have abandoned the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), but his advisers have advocated other measures to shape favorable trade terms.33 Meanwhile, China has stepped up advocacy of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, a proposed free trade agreement for the region that excludes the United States.34 China also has promoted the AIIB, while the United States and Japan continue to instead support the Asian Development Bank.35 Militarily, the growing arms race and the establishment of rival security institutions stand among the most obvious manifestations of an increasing competition in this domain. China and the United States have designed an array of military capabilities and doctrines partly aimed at each other. The PLA has developed weapons systems to counter potential U.S. intervention in any contingency along China’s periphery, which the United States has in turn sought to counter with its own innovations, such as the Joint Operational Access Concept.36 U.S. secretaries of defense Chuck Hagel and Ashton Carter outlined a “third offset” strategy to compete with China and Russia in military technology.37 To promote regional security, the United States has strengthened its military alliances and partnerships, while China has strengthened ties with Russia and argued that regional security is best protected through the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, and other Chinese-led institutions. In 2014, Xi indirectly rebuked the United States for seeking to bolster its security leadership in the region, stating that “it is for the people of Asia to uphold the security of Asia.”38

#### Nuclear war causes extinction.

Starr 17 (Steven; director of the University of Missouri’s Clinical Laboratory Science Program, senior scientist at the Physicians for Social Responsibility, Associate member of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, expert in the environmental consequences of nuclear war; 1/9/17; “Turning a Blind Eye Towards Armageddon — U.S. Leaders Reject Nuclear Winter Studies”; <https://fas.org/2017/01/turning-a-blind-eye-towards-armageddon-u-s-leaders-reject-nuclear-winter-studies/>; Federation of American Scientists; accessed 11/24/18; TV) [AV]

The detonation of an atomic bomb with this explosive power will **instantly ignite fires** over a surface area of three to five square miles. In the recent studies, the scientists calculated that the **blast**, **fire**, and **radiation** from a war fought with 100 atomic bombs could produce **direct fatalities** comparable to all of those worldwide in World War II, or to those once estimated for a “**counterforce**” **nuclear war** between the superpowers. However, the **long-term environmental effects** of the war **could** significantly disrupt the global weather for at least a decade, which would likely **result in** a vast **global famine**. The scientists predicted that **nuclear firestorms** in the burning cities would cause at least five million tons of **black carbon smoke** to quickly rise above cloud level into the stratosphere, where it could not be rained out. The smoke would circle the Earth in **less than two weeks** and would form **a** global **stratospheric smoke layer** that **would remain for** more than **a decade**. The smoke would absorb warming sunlight, which would **heat the smoke** to temperatures near the boiling point of water, producing **ozone losses of** 20 to **50 percent** over populated areas. This would almost double the amount of UV-B reaching the most populated regions of the mid-latitudes, and it would create UV-B indices unprecedented in human history. In North America and Central Europe, the time required to get a painful sunburn at mid-day in June could decrease to as little as six minutes for fair-skinned individuals. As the smoke layer blocked warming sunlight from reaching the Earth’s surface, it would produce the **coldest** average **surface temperatures** in the last 1,000 years. The scientists calculated that global **food production would decrease** by 20 to **40 percent** during a five-year period following such a war. Medical experts have predicted that the shortening of growing seasons and corresponding decreases in agricultural production could cause up to **two billion** people to perish from **famine**. The climatologists also investigated the effects of a nuclear war fought with the vastly more powerful modern **thermonuclear** weapons possessed by the United States, Russia, China, France, and England. Some of the thermonuclear weapons constructed during the 1950s and 1960s were 1,000 times more powerful than an atomic bomb. During the last 30 years, the average size of thermonuclear or “strategic” nuclear weapons has decreased. Yet today, each of the approximately 3,540 strategic weapons deployed by the United States and Russia is seven to **80 times** more powerful than the atomic bombs modeled in the India-Pakistan study. The smallest strategic nuclear weapon has an explosive power of **100,000 tons of TNT**, compared to an atomic bomb with an average explosive power of 15,000 tons of TNT. Strategic nuclear weapons produce much larger nuclear firestorms than do atomic bombs. For example, a standard Russian 800-kiloton warhead, on an average day, will ignite fires covering a surface area of 90 to 152 square miles. A **war** fought with hundreds or thousands of U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear weapons would **ignite immense** **nuclear firestorms** covering land surface areas of many thousands or **tens of thousands** of square miles. The scientists calculated that these fires would produce up to **180 million tons** of black carbon soot and **smoke**, which would form a dense, **global stratospheric smoke layer**. The smoke would remain in the stratosphere for 10 to **20 years**, and it **would block** as much as **70 percent of sunlight** from reaching the surface of the Northern Hemisphere and 35 percent from the Southern Hemisphere. So much sunlight would be blocked by the smoke that the noonday sun would resemble a full moon at midnight. Under such conditions, it would only require a matter of days or weeks for daily minimum **temperatures** to **fall below freezing** in the largest agricultural areas of the Northern Hemisphere, where freezing temperatures would occur every day for a period of between one to more than two years. Average surface temperatures would become colder than those experienced 18,000 years ago at the height of the last Ice Age, and the prolonged cold would cause average rainfall to decrease by up to 90%. Growing seasons would be completely eliminated for more than a decade; it would be **too cold and dark** to grow food crops, **which would doom the** majority of the **human population.** NUCLEAR WINTER IN BRIEF The profound cold and darkness following nuclear war became known as nuclear winter and was first predicted in 1983 by a group of NASA scientists led by Carl Sagan. During the mid-1980s, a large body of research was done by such groups as the Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE), the World Meteorological Organization, and the U.S. National Research Council of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences; their work essentially supported the initial findings of the 1983 studies. The idea of nuclear winter, published and supported by prominent scientists, generated extensive public alarm and put political pressure on the United States and Soviet Union to reverse a runaway nuclear arms race, which, by 1986, had created a global nuclear arsenal of more than 65,000 nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, this created a backlash among many powerful military and industrial interests, who undertook an extensive media campaign to brand nuclear winter as “bad science” and the scientists who discovered it as “irresponsible.” Critics used various uncertainties in the studies and the first climate models (which are primitive by today’s standards) as a basis to criticize and reject the concept of nuclear winter. In 1986, the Council on Foreign Relations published an article by scientists from the National Center for Atmospheric Research, who predicted drops in global cooling about half as large as those first predicted by the 1983 studies and described this as a “nuclear autumn.”

### 1NC – OFF

#### Space cooperation massively boosts prestige for authoritarian regimes

Juul, 19 - Senior policy analyst at the Center for American Progress

Peter Juul, “Trump’s Space Force Gets the Final Frontier All Wrong,” Foreign Policy. March 20, 2019. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/03/20/trumps-space-force-gets-the-final-frontier-all-wrong/>

--Space is k2 national prestige – we control it now because people remember Apollo and ISS but that won’t last forever – strong NASA leadership is key

--Autocracy link – working with Russia and China gives them diplomatic leverage because it treats them as co-equal despite HR violations

--Competition is key – drives all countries to try to outperform the others

But funding isn’t everything, and in the new geopolitical context, democracy must be seen to work effectively. When it comes to space exploration, that means ratcheting back U.S. space cooperation with Russia as well as forgoing any equally intimate cooperation with China and its secretive space agency. The fact that the [head of Russia’s space agency remains under U.S. sanctions](https://spacenews.com/nasa-postpones-rogozin-visit/) for his role in Moscow’s military intervention in Ukraine illustrates the hazards involved in working with autocracies in space. Deep cooperation with autocratic powers in space gives autocracies a major point of diplomatic leverage over the United States, and more generally allows them to poach unearned international prestige by working on goals set and largely carried out by the United States. In today’s world, there’s no reason for the United States to give Russia or China this sort of standing by association.

Cooperation between the United States and Russia won’t grind to an immediate halt, though. With the International Space Station in orbit until at least 2024—if not longer—it will take time to disentangle the web of functional ties that have bound NASA and its Russian counterpart over the last quarter century. Significant cooperation with China should be avoided altogether, especially given its [notoriously opaque](https://www.merics.org/en/blog/chinas-space-program-about-more-soft-power) and [military-run](https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2017/01/china-space/497846/) space program. The space programs and agencies of other nations—NASA, the European Space Agency and its member-nation agencies, the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, and even Russia’s Roscosmos—remain led and run by civilians.

#### Putin soft power is low now, and that prevents Baltic adventurism that goes nuclear---legitimizing him gives him an opening to make information warfare succeed

Kagan, 19 - American resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, and a former professor of military history at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, less famous brother of our favorite neighborhood neocon Robert Kagan

Frederick W. Kagan, “CONFRONTING THE RUSSIAN CHALLENGE: A NEW APPROACH FOR THE U.S.,” Institute for the Study of War. June 2019. <https://www.politico.com/f/?id=0000016b-6eef-dc80-a3ff-ffff778c0000>

\*\*\*Apologies for it being super condensed - it’s a 90 pg article

Impact:

--Russia needs to use nuclear threats in adventurism bc of conventional inferioty

--Wld detonate tac nukes to dare us to go to strategic nukes – either we give up and lose NATO or retaliate

--Causes countervalue strikes that kill everyone

IL:

--Russia adventurism relies on hybrid/info warfare – need to be able to sell a narrative to succeed

--Legitimacy is key – putin’s opportunistic and strikes if he thinks people will buy his narratives

--He’ll view the plan as an opportunity – views multipolarity as legitimating and will see it as recognition of his right to seize soviet states

--Nostalgia link – his sopo strat is based on reminiscence about the old USSR days – space achieves that

UQ:

1] now key – Putin in frozen conflicts and not condoned or condemned – plan is viewed sa ex post facto condoning Ukraine which justifies future incursions – it says putin is fine to seize territory bc we’re willing to work with him anyway!

2] His foreign policy strat is failing now – states are’t aligned with him

3] SoPo low bc he’s been called out – he paid a high price for incursions and the US has shunned him – that means his actions are delegitimized and called out so he won’t try it, but the plan flips it

The Russian threat’s effectiveness results mainly from the West’s weaknesses. NATO’s European members are not meeting their full commitments to the alliance to maintain the fighting power needed to deter and defeat the emerging challenge from Moscow. Increasing political polarization and the erosion of trust by Western peoples in their governments creates vulnerabilities that the Kremlin has adroitly exploited.

Moscow’s success in manipulating Western perceptions of and reactions to its activities has fueled the development of an approach to warfare that the West finds difficult to understand, let alone counter. Shaping the information space is the primary effort to which Russian military operations, even conventional military operations, are frequently subordinated in this way of war. Russia obfuscates its activities and confuses the discussion so that many people throw up their hands and say simply, “Who knows if the Russians really did that? Who knows if it was legal?”—thus paralyzing the West’s responses.

Putin’s Program

Putin is not simply an opportunistic predator. Putin and the major institutions of the Russian Federation have a program as coherent as that of any Western leader. Putin enunciates his objectives in major speeches, and his ministers generate detailed formal expositions of Russia’s military and diplomatic aims and its efforts and the methods and resources it uses to pursue them. These statements cohere with the actions of Russian officials and military units on the ground. The common perception that he is opportunistic arises from the way that the Kremlin sets conditions to achieve these objectives in advance. Putin closely monitors the domestic and international situation and decides to execute plans when and if conditions require and favor the Kremlin. The aims of Russian policy can be distilled into the following:

Domestic Objectives Putin is an autocrat who seeks to retain control of his state and the succession. He seeks to keep his power circle content, maintain his own popularity, suppress domestic political opposition in the name of blocking a “color revolution” he falsely accuses the West of preparing, and expand the Russian economy.

Putin has not fixed the economy, which remains corrupt, inefficient, and dependent on petrochemical and mineral exports. He has focused instead on ending the international sanctions regime to obtain the cash, expertise, and technology he needs. Information operations and hybrid warfare undertakings in Europe are heavily aimed at this objective.

External Objectives

Putin’s foreign policy aims are clear: end American dominance and the “unipolar” world order, restore “multipolarity,” and reestablish Russia as a global power and broker. He identifies NATO as an adversary and a threat and seeks to negate it. He aims to break Western unity, establish Russian suzerainty over the former Soviet States, and regain a global footprint.

Putin works to break Western unity by invalidating the collective defense provision of the North Atlantic Treaty (Article 5), weakening the European Union, and destroying the faith of Western societies in their governments.

He is reestablishing a global military footprint similar in extent the Soviet Union’s, but with different aims. He is neither advancing an ideology, nor establishing bases from which to project conventional military power on a large scale. He aims rather to constrain and shape America’s actions using small numbers of troops and agents along with advanced anti-air and anti-shipping systems.

Recommendations A sound U.S. grand strategic approach to Russia: • Aims to achieve core American national security objectives positively rather than to react defensively to Russian actions; • Holistically addresses all U.S. interests globally as they relate to Russia rather than considering them theater-by-theater; • Does not trade core American national security interests in one theater for those in another, or sacrifice one vital interest for another; • Achieves American objectives by means short of war if at all possible; • Deters nuclear war, the use of any nuclear weapons, and other Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD); • Accepts the risk of conventional conflict with Russia while seeking to avoid it and to control escalation, while also ensuring that American forces will prevail at any escalation level; • Contests Russian information operations and hybrid warfare undertakings; and • Extends American protection and deterrence to U.S. allies in NATO and outside of NATO. Such an approach involves four principal lines of effort. Constrain Putin’s Resources. Russia uses hybrid warfare approaches because of its relative poverty and inability to field large and modern military systems that could challenge the U.S. and NATO symmetrically. Lifting or reducing the current sanctions regime or otherwise facilitating Russia’s access to wealth and technology could give Putin the resources he needs to mount a much more significant conventional threat—an aim he had been pursuing in the early 2000s when high oil prices and no sanctions made it seem possible. Disrupt Hybrid Operations. Identifying, exposing, and disrupting hybrid operations is a feasible, if difficult, undertaking. New structures in the U.S. military, State Department, and possibly National Security Council Staff are likely needed to: 1. Coordinate efforts to identify and understand hybrid operations in preparation and underway; 2. Develop recommendations for action against hybrid operations that the U.S. government has identified but are not yet publicly known; 3. Respond to the unexpected third-party exposure of hybrid operations whether the U.S. government knew about the operations or not; 4. Identify in advance the specific campaign and strategic objectives that should be pursued when the U.S. government deliberately exposes a particular hybrid operation or when third parties expose hybrid operations of a certain type in a certain area; 5. Shape the U.S. government response, particularly in the information space, to drive the blowback effects of the exposure of a particular hybrid operation toward achieving those identified objectives; and 6. Learn lessons from past and current counter-hybrid operations undertakings, improve techniques, and prepare for future evolutions of Russian approaches in coordination with allies and partners. The U.S. should also develop a counter-information operations approach that uses only truth against Russian narratives aimed at sowing discord within the West and at undermining the legitimacy of Western governments.

Delegitimize Putin as a Mediator and Convener.

Recognition as one of the poles of a multipolar world order is vital to Putin. It is part of the greatness he promises the Russian people in return for taking their liberty. Getting a “seat at the table” of Western-led endeavors is insufficient for him because he seeks to transform the international system fundamentally. He finds the very language of being offered a seat at the West’s table patronizing.

He has gained much more legitimacy as an international partner in Syria and Ukraine than his behavior warrants. He benefits from the continuous desire of Western leaders to believe that Moscow will help them out of their own problems if only it is approached in the right way.

The U.S. and its allies must instead recognize that Putin is a self-declared adversary who seeks to weaken, divide, and harm them—never to strengthen or help them. He has made clear in word and deed that his interests are antithetical to the West’s. The West should therefore stop treating him as a potential partner, but instead require him to demonstrate that he can and will act to advance rather than damage the West’s interests before engaging with him at high levels.

The West must not trade interests in one region for Putin’s help in another, even if there is reason to believe that he would actually be helpful. Those working on American policy in Syria and the Levant must recognize that the U.S. cannot afford to subordinate its global Russia policy to pursue limited interests, however important, within the Middle East. Recognizing Putin as a mediator or convener in Syria—to constrain Iran’s activities in the south of that country, for example—is too high a price tag to pay for undermining a coherent global approach to the Russian threat. Granting him credibility in that role there enhances his credibility in his self-proclaimed role as a mediator rather than belligerent in Ukraine. The tradeoff of interests is unacceptable.

Nor should the U.S. engage with Putin about Ukraine until he has committed publicly in word and deed to what should be the minimum non-negotiable Western demand—the recognition of the full sovereignty of all the former Soviet states, specifically including Ukraine, in their borders as of the dates of their admission as independent countries to the United Nations, and the formal renunciation (including the repealing of relevant Russian legislation) of any right to interfere in the internal affairs of those states

Defend NATO. The increased Russian threat requires increased efforts to defend NATO against both conventional and hybrid threats. All NATO members must meet their commitments to defense spending targets—and should be prepared to go beyond those commitments to field the forces necessary to defend themselves and other alliance members. The Russian base in Syria poses a threat to Western operations in the Middle East that are essential to protecting our own citizens and security against terrorist threats and Iran. Neither the U.S. nor NATO is postured to protect the Mediterranean or fight for access to the Middle East through the eastern Mediterranean. NATO must now prepare to field and deploy additional forces to ensure that it can win that fight. The West should also remove as much ambiguity as possible from the NATO commitment to defend member states threatened by hybrid warfare. The 2018 Brussels Declaration affirming the alliance’s intention to defend member states attacked by hybrid warfare was a good start. The U.S. and other NATO states with stronger militaries should go further by declaring that they will come to the aid of a member state attacked by conventional or hybrid means regardless of whether Article 5 is formally activated, creating a pre-emptive coalition of the willing to deter Russian aggression. Bilateral Negotiations. Recognizing that Russia is a self-defined adversary and threat does not preclude direct negotiations. The U.S. negotiated several arms control treaties with the Soviet Union and has negotiated with other self-defined enemies as well. It should retain open channels of communication and a willingness to work together with Russia on bilateral areas in which real and verifiable agreement is possible, even while refusing to grant legitimacy to Russian intervention in conflicts beyond its borders. Such areas could include strategic nuclear weapons, cyber operations, interference in elections, the Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty, and other matters related to direct Russo-American tensions and concerns. There is little likelihood of any negotiation yielding fruit at this point, but there is no need to refuse to talk with Russia on these and similar issues in hopes of laying the groundwork for more successful discussions in the future. INTRODUCTION The Russian challenge is a paradox. Russia’s nuclear arsenal poses the only truly existential threat to the United States and its allies, but Russia’s conventional military forces have never recovered anything like the power of the Soviet military. Those forces pose a limited and uneven threat to America’s European allies and to U.S. armed forces, partially because many U.S. allies are not meeting their NATO defense spending commitments. Russia is willing and able to act more rapidly and accept greater risk than Western countries because of its autocratic nature. Its cyber capabilities are among the best in the world, and it is developing an information-based way of war that the West has not collectively properly understood, let alone begun developing a response to. That information-based warfare has included attempts to affect and disrupt elections in the U.S. and allied states. The complexity and paradoxical nature of the Russian threat is perhaps its greatest strength. It is one of the key reasons for the failure of successive American administrations and U.S. partners around the world to develop a coherent strategy for securing themselves and their people and advancing their interests in the face of Russian efforts against them. The West’s lack of continuous focus on the Russian challenge has created major gaps in our collective understanding of the problem—another key reason for our failure to develop a sound counter-strategy. American concerns about Russia are bifurcated, moreover. Many Americans see the Russian threat primarily as a domestic problem: Moscow’s interference in the 2016 presidential election, attempts to interfere in the 2018 midterm election, and efforts to shape the 2020 elections. The U.S. national security establishment acknowledges the domestic problem but is generally more concerned with the military challenges a seemingly reviving Russia poses to U.S. NATO allies and other partners in the Euro-Atlantic region; with Russia’s activities in places like Syria and Venezuela; and with Russia’s outreach to rogue states such as North Korea and Iran. Even that overseas security concern, however, is pervaded by complexity and some confusion. The recommendations of the current U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) and National Defense Strategy (NDS) are dominated by responses to much-trumpeted Russian investments in the modernization of conventional and nuclear forces. At the same time, those documents acknowledge the importance of Russian capabilities at the lower end of the military spectrum and in the non-military realms of information, cyber, space, information, and economic efforts. Americans thus generally agree that Russia is a threat to which the U.S. must respond in some way, but the varying definitions of that threat hinder discussion of the appropriate response. Russia has entangled itself sufficiently in American partisan politics that conversation about the national security threat it poses is increasingly polarized. We must find a way to transcend this polarization to develop a strategy to secure the U.S. and its allies and advance U.S. interests, despite Russian efforts to undermine America’s domestic politics. AMERICAN INTERESTS—WHAT IS AT STAKE The Ideals of the American Republic The stakes in the Russo-American conflict are high. Russian leader Vladimir Putin seeks to undermine confidence in democratically elected institutions and the institution of democracy itself in the United States and the West.1 He is trying to interfere with the ability of American and European peoples to choose their leaders freely2 and is undermining the rules-based international order on which American prosperity and security rest. His actions in Ukraine and Syria have driven the world toward greater violence and disorder. The normalization of Putin’s illegal actions over time will likely prompt other states to emulate his behavior and cause further deterioration of the international system. Moscow’s war on the very idea of truth has been perhaps the most damaging Russian undertaking in recent years. The most basic element of the Russian information strategy, which we will consider in more detail presently, is the creation of a sense of uncertainty around any important issue. Russia’s strategy does not require persuading Western audiences that its actions in Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula or the Kerch Strait, which connects the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, for example, were legal or justified.3 It is enough to create an environment in which many people say simply, “who knows?” The “who knows?” principle feeds powerfully into the phenomena of viral “fake news,” as well as other falsehoods and accusations of falsehoods which, if left unchecked, will ultimately make civil discourse impossible. The Kremlin’s propaganda does not necessarily need its target audiences to believe in lies; its primary goal is to make sure they do not believe in the truth. This aspect of Putin’s approach is one of the greatest obstacles to forming an accurate assessment and making recommendations. It is also one of the most insidious threats the current Russian strategy poses to the survival of the American republic. The good news is that the war on the idea of truth does not involve military operations or violence, though it can lead to both. The bad news is that it is extraordinarily difficult to identify, let alone to counter. Yet we must counter it if we are to survive as a functioning polity. American Prosperity The debate about the trade deficit and tariffs only underscores the scale and importance of the role Europe plays in the American economy. Europe is the largest single market for American exports and the second-largest source of American imports, with trade totaling nearly $1.1 trillion.4 American exports to Europe are estimated to support 2.6 million jobs in the U.S.5 Significant damage to the European economy, let alone the collapse of major European states or Europe itself, would devastate the U.S. economy as well. American prosperity is tightly interwoven with Europe’s. American prosperity also depends on Europe remaining largely democratic, with market-based economies, and subscribing to the idea of a rulesbased international order. The re-emergence of authoritarian regimes in major European states, which would most likely be fueled by a resurgence of extremist nationalism, would lead to the collapse of the entire European system, including its economic foundations. European economic cooperation rests on European peace, which in turn rests on the continued submergence of extremist nationalism and adherence to a common set of values. Russian actions against Western democracies and support for extremist groups, often with nationalist agendas, reinforce negative trends emerging within Europe itself. These actions therefore constitute a threat to American prosperity and security over the long term. The American economy also depends on the free flow of goods across the world’s oceans and through critical maritime chokepoints. Russia posed no threat to those chokepoints after the Soviet Union fell, but that situation is changing. The establishment of what appears to be a permanent Russian air, land, and naval base on the Syrian coast gives Russia a foothold in the Mediterranean for the first time since 1991. Russian efforts to negotiate bases in Egypt and Libya and around the Horn of Africa would allow Moscow to threaten maritime and air traffic through the Suez Canal and the Red Sea.6 Since roughly 3.9 million barrels of oil per day transited the Suez in 2016, to say nothing of the food and other cargo moving through the canal, Russian interference would have significant impacts on the global economy—and therefore on America’s economy.7 Russia’s efforts to establish control over the maritime routes opening in the Arctic also threaten the free movement of goods through an emerging set of maritime chokepoints.8 Those efforts are even more relevant to the U.S. because the Arctic routes ultimately pass through the Bering Strait, the one (maritime) border America shares with Russia. Russian actions can hinder or prevent the U.S. and its allies from benefiting from the opening of the Arctic. Russia is already bringing China into the Arctic region through energy investment projects and negotiations about the use of the Northern Sea Route, despite the fact that China is a state with no Arctic territory or claims.9 NATO The collective defense provision of the NATO treaty (known as Article 5) has been invoked only once in the 70-year history of the alliance: on September 12, 2001, on behalf of the United States. NATO military forces provided limited but important assistance to the U.S. in the immediate wake of the 9/11 attacks, including air surveillance patrols over the United States, and have continued supporting the U.S. in the long wars that followed. NATO established military missions in both Iraq and Afghanistan in the next two decades, deploying tens of thousands of soldiers to fight and to train America’s Iraqi and Afghan partners. American allies, primarily NATO members, have suffered more than 1,100 deaths in the Afghan war, slightly under half the number of U.S. deaths.10 The non-U.S. NATO member states collectively spent roughly $313 billion on defense in 2018—about half the American defense budget.11 The failure of most NATO members to meet their commitment to spend 2 percent of their GDP on defense is lamentable and must be addressed. But the fact remains that the alliance and its members have spent large amounts of blood and treasure fighting alongside American forces against the enemies that attacked the U.S. homeland two decades ago, and that they provide strength and depth to the defense of Europe, which remains of vital strategic importance to the United States. The U.S. could not come close to replacing them without significantly increasing its own defense spending and the size of the U.S. military—to say nothing of American casualties. NATO is also the most effective alliance in world history by the standard that counts most: it has achieved its founding objective for 70 years. The alliance was formed in 1949 to defend Western Europe from the threat of Soviet aggression, ideally by deterring Soviet attack, and has never needed to fight to defend itself. The United States always provided the preponderance of military force for the alliance, but the European military contribution has always been critical as well. American conventional forces throughout the Cold War depended on the facilities and the combat power of European militaries, and the independent nuclear deterrents of France and Great Britain were likely as important to deterring overt Soviet aggression as America’s nuclear arsenal. The Soviets might have come to doubt that the U.S. would risk nuclear annihilation to defend Europe, but they never doubted that France and Britain would resort to nuclear arms in the face of a Soviet invasion. Has NATO become irrelevant with the passing of the Cold War and the drawdown of U.S. forces from Iraq and Afghanistan? Only if the threat of war has passed and Europe itself has become irrelevant to the United States. Neither is the case. Europe’s survival, prosperity, and democratic values remain central to America’s well-being, as noted above, and today’s global environment makes war more likely than it has been since the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is not a given that Europe will remain democratic and a part of the international rules-based order if NATO crumbles. The U.S. can and should continue to work with its European partners to increase their defense expenditures and, more to the point, military capabilities (for which the percent of GDP spent on defense is not a sufficient proxy). The U.S. must also recognize the centrality of the alliance to America’s own security, as both the National Security Strategy and the National Defense Strategy do.12 The maintenance and defense of NATO itself is a core national security interest of the United States. Cyber Russia is one of the world’s leading cyber powers, competing with the U.S. and China for the top spot, at least in offensive cyber capabilities. Russian hacking has become legendary in the U.S. thanks to Russia’s efforts to influence the 2016 presidential campaign, but Russia has turned its cyber capabilities against its neighbors in other damaging ways. Russia attacked Estonia in 2007 with a massive distributed denial-of-service attack. It attacked Ukrainian computers with the NotPetya malware in 2017, which eventually caused billions of dollars in damage, including in the Americas.13 It also employed cyberattacks in coordination with its ground invasions of Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014. Fears of Russian cyber capabilities are warranted. This report does not consider the Russian cyber challenge in detail because others with far more technical expertise and support are actively engaged in combating it, defending against it, and deterring it. Our sole contribution in this area will be to consider it in the specific context of information operations support for hybrid operations in the recommendations section below. This approach stems from the recognition that the Kremlin’s cyber operations largely serve as enablers for its larger campaigns, rather than as a main effort. One must note, however, that while deterrence with conventional and nuclear forces prevents attacks, the United States is subject to cyberattack every day and has not established an effective means of retaliation, and thus deterrence. Weapons of Mass Destruction Russia’s nuclear arsenal is large enough to destroy the United States completely. The U.S. currently has no fielded ability to defend against a full-scale Russian nuclear attack—nor can Russia defend against a U.S. nuclear attack. American missile defense systems, by design, do not have the characteristics or scale necessary to shoot down any important fraction of the number of warheads the Russians have aimed at the U.S. from land- and sea-based launch platforms. America’s security against Russian nuclear attack today rests on the same principle as it has since the Russians first acquired nuclear weapons: deterrence. Russia also lacks the ability to shoot down American land- or sea-launched missiles and may not even be able reliably to shoot down U.S. nuclear-armed fifth-generation bombers. Deterrence is extremely likely to continue to work against Putin, who is a rational actor without the kinds of apocalyptic visions that might lead another leader to opt for annihilation in pursuit of some delusional greater good.14 The U.S. must pursue necessary modernization of its nuclear arsenal to sustain the credibility of its nuclear deterrent forces, but there is no reason to fear that deterrence will fail against Putin if it does so.15 It is less clear that Russia will continue to abide by its commitments to abjure chemical weapons, however. Russian agents have already conducted several chemical attacks, bizarrely using distinctive, military-grade chemical agents in attempted assassinations in the United Kingdom.16 Putin has also given top cover to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s use of chemical weapons against his own people, despite Russia’s formal role in guaranteeing Assad’s adherence to his 2013 promise to destroy his chemical weapons stockpile and refrain from any such use.17 Periodic Russian-inspired “rumors” that Western military personnel and Ukraine—which has no chemical weapons program—were planning to use chemical weapons on Ukrainian territory raise the concern that Russian agents provocateurs might conduct false flag operations of their own.18 Russia has the capability to produce chemical weapons at will—as does any industrialized state—but it is now showing that it may be willing to do so and to use them. The Soviet Union also maintained a vibrant biological weapons program. Russia has not thus far shown any signs of having restarted it or of having any intent to do so. The completely false claims that the U.S. has built biological weapons facilities in Russia’s neighboring states raise some concern on this front, since they could theoretically provide cover for the use of Russia’s own biological weapons, but they are more likely intended to influence the information space and justify other Russian actions.19 Terrorism Russia poses several challenges to any sound American approach to counter-terrorism. In addition to Iran, the world’s most prolific state sponsor of terrorism, Moscow’s preferred partners in the Middle East are those whose actions most directly fuel the spread of Salafi-jihadi groups. Russia encouraged and supported systematic efforts to eliminate moderate, secular opposition groups in Syria to the benefit of the Salafi-jihadi groups. Putin aims to expel or constrain the U.S. in the Middle East and establish his own forces in key locations that would allow him to disrupt American efforts to re-engage.20 Russia is the co-leader of a political and military coalition that includes Iran, Lebanese Hezbollah, the Assad regime, and Iranian-controlled Iraqi Shi’a militias.21 Russia provides most of the air support to that coalition in Syria, as well as special forces troops (SPETSNAZ), intelligence capabilities, air defense, and long-range missile strikes.22 That coalition’s campaign of sectarian cleansing has driven millions of people from their homes, fueling the refugee crisis that has damaged Europe.23 The coalition seeks to reimpose a minoritarian ‘Alawite dictatorship in Syria and a militantly anti-American and anti–Sunni Arab government in Iraq.24 The atrocities Russian forces themselves have committed, including deliberate and precise airstrikes against hospitals, have increased the sense of desperation within the Sunni Arab community in Syria, which Salafi-jihadi groups such as ISIS and al Qaeda have exploited.25 Russia supported Assad’s campaign to destroy the non-Salafi-jihadi opposition groups opposing him—particularly those backed by the U.S.—to aid the narrative that the only choices in Syria were Assad’s government or the Salafi-jihadis.26 That narrative was false in 2015 when Russian forces entered the fight but has become much truer following their efforts.27 Russia backed this undertaking with military force, but even more powerfully with information operations that continually hammered on the theme that the U.S. itself was backing terrorists in Syria and Russia was fighting ISIS.28 The insidiousness of the Russian demands that the U.S. remove its forces from Syria is masked by the current U.S. administration’s desire to do exactly that.29 One can argue the merits of keeping American troops in Syria or pulling them out— and this is not the place for that discussion—but the choice should be America’s. At the moment it still is. The consolidation of Russian anti-access/ area-denial (A2/AD) systems in Syria, however, together with the prospect of the withdrawal (or expulsion) of American forces from Iraq (or the closure of Iraqi airspace to support U.S. operations in Syria), could severely complicate American efforts to strike against terrorist threats that will likely re-emerge in Syria over time.30 The more the U.S. relies on an over-the-horizon strategy of precision strikes against terrorists actively planning attacks on the American homeland, the more vulnerable it becomes to the potential disruption of those strikes by Russian air defense systems, whether operated openly by Russians or nominally by their local partners. RUSSIA’S OBJECTIVES Mention of Putin’s objectives or of any systematic effort to achieve them almost always elicits as a response the assertion that Putin has no plan: Putin has no strategy; there is no Russian grand strategy, and so on. The other extreme of the debate considers Putin a calculated strategist with a grand master plan. The question of whether Putin has a plan, however that word is meant by those who assert that he does not, has important consequences for any American strategy to advance U.S. interests with regard to Russia. The trouble is that it is not clear what it would mean for Putin to have a plan or to lack one. We must first consider that more abstract question before addressing whether he has one. To have a plan usually means to have articulated goals, specific methods by which one will seek to achieve those goals, and identified means required for those methods to succeed. Goals, methods, and means can range from very specific to extremely vague and can be more flexible or more rigid. Specificity and flexibility can vary among the elements of this triad, moreover—goals may be very specific and rigid, methods general and flexible, means specific and flexible, or any other logical combination. When considering the question of Putin’s plan, therefore, we must break the discussion down into these four components: Does he have goals? Has he determined methods of achieving his goals? Has he specified resources required for those methods? How specific and how flexible are his goals, his methods, and the resources he allocates? Putting this discussion in context is helpful. Does a U.S. president have “a plan”? Not in any technical or literal sense. Every U.S. administration produces not a plan, but a National Security Strategy that is generally long on objectives—often reasonably specific—and very short on details of implementation (methods). Different national security advisers oversee processes within the White House to build out implementation details to greater or lesser degrees, but the actual implementation plans (methods) are developed by the relevant Cabinet departments. Those departments are also generally responsible for determining the resources that will be needed to implement their plans. The White House must then approve both the plans themselves and the allocation of the requested resources—and then must persuade Congress actually to appropriate the resources in the way the White House wishes to allocate them. This entire process takes more than a year from the start of a new administration and is never complete—the world changes, personnel turn over, and annual budget cycles and mid-term elections cause significant flutter. The one thing that does not happen is that a president receives and signs a “plan” with clear goals, detailed and specified methods, and the specific resources required, which is then executed.31 Putin does not have more of a plan than the U.S. does. It is virtually certain that he also lacks any such clear single document laying out the goals, methods, and means that he and his ministers are executing. But does he have as much of a plan as Presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump have had? By all external signs, he does.

Putin has clearly articulated a series of overarching objectives and goals for Russia’s foreign policy and national security. Putin has been continuously communicating them through various media, including Russia’s doctrinal documents, regular speeches, his senior subordinates, and the Kremlin’s vast propaganda machine for the past two decades.

Russia has a foreign policy concept similar in scope and framing to the U.S. National Security Strategy, a military doctrine similar to the U.S. National Defense Strategy, and a series of other strategies (such as maritime, information security, and energy security) relating to the other components of national power and interest.32 These documents remain very much living concepts and have gone through multiple revisions in the decades since the fall of the Soviet Union.

Through regular speeches, Putin consistently communicates his goals and the key narratives that underpin Russian foreign policy. He makes an annual speech to the Russian Federal Assembly that is similar in some respects to the U.S. president’s State of the Union address. Putin’s addresses tend to be even more specific (and much more boring) in presenting the previous year’s accomplishments and an outline of goals and intentions for the next year.33 Russia’s doctrines and concepts match Putin’s speeches closely enough to suggest that there is some connection between them. Putin also makes other regular speeches, including at the UN General Assembly, the Valdai Discussion Club, the Munich Security Conference at times, and during lengthy press conferences with the Russian media. These remarks are usually rather specific in their presentation of his objectives and sometimes, some of the means by which he intends to pursue them. Such speeches are neither less frequent nor less specific than the major policy speeches of American presidents.

The widespread belief that Putin is simply or even primarily an opportunist who reacts to American or European mistakes is thus erroneous. Nor is Putin’s most common rhetorical trope—that he is the innocent victim forced to defend Russia against unjustified Western aggression—tethered to reality.34 Putin’s statements, key Russian national security documents, and the actions of Putin’s senior subordinates over the two decades of his reign cannot be distilled into a “plan,” but rather represent a set of grand strategic aims and strategic and operational campaigns underway to achieve them.

Putin has remained open and consistent about his core objectives since his rise to power in 1999: the preservation of his regime, the end of American “global hegemony,” and the restoration of Russia as a mighty force to be reckoned with on the international stage. Some of his foreign policy pursuits are purely pragmatic and aimed at gaining resources; others are intended for domestic purposes and have nothing to do with the West.

Putin has articulated a vision of how he wants the world to be and what role he wishes Russia to play in it. He seeks a world without NATO, where the U.S. is confined to the Western Hemisphere, where Russia is dominant over the former Soviet countries and can do what it likes to its own people without condemnation or oversight, and where the Kremlin enjoys a veto through the UN Security Council over actions that any other state wishes to take beyond its borders.35 He is working to bring that vision to reality through a set of coherent, mutually supporting, and indeed, overlapping lines of effort. He likely allows his subordinates a great deal of latitude in choosing the specific means and times to advance those lines of effort—a fact that makes it seem as if Russian policy is simply opportunistic and reactive. But we must not allow ourselves to be deluded by this impression any more than by other Russian efforts to shape our understanding of reality.

Putin’s Domestic Objectives

Maintaining relative contentment within his power circle is a key part of regime preservation. Putin has a close, trusted circle of senior subordinates, including several military and intelligence officials who have been with him for the past 20 years.36 His power circle has several outer layers, which include—but are not limited to—major Russian businessmen, often referred to as “oligarchs.” The use of the term “oligarch” to describe those who run major portions of the economy is inaccurate, however. Those individuals have power because Putin gives it to them, not because they have any inherent ability to seize or hold it independently. He shuffles them around—and sometimes retires them completely—at his will, rather than in response to their demands.37 They do not check or control Putin either individually or collectively, and they rarely, if ever, attempt to act collectively in any event. Putin controls Russia and its policies as completely as he chooses. This situation is different from the way in which the Soviet Union was ruled after Joseph Stalin’s death in 1953. The post-Stalin USSR really was an oligarchy. Politburo members had their own power bases and fiefdoms. They made decisions—including selecting new members, choosing new leaders, and even firing one leader (Stalin’s successor, Nikita Khrushchev)—by majority vote. There is no equivalent of the Politburo in today’s Russia, no one to balance Putin, and certainly no one to remove him. Putin seeks to keep the closest circle of subordinates and the broader Russian national security establishment content, as they form one of the core pillars of his power. He thus seeks to maintain a relative degree of contentment within various layers of his power structures, including among the “oligarchs.” For example, the Kremlin offered to help mitigate sanctions-related consequences for Russian businessmen.38 Kremlin-linked actors, in another example, reportedly embezzled billions of dollars in the preparations for the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia—the $50 billion price tag of which was the highest for any Olympic games.39 Putin can still retire any of the “oligarchs” at will without fear of meaningful consequences—yet his regime is much more stable if they collectively remain reasonably satisfied. This reality will drive Putin to continue to seek access to resources, legal and illegal, with which to maintain that satisfaction. Maintaining popular support is a core objective of Putin’s policies. Putin is an autocrat with democratic rhetoric and trappings. Putin’s Russia has no free elections, no free media, and no alternative political platforms. He insists, however, on maintaining the “democratic” façade. He holds elections at the times designated by law (even if he periodically causes the law to be amended) and is genuinely (if decreasingly) popular. Nor is his feint at democratism necessarily a pose. The transformation of the Soviet Union into a democracy was the signal achievement of the 1990s.40 Putin played a role in that achievement, supporting St. Petersburg mayor Anatoliy Sobchak, then Boris Yeltsin, in their battles against attempts by communists to regain control and destroy the democracy, and then by an extreme right-wing nationalist party to gain power.41 Putin has called out many weaknesses of the Yeltsin era—but never the creation of a democratic Russia. Putin has not yet shown any sign of formally turning away from democracy as the ostensible basis of his power, although he has constrained the political space within Russia to the point that the elections are a sham. However, were he to abandon the democratic principles to which he still superficially subscribes, he would need fundamentally to redesign the justification of his rule and the nature of his regime. Nevertheless, he can only maintain even the fiction of democratic legitimacy if he remains popular enough to win elections that are not outrageously stolen. He has not been able to fix the Russian economy, despite early efforts to do so. The fall of global oil prices from their highs in the 2000s, as well as the Western sanctions imposed for his actions in Ukraine, among other things, are causing increasing hardship for the Russian people.42 Putin has adopted an information operations approach to this problem by pushing a number of core narratives, evolving over time, to justify his continued rule and explain away the failures of his policies. He has also grown the police state within Russia for situations in which the information operations do not work to his satisfaction. Putin’s justification of his rule has evolved over time. He first positioned himself as the man who will bring order. The 1990s was a decade of economic catastrophe for Russia. Inflation ran wild, unemployment skyrocketed, crime became not only pervasive but also highly organized and predatory, and civil order eroded. Putin succeeded Yeltsin with a promise to change all that. His “open letter to voters” in 2000 contained a phrase fascinating to students of Russian history: “Our land is rich, but there is no order.” That phrase is similar to one supposedly sent by the predecessors of the Russians at the dawn of Russian history to a Viking prince who would come to conquer them: “Our land is rich, but there is no order. Come to rule and reign over us.” By using the first part of that line, Putin, like Riurik, the founder of Russia’s first dynasty, cast himself as the founder of a new Russia in which order would replace chaos.43 Putin’s initial value proposition to his population was thus order and stability. He did, indeed, attempt to bring order to Russia’s domestic scene. Putin strengthened government institutions and curbed certain kinds of crime. He restored control over the region of Chechnya through a brutal military campaign. He tried to work with economic technocrats to bring the economy into some kind of order. The task was immense, however—Soviet leaders had built the entire Russian industrial and agricultural system and economic base in a centralized fashion. Undoing that centralization and creating an economy in which the market really could work was beyond Putin’s skill and patience. He largely abandoned the effort within a few years, both because it was too hard and because it seemed unnecessary.44 The rising price of oil in the early 2000s fueled the Russian economy and filled the government’s coffers on the one hand.45 The genuine structural reforms and innovation that were needed, on the other, also became antithetical to Putin’s ability to maintain control, as government corruption is a powerful tool of influence in Russia. Putin began to erode civil liberties in that period offering the unspoken but clear exchange: Give me your liberties and I will give you prosperity and stability. The 2008 global financial crisis collapsed oil prices, and the post-2014 sanctions regime removed the patches and workarounds Putin had used to offset his failure to transform Russia’s economy. Continuing low oil prices (and sanctions) have prevented it from recovering with much of the rest of the global economy, even as Putin has continued to eschew any real effort to address the systemic failings holding Russia’s economy back. Putin has therefore refocused on a different value proposition: Give me your liberties and I will give you greatness. He is increasingly linking the legitimacy of his own autocracy with Russia’s position on the world stage and with Russia’s ability to stand up to American “global hegemony.”46

Putin has simultaneously erected a narrative to deflect criticism for Russia’s problems onto the West. The West, supposedly fearful of Russia rising and determined to keep Russia down, has thwarted its rightful efforts to regain its proper place in the world at every turn. Putin claims the Russian economy is in shambles because of unjust and illegal sanctions that have nothing to do with Russia’s actions and are simply meant to keep “the Russian bear in chains.”47

Putin has also consistently fostered a complex narrative that combines diverse and—from the Western perspective—often conflicting elements, including Soviet nostalgia, Eastern Orthodoxy, Russian nationalism, and the simultaneous emphasis on Russia’s multiethnic and multireligious character. The importance Putin gives this narrative is visible in things large and small. He has named Russia’s ballistic missile submarines after Romanov tsars and Muscovite princes.48 He issued a decree in 2009 mandating the introduction of religious education in Russian schools, which began in 2012.49 He continues to place a major emphasis on Soviet-era achievements. Putin and his information machine take these various elements, refine and tailor them, and produce a mix of ideas to cater to various parts of the Russian population.

We can expect Putin’s narratives to continue to shift to accommodate changing realities, but the current rhetorical linkage between Russia’s position on the world stage and the legitimacy of Putin’s domestic power is concerning. It suggests that Putin may be more stubborn about making and retaining gains in the international arena than he was in the first 15 years of his rule, as he seeks ways to bolster his popularity, which is flagging, and on which his mythos relies.

Blocking a “color revolution” in Russia is the overarching justification Putin gives for the erosion of political freedom and the expansion of Russia’s police state. Revolutions overturned post-Soviet governments in Georgia (the Rose Revolution in 2003), Ukraine (the Orange Revolution in 2004), and Kyrgyzstan (the Tulip Revolution in 2005). Putin blamed all of them on efforts by the West, primarily the U.S., to undermine pro-Russian governments, even though all three emerged indigenously and spontaneously without external assistance. He regarded the Ukrainian EuroMaidan Revolution of 2014 as an extension of this phenomenon.50 The rhetoric Putin and other Russian officials and writers use about “color revolutions” is extreme. It paints them as part of a coherent Western effort aimed ultimately at overthrowing the Russian government itself. It is quite possible that Putin believes that there is such an effort underway and that the events that rocked the post-Soviet states were a part of it. Even if he did not believe this when he started to talk about it, he may well have convinced himself of it after 15 years of vituperation on the subject. The notion of a “color revolution” conspiracy against Russia is also a convenient way for Putin to discredit any opposition, an easy way to tar political opponents as foreign agents and traitors, to control and expel foreign non-governmental organizations, and generally to justify the erosion of civil liberties, human rights, and free expression in Russia. It externalizes resistance to Putin’s increasing autocracy while simultaneously providing scapegoats to blame for Russia’s problems. It also creates the narrative basis for casting any Western efforts to constrain Russian actions anywhere as part of a larger effort to set preconditions for a “color revolution” in Moscow. It fuels a narrative to which Russians are historically amenable: that Russia is surrounded and under siege by hostile powers trying to contain or destroy it. Putin can cast almost any action foreign states take of which he does not approve as part of this effort.51 The net effects of this narrative are threefold. First, it tends to consolidate support behind Putin as he presents himself as the defender of Russia against a hostile world—and his near-total control of the information most of his people receive makes it difficult for many to hear and believe any other side. Second, it constantly confronts the West with the suspicion that someone really is trying to orchestrate a conspiracy to cause “regime change” in Russia. Although no state or alliance has had any such objective since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the negative connotations of even the idea of attempting regime change create opposition to policies labeled in this way. Third, it also creates opposition to a potential peaceful change in the nature of the Russian regime from within, as Putin has associated the idea of political change with the “color revolution” prism of chaos, destruction, and an inevitably worsening economy. Putin presents his people a simple (but false) choice between the prospect of going back to something like the chaos and poverty of the 1990s ... or Vladimir Putin. Using the bogey of the “color revolution” conspiracy theory and other narratives, Putin is expanding the already-significant state control over his people’s communications and moving to a more rigid authoritarian model. He has prevented the emergence of any significant political opposition party or leader. Key opposition figures have been murdered, imprisoned, poisoned, and otherwise attacked.52 Putin’s regime suppresses—sometimes brutally— political dissent in the form of peaceful street protests or demonstrations, despite their small sizes.53 The political environment in Russia today is not markedly different from that of the Soviet Union in its last decade. Putin has brought the overwhelming majority of significant Russian media outlets into line with his own desired narratives, presenting the Russian people with a coherent stream of propaganda virtually without deviation. He appears to have decided that even this level of information control is insufficient, however, and has recently begun to assert even greater technical and policy control over Russians’ access to the internet.54 He has not yet matched these activities with recreation of an internal security apparatus on the scale needed to control the population through coercion, intimidation, and force, but he has been steadily expanding the internal security services during his two decades of rule. He has centralized some elements of the internal security apparatus under the control of a loyal lieutenant, but he would need to expand it considerably to be able to rely on it to maintain order by force beyond Moscow and St. Petersburg.55 In assessing whether Putin aims to shift the basis of his rule to more overt dictatorship, one of the key indicators to watch for is further expansion of that apparatus. It is also an indicator of the degree to which he sincerely believes that any sort of “color revolution” is in the offing. Expansion of the Russian economy remains an important component of Putin’s ability to sustain and grow his assertive foreign policy, popular support, and the resources subsidizing his close circle. Putin seems largely to have given up the idea of reforming the economy and has thus set about at least two major undertakings to improve it without reform. Undermining the Western sanctions regime. The imposition of major sanctions on Russia following the invasion of Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea in 2014 has inflicted great damage on the Russian economy. Putin has launched a number of efforts to erode and break those sanctions, both in Europe and in the U.S. Despite repeated declarations about the ineffectiveness of sanctions, Putin clearly believes that nothing would improve the economy more dramatically and rapidly than their elimination. The Mueller Report amply documents Putin’s fear of new sanctions after the 2016 elections and his efforts to deflect them or have them nullified.56 He even went so far as to promise not to retaliate against the sanctions the Obama administration imposed, in hopes of persuading the incoming Trump administration to reverse or block them. His efforts failed, however, as Congress insisted on new sanctions and President Trump did not stop them. Russian activities in Europe have aimed in part to suborn one or more members of the European Union (EU) to refuse to renew the sanctions imposed following Russia’s 2014 invasion of Ukraine. Openly pro-Russian governments in Budapest and now Rome, along with other states that have indicated greater reluctance to continue the sanctions regime, have not yet cast the vote to stop the renewal of sanctions. Putin has not given up, however, and continues to work to shape the political, informational, and economic environment in Europe to make it safe for one country to vote against sanctions renewal—and one vote is all he needs in the consensus-based EU model. The collapse of the sanctions regime and a flood of foreign direct investment into Russia could dramatically increase the resources available to support Putin’s foreign and defense efforts, even without fundamentally addressing the problems of the Russian economy. Putin would likely use those resources to return to the aggressive conventional military buildup he was pursuing before the imposition of sanctions in 2014 and to supercharge his economic efforts to establish Russian influence around the world. Developing new revenue streams is another obvious approach to bringing cash into the Russian economy and government. Russia is at a disadvantage in this regard because of the structural weaknesses of its economy. Its principal exports are almost entirely in the form of mineral wealth—oil, coal, and natural gas, as well as other raw materials. Weapons and military training services are the major industrial export. The use of private military companies (PMCs) such as the Wagner Group is a foreign policy tool for the Kremlin, but also one of the main exportable “services.” Civilian nuclear technology is a niche expertise that Putin is willing to sell as well. Putin has worked hard to expand Russia’s economic portfolios in all these areas. He has pushed both the Nord Stream II and the Turk Stream natural gas pipelines to make Europe ever more heavily dependent on Russian natural gas and to eliminate Russia’s dependency on the Ukrainian gas transit system. His lieutenants are actively negotiating deals throughout the Middle East and Africa to sell civilian nuclear technology. This generates continuous revenue because the states that commit to using Russian nuclear reactor technology will likely become dependent on Russian equipment and expertise to keep it running.57 Russia’s military activities in Syria can be described as a massive outdoor weapons exposition.58 The Russian armed forces have ostentatiously used several advanced weapons systems that were not required for the specific tactical tasks at hand.59 The Russian military staged these displays with the informational and geopolitical aim of demonstrating Russia’s renewed and advanced conventional capabilities. They also showed the effectiveness of weapons and platforms whose export versions are for sale. Russian military hardware salesmen are active throughout the Middle East and are having success. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan seems committed to purchasing the S-400 air defense system, despite vigorous American and NATO opposition and the threat that the U.S. will refuse to complete planned sales of the F-35 stealth aircraft to Turkey.60 The U.S. should certainly not deliver the F-35 to Turkey if Erdogan proceeds with purchase of the S-400. A Turkish trade of the F-35 for the S-400 would nevertheless be a significant victory for Putin in both economic and political terms. Putin’s efforts to steal arms business from the U.S. would also be assisted by legislation or executive decisions blocking the export of weapons systems to Saudi Arabia over the conduct of the war in Yemen. Income from such sales is a trivial percentage of American net exports, to say nothing of U.S. GDP, but would be much larger in the Russian ledgers, where totals are more than an order of magnitude smaller. The proliferation of Russian PMCs is another potential source of revenue—in addition to being a Kremlin foreign policy tool—although it is hard to assess its significance because of the secrecy surrounding the entire PMC enterprise. The reported numbers of mercenaries deployed by various Russian PMCs are generally in the low hundreds here and there—not large enough, in principle, to suggest that the income from them would be very great. There is no knowing the terms of their contracts, however, or what other activities they might engage in while stationed in poorly governed states rife with corruption and organized crime. None of these activities is likely to generate floods of money into Russia’s coffers in the near term, which is likely why Putin remains so heavily focused on sanctions relief. Putin has no other viable options for obtaining resources on a large scale. A significant increase in the price of hydrocarbons—either oil or natural gas—would once again flood Russia with cash. But Putin has no obvious way of directly causing such an increase in the price of oil, since Russia’s share of the oil market is not large enough to allow him to force price increases on OPEC. His ability to manipulate the price he charges Europeans for natural gas is also constrained. If he raises it too high, he could drive the Europeans to search harder for alternative sources of fuel or, given the Trump Administration’s willingness to export American liquefied natural gas (LNG), to rely on the U.S. instead of Russia. Such a European turn away from Russian gas would be a disaster for Russia. Without the ability to export LNG on a large scale, Russia can only sell gas where the pipelines go—and right now, they go to Europe. Russia could expand cooperation with China to create another major source of cash. Putin is very likely aware of the long-term risks of growing Chinese influence over Russia and its neighbors, yet he still may pursue greater economic ties with Xi Jinping’s China, given the likely calculation that he can control this relationship in the near term. Even so, Chinese cash usually comes with a heavy non-cash price, and Putin is savvy enough to be wary of becoming too dependent on Beijing’s largesse. Russia’s economy is therefore likely critical but stable. None of the economic efforts Putin has put into effect will fix the Russian economy’s fundamental structural flaws. All are palliatives with half-lives. Putin lacks a meaningful plan in this sense—nothing he is saying or doing will create a stable economic basis for Russia’s future. Neither, on the other hand, is Russia heading for a crash. The current level of economic stagnation is likely stable and sustainable—a constraint on Putin’s ability to expand his conventional capabilities and use economic instruments of power abroad, but not a threat to his rule. Russia has been a relatively poor country for much of its history. Yet it has proved capable of asserting itself on the European or global stage for most of that time. Russians are used to being a “poor power”; this is a normal state. These realities do not undercut the value of Western economic pressure on Russia; they should, rather, help set the proper objectives and expectations in applying such pressure. Retaining power constitutionally and managing a succession are the last major domestic campaigns in which Putin is engaged. Putin faces a significant watershed when his current presidential term ends in 2024, as he is constitutionally prohibited from running for re-election again in that cycle. He faced this dilemma in 2008 and chose then to allow Dmitrii Medvedev to become president while he retained effective control of Russian policy from the post of prime minister. He could pursue a similar model in 2024, but it is unlikely that he will do so. Among other things, Medvedev appears to have made at least one decision of which Putin violently disapproved—the failure to veto the UN resolution authorizing intervention in Libya against Moammar Ghaddafi—but he chose not to stop or reverse it. His ability to continue to control Russian policy and, even more, manage his succession from a position nominally subordinate to even a puppetlike president could also become more problematic as he ages. Putin could always cause the Duma to adjust the constitution again to let him run for another term, but he has not been laying the groundwork for such an approach (although it is admittedly early days yet for such an action). He might be pursuing an effort that offers a more interesting potential resolution to the dilemma in the form of further implementation of the Union Treaty with Belarus. He has been actively “negotiating” with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko to create a full integration of the Russian and Belarusian armed forces and security services, bringing Belarus nearly completely back under de facto Russian control.61 Belarus would nevertheless remain a nominally independent sovereign state. The integrated forces would function under the rubric of a union of the two states, which would naturally have a president. Putin might shift to that role, retaining full control over the security apparatuses of both states, as well as the dominance he holds by virtue of his control of Russia’s economy and kleptocracy. He could then allow a puppet to take over as Russia’s president but now in a role subordinated to him rather than nominally superior to him.

External Objectives

Putin has been as explicit as it is possible to be in his overarching foreign policy aims: he seeks to end American dominance and the “unipolar” world order, restore “multipolarity,” and reestablish Russia as a global force to be reckoned with. He identifies NATO as an adversary and a threat and clearly seeks to weaken it and break the bonds between the U.S. and NATO’s European members.

Breaking Western unity is thus one of Putin’s core foreign policy objectives. Three major lines of effort support this undertaking: invalidating the collective defense provision of the North Atlantic Treaty (Article 5), weakening or breaking the European Union, and destroying the faith of Western societies in their governments and institutions.

Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty states that an attack on one member of the alliance is an attack on all, with the requisite defense commitments. The provision’s activation is far from automatic, however. A member state under attack must request support from the alliance whose political body, the North Atlantic Council (NAC), must then vote unanimously to provide it. The alliance has activated Article 5 only once, as noted above, and on behalf of the United States. Putin is working to ensure that it is never activated again. Putin can achieve this by creating a situation in which one or more member states votes against a request to activate Article 5, or in which a member state under attack does not request such a vote for fear that it will fail. If a state under Russian attack does not seek or fails to secure the alliance’s support, then the collective defense provision that is the bedrock of the alliance will have been weakened badly if it has not collapsed entirely. Putin’s efforts to secure Hungarian and also Italian support to end the renewals of EU sanctions help him in this undertaking as well, since both Hungary and Italy are NATO members. Hungary’s Viktor Orban in particular is so overtly pro-Russian that he could well seize on any doubt about the reality of a Russian hybrid intervention to refuse to vote for an Article 5 activation. Putin has acquired a potentially more interesting route to Article 5 nullification, moreover, in his entente with Turkey, also a NATO member, over Syria. His noteworthy failure to respond to the downing by the Turkish Air Force of a Russian fighter that crossed the Turkish border in 2015 has paid dividends. His efforts to sell the Turks the S-400 system are also advancing the aim of driving a deep wedge between Ankara and Washington. Erdogan’s suspicions that the U.S. backed the failed 2016 coup against him make very real the possibility that he would come before even Orban in refusing to vote for an Article 5 action in the case of a hybrid campaign in Latvia, for instance. The question of how much Putin seeks to destroy the collective defense provisions of the NATO treaty rather than simply to regain formerly Soviet territories should loom large in considerations of possible military scenarios. The direct deployment of regular, uniformed Russian armed forces personnel in one of the Baltic states would make it very difficult for any NATO member state to refuse to honor a request to invoke Article 5. Erdogan, Orban, or some other leader might still find a way, but the pressure to show alliance solidarity in such a situation would be intense. A Crimea-type scenario, then, in which the hybrid war starts with “little green men” (Russian soldiers out of uniform) but then escalates quickly to the use of conventional Russian military personnel, with their equipment and insignia, is much less likely if Article 5 is the target. A better Russian approach in that case would be the model Putin used in eastern Ukraine: Russian soldiers out of uniform work with local proxies, some already existing, others created as they go along, and try hard never to show themselves overtly.62 Russian information operations work around the clock to obfuscate emerging evidence of any Russian military presence, while the Kremlin praises the brave warriors of the Russianspeaking patriots within the target state, who are surprisingly well armed and well led. In such a case, Putin is more likely to attempt to leverage an insurgency (which he probably created) to break the government and create chaos of some sort than to move to overt deployment of conventional forces—at least until he is as sure as he can be that even such a deployment would not rouse the alliance to invoke Article 5 at the last moment. He might well accept or even prefer an ostensible “failure” to gain control of the target country (at that time) in return for making obvious to all that NATO is dead. After all, once the collective defense provisions of the alliance and the Western will to defend the Baltics are destroyed, Putin can pick them off at his leisure. Weaken or break the European Union. Putin has been energetically supporting Euroskeptic parties for many years—his financial aid to Marine Le Pen in France is the most ostentatious example, but there are numerous others.63 He stands to benefit from weakening or breaking the European Union in several ways. First, the EU is an exclusive economic club that Russia will be unable to join in Putin’s lifetime. The corruption and opacity of the Russian economy are too deeply established for Putin to imagine a time when Russia might meet the standards for EU membership—and Putin relies on this corruption and opacity, as we have noted, for continued control over the major economic actors in Russia. Nor is he likely to desire such membership. Sitting around a table on an equal basis with Luxembourg and Belgium is not appealing to a man who aspires to be one of the poles in a multipolar world. But the EU collectively wields great economic power through its ability to control trade with the bloc and impose sanctions. Putin would do much better in a Europe where he could negotiate and pressure individual states on a bilateral basis—and a Europe that was unable to impose multilateral sanctions on him and require all member states to abide by them—and he appears to understand that. Second, the Euroskeptic parties are generally extremely nationalistic. The reemergence of nationalism within Europe poses an enormous challenge to the stability of intra-European relations and could even undermine the long peace that has held in Western Europe since 1945.64 It would likely translate into conflict at the North Atlantic Council and could well drive increased tensions between individual European countries and the United States. Putin appears to be untroubled by the prospect of a reemergence of German nationalism, even though that ideology historically has targeted Russia. He may believe that the benefit of shattering the Western bloc outweighs risks that he likely expects to be able to handle in other ways. Weakening Western will and trust in democratic institutions is another line of effort Putin is pursuing to break the Western bloc. His interference in the Western political systems and information space is intended to destroy Westerners’ trust in their governments and in the idea of democracy, as much as to bring about the election or defeat of particular candidates—if not more so.65 He is explicit in his attacks on the Western political system: “Even in the so-called developed democracies, the majority of citizens have no real influence on the political process and no direct and real influence on power,” he said in 2016, adding that “it is not about populists … ordinary people, ordinary citizens are losing trust in the ruling class.”66 This effort benefits from trends in Western societies that were already undermining popular faith in institutions. Americans’ confidence in institutions generally has dropped by about 10 percent from its post–Cold War high in 2004.67 The Iraq War, the 2008 financial crisis, and revelations of classified U.S. surveillance programs, among other things, have eroded Americans’ trust in institutions almost across the board. The military is a remarkable exception to this trend. The massive, unauthorized release of classified materials by Edward Snowden was particularly important in this regard, as it has cemented the erroneous impression that the U.S. government was listening to the phone calls and reading the e-mails of all its citizens and those of many other countries. That impression has widened the wedge between some major technology companies and the government, hindering the development of a national cyber-defense capability and even the government’s ability to contract for advanced software.68 It is not surprising that Snowden ended up in Moscow or that Putin has granted him asylum. Snowden advanced a major Russian line of effort, apparently without any orders from Putin. These negative trends in the West have created openings that Putin is working to exploit by compromising elections, supporting extremist candidates, and pursuing aggressive information operations that stoke divisions and mistrust within Western societies. Establishing Russian suzerainty over the states of the former Soviet Union is a second major foreign policy objective. Suzerainty is “a dominant state controlling the foreign relations of a vassal state but allowing it sovereign authority in its internal affairs.”69 It is the most precise way of capturing Putin’s aims vis-à-vis the former Soviet states and the limitations of those aims. He is not attempting to reconquer the lost territory nor to govern it directly from Moscow. He has asserted, rather, that the world must recognize that post-Soviet states have only a truncated sovereignty over their own affairs. They may not freely join alliances such as NATO or economic blocs such as the EU without Moscow’s permission, for example. Putin further claims that Russia has the right to protect Russian speakers in those states against oppression or discrimination (as defined and determined by Putin), and that it may use military force to do so. Assertion of the right to defend Russian speakers abroad is not Putin’s innovation. Boris Yeltsin’s government articulated it in the early 1990s, but Yeltsin never acted on it.70 Opposition to NATO’s expansion also originated in the Yeltsin era, and the 1997 National Security Concept identified such expansion as a “national security threat.”71 But whereas Yeltsin nevertheless continued to try to work with NATO and establish a relationship with it, Putin has been frankly antagonistic toward the alliance. The actual expansion of NATO to include the three Baltic states as well as Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Slovenia in 2004 was likely a tipping point in Putin’s attitudes. The critical nuance to consider is that Putin has always been more concerned about the loss of control over Russia’s perceived sphere of influence than an actual NATO threat to Russia.72 NATO expansion coincided with the first of the “color revolutions” in Ukraine, which clearly fueled Putin’s fears that the former Soviet states were at risk of slipping entirely out of Moscow’s orbit. Putin initiated active efforts to regain control over the former Soviet states shortly after he took office in 1999-2000, but it took several years before he adopted a more combative tone and aggressive policies. Putin’s speech before the Munich Security Conference in 2007 and then his invasion of Georgia in 2008 underscored this overt turn.73 He has clearly made it a priority to ensure that no more former Soviet states join NATO or the EU, while working to undermine the bonds linking the Baltic states to the alliance. Putin’s claims to suzerainty over the former Soviet states have been met with ambivalence in the West. Russia experts and others often defend the assertion of a unique Russian sphere of influence over those states on historical or geopolitical bases.74 Even the seizure and annexation of Crimea has been presented as somehow ambiguous. Putin’s argument—that Soviet Communist Party secretary general Nikita Khrushchev’s transfer of the region from Russia to Ukraine was an internal matter that should not have led to the peninsula’s inclusion in an independent Ukraine—has gotten a surprising amount of traction in the expert community.75 Examined closely, however, Putin’s claims over the former Soviet states are completely indefensible. All 15 of the Soviet Socialist Republics, including Russia, were recognized as sovereign states after the USSR collapsed, and they were admitted to the UN on an equal basis with all other UN member states. The Russian Federation recognized them all and their UN accessions without reservations. The subsequent complaints by Yeltsin’s foreign minister, Yevgenii Primakov, and then Putin, about the folly of Yeltsin’s decisions to do so does not change or invalidate those decisions.76 The 15 former Soviet states thus have all the same rights as every other member of the UN—including the right to make such alliances and join such blocs as they choose without needing the permission of another power, and the right to govern their own people, including minorities, as they wish. It is ironic, to say the least, that Putin vigorously defends Assad’s right to conduct horrifying atrocities against his own people on the grounds of sovereignty, while claiming that alleged discrimination against the use of Russian language in post-Soviet states justifies his own military intervention in those states. Russia can certainly decide that the shift of post-Soviet states into the NATO or EU orbit poses such a significant threat to its security and interests that it must use force to stop or reverse it, just as any sovereign state can see threats in the actions of its neighbors and decide that it must respond with force. But the resort to force in such circumstances is aggression, not a defensive move, and must be regarded and treated as such by the international community. Accepting the Russian argument that Moscow has an inherent right to intervene, including militarily, in its neighbors based on their treatment of their Russian minorities or their intentions to join alliances is a truncation of their sovereignty that undermines the entire basis of international law and the UN Charter. Putin is actively working to establish precisely that principle as a matter of international norm and is making a distressing amount of progress. Both Yeltsin and Putin have retained Russian suzerainty over some post-Soviet states in legal and legitimate ways as well. Russian ground and air forces have remained in Armenia, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan almost continuously since the fall of the Soviet Union at the invitation of the governments of those states. A small Russian military contingent also remains in Moldova in more ambivalent circumstances. The government in Chisinau does not welcome its presence and the parliament has called on it to depart, but the Moldovan government has not formally ordered the Russians to leave.77 These deployments give Russia significant influence in the Caucasus, eastern Central Asia, and Moldova. The deployment in Tajikistan also creates a platform for Russian engagement and interference in Afghanistan. The situation in Belarus is the most worrisome of the legal reconsolidation efforts because of the strategic impacts it could have on NATO’s ability to defend the Baltic states (see Appendix I for a more detailed consideration of this problem). Negotiations currently underway could lead to the merging of the Russian and Belarusian armed forces and the technical subordination of the governments of Russia and Belarus to some new Union State. It is tempting, as we have noted, to imagine Putin taking control of this new combined polity after the end of his current presidential term, thereby finding an elegant solution to the constitutional problems of extending his reign. Returning Russia to the status of a global power shaping the international system is the last major external objective Putin is pursuing. Several lines of effort support this objective: Regain a global military footprint. Putin has been working to regain parts of the Soviet global military position lost in the late 1980s. A principal aim of this undertaking is to impose increasing costs on America’s efforts to continue operating around the world as it chooses and to offset part of the huge financial deficit holding Putin back from pursuing his larger aims. It is not meant to create platforms for global or even major regional wars, still less to advance an ideology (one of the Soviet objectives in creating the footprint in the first place). Putin’s establishment of a long-term air and naval base in Syria was the first significant step in this effort.78 He has also been cultivating the leaders of other states that were formerly Soviet clients and partners, including Egypt, Libya, Iraq, Sudan, and Cuba.79 In addition, he has recently added to the list by deploying Russian mercenaries (at least) in Venezuela and solidifying an entente with Iran that the Soviet Union never had.80 The Russian armed forces and/or mercenaries are now openly operating out of bases in Syria, Ukraine, and Venezuela. Russian PMCs have also reportedly been operating in Sudan, Central African Republic, and Libya.81 Russian forces have episodically used bases in Iran as well.82 This footprint is far smaller than the Soviets’, but is a dramatic change from Russian policies and capabilities between 1991 and 2013. Indications are that Putin intends to expand further using the sale of advanced weapons systems as the entry wedge. One major reason the U.S. is unwilling to give Turkey the F-35 if Ankara proceeds with the Russian S-400 air defense system purchase is that Russian technical specialists would be stationed in Turkey with its deployment. For the U.S., the military implications of these efforts are complex. The Russian military does not now have the capability to deploy large enough numbers of advanced offensive conventional weapons systems to bases beyond its borders to challenge a major American military effort to destroy them. The defensive systems, especially advanced A2/AD systems like the S-300, S-400, and Bastion anti-ship cruise missile system pose much greater challenges.83 But the U.S. military could defeat the limited numbers of such systems the Russians have emplaced in Syria and might emplace elsewhere if it chose to allocate the necessary resources. The most immediate consequence of the expanded Russian global conventional footprint, then, is the requirement that the U.S. and its allies ensure the availability of the forces that might be needed to handle the Russian systems. That resource requirement is significant. Neither the U.S. nor NATO has anticipated having to fight in the Mediterranean since the end of the Cold War, and the alliance does not have the necessary assets permanently allocated to respond to such a threat. It has instead generally used the resources that would be needed to counter Russian positions to conduct counter-terrorism operations throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The Russian deployments thus force on the alliance, in the event of an escalation with Moscow, the choice of reducing counter-terrorism operations, reallocating forces from the Indo-Pacific theater (not really an option in the current geostrategic environment), or creating and deploying new forces to deal with the emerging threat. In this context, the loss of Turkey as a reliable U.S. partner is very damaging. The Turkish air force is significant in its own right, although it is still recovering from Erdogan’s post–coup attempt purge, and the ability to use Turkish bases for operations against Russian positions in Syria would be strategically very significant.84 But the burgeoning Russo-Turkish entente means that the U.S. and NATO cannot count on Ankara in a showdown, further raising the requirement to develop and deploy new resources. The Russian deployments in Syria, Venezuela, and elsewhere are, in fact, part of a hybrid operation aimed not at preparing to fight a conventional war, but rather, at persuading the U.S. and its allies to withdraw from the threatened regions or limit their operations. Putin likely aims to increase both the risk and the cost of continuing to conduct military operations in the MENA area to a level at which the U.S. yields to its ever-growing impulse to pull back from the region entirely. This operation is surely also aimed at securing economic resources. Recent Russian deployments to Venezuela have gone to key oil-producing areas, and Putin’s financial interactions with Nicolas Maduro are well reported.85 Russian forces in Syria are also supporting Putin’s efforts to gain at least partial control over the reconstruction resources expected to flow into that country if ever he can persuade the international community to send them.86 Putin’s Syria campaign has already helped leach resources for his inner circle. For example, a Russian company run by Yevgeniy Prigozhin, a close Putin associate central to Russia’s attack on the U.S. political system, secured a stake in Syrian oil and gas fields via the Assad regime.87 It is vital in assessing Russia’s apparent reconstruction of the Soviet global military posture to recognize the essential differences in aims driving Putin from those motivating the Soviets. Putin intends to raise the cost to the U.S. of being a global power to levels higher than he thinks Americans will wish to pay. The U.S. must recognize the limitations of his ambitions in this regard as it develops intelligent responses at reasonable cost, even while being clear-eyed about the real threats Russia’s expanding global footprint present.

Normalize Russia’s violations of international law. The Russian cyberattack against Estonia in 2007; invasion of Georgia in 2008, with the subsequent annexation of the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia; invasion of Ukraine in 2014; deliberate attacks against civilians in Syria; defense of Assad’s use of chemical weapons and other crimes against humanity; chemical-weapons attacks on Russian expatriates in the UK; and seizure of Ukrainian naval vessels and personnel attempting to transit the Kerch Strait are all violations of international law.

Russia has paid virtually no price for any of them except the invasion of Ukraine. On the contrary, Putin has positioned himself as a mediator in Syria (although not a successful one) by convening a pseudo–peace process in Astana that competes with the internationally recognized Geneva Process (which has also been unsuccessful, to be sure). Putin continues to portray Russia as a mediator even in the Ukraine conflict where he is a belligerent. He successfully obfuscated the illegality of his actions in and beyond the Kerch Strait, and has deflected some of the opprobrium his activities in Syria deserve by accusing the U.S. of supporting terrorists and the Syrian opposition of conducting the chemical weapons attacks.88 The expulsion of Russian officials—including intelligence officers— by the U.S., UK, and other states in response to the chemical weapons attacks in Britain was hardly a crippling response.89

The net result of these repeated violations of international law that do not result in meaningful consequences is their normalization. Each one establishes a precedent that Putin can and will then use to defend similar or even more aggressive activities. If the West accepted the clearly illegal seizure of Ukrainian ships in international waters near the Kerch Strait, how will it react if Russian forces seize some other ship on a trumped-up pretext while it attempts to transit the opening Arctic shipping route? Having taken no action against Russia for its defense of Assad’s use of chemical weapons, how would the West respond to a covert Russian operation to use chemical warfare in Ukraine while attributing the incident to the Ukrainian or a Western government?

The principled answer is that, of course, failure to act in one case does not preclude action in subsequent cases. If the West has not responded adequately to most of these Russian transgressions, neither has it explicitly condoned them—yet. That is a line that we must be very wary of inadvertently crossing.

Imagine an unlikely but not an impossible situation in which Ukraine’s President Volodymir Zelensky, elected in April 2019, asks the U.S. and the EU to waive Russian sanctions for Ukraine—or lift them altogether—as part of a deal he is negotiating to “end the conflict” in his country. It would be difficult to resist such a request since ending wars is desirable, especially if it can be done with the apparent acceptance of both sides. The net effect of endorsing such a deal, however, which would surely leave Crimea in Russia’s hands and eastern Ukraine in a changed political relationship to Kyiv, would be to endorse retroactively the violations of international law Putin committed in 2014. Doing so would indeed establish a precedent that Putin can impose his will on other states as long as he subsequently succeeds well enough to convince or coerce those states into recognizing his actions.

There is, of course, no new principle at work here. It has always been true in the modern states system that a successful aggressor can have his aggression legitimized by a subsequent peace agreement, even one forcefully imposed on the defeated state. The novelty in this situation is twofold. First, Russia has not been universally identified as the aggressor— Putin’s efforts in Ukraine are not generally accepted as the offensive land-grab they actually were—and Putin’s role in any deal would be as mediator rather than belligerent. It is one thing to accept that Putin launched, waged, and won a war of aggression, the outcome of which the defeated state chose to accept; it is another to say that he facilitated and mediated a peace agreement in a conflict to which he was not actually party, when, in fact, he initiated it and directly benefited from it.

Second, the principle at issue goes beyond the straightforward one of legitimizing a forcible conquest—it also touches on the nature of the post-Soviet states’ sovereignty. Putin has asserted, as we have argued, that Russia has the right to intervene by force in any of the post-Soviet states and the international community has no right to interfere (including even by offering an opinion). Recognizing his activities in Ukraine ex post facto recognizes this principle as well. It establishes as a firm precedent, reinforcing the precedent already established by the invasion of Georgia, that there are degrees of sovereignty in the international community and that some states are more sovereign than others. Putin is clearly attempting to establish precisely that principle. The West must resist the temptations he may offer to allow him to do so.

Create a constellation of alliances and friendly states that gravitate toward Russia. Putin has been working hard to create multiple blocs and groupings of which Russia is either the sole center or one of a small number of core states, as an alternative to the U.S.-dominated international order he so opposes.90 Few of these individual efforts have been particularly effective, nor is it clear that the sum of them will result in a truly Russia-centric constellation of states. But the tenacity with which he has pursued this objective and the sheer number of attempts to reach it demonstrate, if nothing else, the importance he seems to attach to it.

Some of these groupings offer Russia little inherent influence. BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) began simply as an acronym to describe major emerging markets, for example. It has no formal decision-making process, nor are its members aligned with one another on political or economic policies. It has no military component at all.

Some, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) require Russia to compete with China for predominant influence.91 That competition is not going well for Moscow, at least in the case of the SCO, leading Putin to de-emphasize this forum for the moment. Some, like the Eurasian Economic Union, remain largely aspirational. They have not yet established themselves as meaningful associations through which Russia could hope to exert influence now, nor is it clear that they will gain more significance over time—although Putin continues to work at it.92 Others are operational and meaningful. The Astana Process tripartite has not brought peace to Syria, but it has helped establish Putin at the heart of a triad with Iran and Turkey that is shaping Ankara’s drift away from NATO and toward Moscow. The Quartet Intelligence Center has not yet integrated the Iraqi military or government into the Russian orbit as fully as Putin might like, but it gives form to the very real military coalition of Russia, Iran, and Syria that is fighting in Syria.93 Still others, such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) are largely moribund at the moment, but the Union Treaty with Belarus had also been dormant almost since its creation in the 1990s, and Putin is attempting to reify it.94 We cannot discount the possibility that he may do so with one of the other agreements that are legacies of the 1990s. The purpose of laying out these various efforts is not to suggest that they are likely to succeed, or that their success would have dire consequences for American national security—it might or might not, depending on the circumstances. The purpose is, rather, to demonstrate again the coherence between Putin’s stated grand strategic vision and the undertakings the Russian state is pursuing to achieve it. Putin’s goals are antithetical to the security and national interests of the United States and its allies. We must prevent him from achieving them, without resorting to major war if at all possible. We turn next, therefore, to the means by which Putin and his subordinates pursue his aims—an examination that will show the tremendous challenges his methods pose, on the one hand, and the opportunities to respond with means well short of war, on the other.

THE RUSSIAN WAY OF WAR

The Russian way of war today is based on recognition of Russia’s fundamental weaknesses and the fact that Russia is not a near-peer of the U.S. and will not become one any time soon. It is designed to achieve Moscow’s objectives without fighting a major war against the West that Russia would likely lose if it did not escalate to using nuclear weapons.95 Its technological emphases have therefore been on less-expensive and asymmetric capabilities such as information operations, cyber operations, A2/ AD systems, and nuclear systems. Its intellectual development has focused on the category of political-informational-military activities encapsulated in the terms “hybrid war” or “gray zone” conflict.96 Russia is optimizing itself to fight a poor man’s war because it is poor and will remain so. Putin is sufficiently in contact with reality to know that he will fail if he attempts to regain anything approaching conventional military parity with the West.

Assessing the novelty of this Russian approach is difficult. None of the concepts or technologies on which it relies is new or unique to it. Most of the key intellectual framework goes back to the early days of Soviet military thinking. Some can be traced back centuries to Sun Tsu. Nor has Russia abandoned traditional military approaches and conventional capabilities. It would be both wrong and dangerous to ascribe to Russia the invention of an entirely new way of war that is the only way in which it will fight now, or in the future.

There are nevertheless important differences between the current Russian approach and the approach that characterized Russian military and national security strategy and doctrine in the 2000s and the 1990s, to say nothing of the Soviet period. The differences lie partly in emphasis and partly in the degree of intellectual development of certain concepts at the expense of others. It would be equally wrong and dangerous, therefore, to see the current Russian approach to war as the same as, or even congruent with, all of the post-Soviet period. The Russian military in the 1990s and 2000s focused largely on acquiring the capabilities it most envied in the stunning conventional American military victories against Iraq in 1991 and 2003. It sought to acquire long-range precision-strike capabilities that the Soviet military never had, stealth technology, and tanks and aircraft roughly equivalent with the mainstay technologies of NATO countries.97 It also sought to transform itself from a mass cadre-andreserve conscript force into a volunteer professional military, recognizing the tremendous value the U.S. transition to the all-volunteer force had brought on the battlefield.98 It has managed to achieve only partial success in most of these measures after nearly three decades. It has re-equipped many, but by no means all, of its combat units with weapons systems roughly equivalent to American fourth-generation aircraft (such as the F-15E Strike Eagle), M1 tanks, etc. It has struggled to field a force of fifth-generation aircraft and is unlikely to build a large enough arsenal of such aircraft to pose a serious challenge to American capabilities in any short period of time.99 It has acquired and demonstrated the ability to employ precision weapons, including long-range precision missile systems. Its mix of those systems and “dumb bombs” in Syria, however, was more similar to the mix the U.S. used in 1991 than to the mix American forces use today—the large majority of Russian munitions dropped in Syria were not precision-guided munitions because the Russian stockpiles are not large enough to support their widespread employment.100 The Russian military has notably failed to transition fully to an all-volunteer force, moreover, and has given up the effort. It has become, therefore, a segmented force with a volunteer element (so-called contract soldiers) and a large body of conscripts serving one-year terms (half the two-year service requirement for conscripts in the Red Army). This partial professionalization will continue to exercise a drag on its ability to complete its modernization programs; one-year conscripts simply cannot learn both how to be soldiers and how to use very advanced modern weapons systems. Russia’s modernization efforts lurched dramatically in 2008 with the appointment of Anatolii Serdyukov as defense minister.101 Serdyukov’s mandate was to reduce the cost of the Russian military significantly in response to the collapse in global oil prices resulting from the global financial crisis. He sought to make major personnel cuts, to restructure weapons system acquisition, and to reorganize the military, especially the ground forces, in a way that would have severely degraded its ability to conduct large-scale conventional warfare without optimizing it for any other sort of warfare. Serdyukov’s successor, Sergei Shoigu, along with Chief of the General Staff Valeriy Gerasimov, have reversed many, but not all, of those reforms. It is important to note, therefore, that some of the changes being made to the Russian military that enhance its ability to fight maneuver war are reversals of changes made in 2008 for cost-cutting purposes, rather than new improvements on an already-sound structure. The emphasis in Russian military development has changed significantly since the start of Russian involvement in Ukraine in 2014 and Syria in 2015. Gerasimov published a noteworthy article in 2013, discussion of which in the Western press gave rise to the phrase “Gerasimov doctrine.”102 The author of that phrase subsequently not only retracted it, but also aggressively attacked the idea of its existence.103 As with “hybrid war” and “gray zone,” this paper will not attempt to defend or attack the validity of the term, but will explore the collection of concepts and actions to which it could meaningfully be said to apply and that do actually comprise the current Russian approach to war.104 The heart of this approach is the conclusion that wars are won and lost in the information space rather than on the battlefield. Russian military thinkers have gone so far as to argue that every strategic, operational, and even tactical undertaking should be aimed first at achieving an effect in the information space, and that it is the information campaign that is decisive.105 Formal Russian doctrine has not gone this far, nor has Russian military activity on the ground, but the extreme statement is a measure of how important the concept is.106 The importance of information operations is old hat for any Sovietologist. The Soviets were renowned for the “active measures” of the KGB, for “disinformation” and various efforts to suborn groups in the West, sometimes unwittingly, to advance their ideological and concrete agendas. The Soviet military evolved an elaborate theory of deception, bringing the term “maskirovka” into common parlance among those who studied it. The Soviets also built out a concept called “reflexive control” that is the most noteworthy element of Putin’s ability to play a poor hand well.107 Reflexive control is a fancy way of saying “gaslighting.” It is the effort to shape the information space in which an adversary makes decisions so that he voluntarily chooses to act contrary to his own interests and his own benefit—all the while believing that he is actually advancing his own cause. Reflexive control is a form of intellectual jiu-jitsu, which may be one reason it appeals to Putin, who is a long-time and high-level practitioner of the Russian form of judo known as sambo.108 It uses the enemy’s strength against him in the best case, but at least causes him to avoid bringing his strength to bear against you. None of this, again, is new. Even the additions of cyber operations and cyber-enabled information operations such as bots and troll farms are not new or unique to the Russian approach to war. The novelty comes in part from the relative emphasis in Russian operations on efforts to shape the information space and the frequent subordination of conventional military operations and the threat of such operations to those efforts. Another novel aspect is the vulnerability of Western societies to these kinds of efforts, resulting in part from the effects of changes in the technological shape of the information space and the way in which it interacts with the psychology and sociology of Western individuals and societies. The current information environment favors the attacker over the defender for several reasons. The extremely widespread penetration of the internet in Western societies gives an attacker almost universal access to the population, unfiltered by government agency or corporate leadership. The anonymity made possible by the internet makes it difficult or impossible for individuals to know who is speaking to them. The decentralization of sources of information magnifies the effect of that anonymity by allowing it to seem that multiple independent sources verify and validate each other even when a single individual or group controls all of them. And the psychological asymmetry of outrage and retraction means that corrections and fact-checking almost never fully undo the damage done by a false accusation and often have little effect. These characteristics of the modern information space have created the ideal environment in which ideas first developed and attempted by the Soviets can flourish in ways the Soviets could never have imagined.

We must be careful to avoid attributing too much brilliance to Putin and Gerasimov. It is not necessarily the case, or even likely, that they perceived the opportunities these phenomena would present and skillfully designed a “doctrine” to take advantage of them. On the contrary, they and their Russian and Soviet predecessors have been trying to make these approaches work all along. The increased intellectual, doctrinal, and organizational emphasis on them, starting overtly in 2015, likely results instead from the realization that they were suddenly working very well. As with all important military innovations, therefore, the emergence of the current Russian approach to war was almost certainly the result of theory, action, experience, and reflections on interactions with the adversary rather than a sudden explosion of insight.

Whatever its origins and novelty or lack thereof, this Russian approach has allowed Putin to make gains he could never have hoped to make with conventional military forces alone.109 Syria is a case in point. Russia could never have established a lodgment on the Syrian coast and then expanded it to encompass a naval facility, a permanent and expanded military airbase, and a ground forces garrison—all protected by advanced air defense systems—through conventional military operations, against the wishes of the U.S. and its allies. Russian aircraft flying to Syria must transit either NATO airspace (through Turkey or Romania or Bulgaria and then Greece) or Iraqi airspace (via Iran) that the U.S. dominates. Had the U.S. been determined to prevent Russian planes from getting to Syria, the Russian Air Force could not have penetrated the defenses the U.S. and its allies could have put up. But the U.S. and its allies made no such decision. They have, on the contrary, worked hard to avoid any risk of military confrontation with Russian aircraft—a project made challenging, not unironically, by the periodic aggressiveness of Russian pilots. The prospect of a Russian naval expedition forcing its way into the Tartus naval facility in the face of efforts by the U.S. Sixth Fleet to stop it is even more fanciful.

The key to Putin’s success in this gambit lay in his ability to persuade American and NATO leaders that Russia’s military presence in Syria was not a threat and might even be helpful—while simultaneously stoking the belief that any U.S. effort to oppose or control the Russian deployment would lead to major, possibly nuclear, war.

The key to that success, in turn, lay in the fact that neither the Obama nor the Trump administration wanted to be in Syria or wished to fight any kind of conflict with Russia. President Obama, on the contrary, invited Putin into Syria in 2013 to help him out of the trap he had created by announcing that any further use of chemical weapons by Assad was a “red line”—without actually being willing to enforce that red line when Assad crossed it.

Obama’s decision to reach out to Moscow likely resulted in part from the long bipartisan trend of seeking to “reset” relations with Russia, bring Russia back into the fold of responsible international stakeholders, and generally return to what Americans saw as the golden age of U.S.-Russian cooperation in the 1990s. This trend began in the first years of the George W. Bush administration, shortly after Putin’s accession to power. It continued with Hillary Clinton’s vaunted push of the “reset” button and Donald Trump’s praise for Putin and continued attempts to find ways to cooperate with him toward supposedly common objectives.110 The conviction that a Russian reset and a return to the golden years of the 1990s is just one phone call or summit away has become one of the few truly bipartisan foreign policy assumptions in this increasingly polarized era. Putin has used it skillfully to advance his own projects while offering few or no concessions in return.

Conventional military forces play a critical role in the Russian approach to war nevertheless. Russian airpower and long-range precision-strike capability were critical to preserving, stabilizing, and then expanding the Assad regime and the territory it controlled in Syria. Iran, Lebanese Hezbollah, and the other components of the pro-regime coalition all lack similar capabilities. The hardening of opposition defenses in various parts of Syria before the Russian intervention raised the requirement for continued regime offensive operations beyond what the pro-regime coalition could provide.111 The Russian intervention was therefore essential to the survival of the regime and remains essential to its precarious stability and to any hope it has of regaining control of the rest of Syria. The very limited deployment of a few dozen aircraft and salvoes of long-range missiles made Russia indispensable to the pro-regime coalition and gave Putin enormous leverage in Syria at relatively low risk and low cost. The deployment of Russian S-300 and S-400 anti-aircraft systems to Syria dramatically increased that leverage, again at very low risk and cost. The American military could destroy those systems and operate freely over Syrian airspace even against Moscow’s wishes, but the cost in U.S. aircraft and missiles devoted to the operation, in time, and possibly in casualties and aircraft losses would be significant. The range of the S-300 and the reported locations at which launchers were deployed, moreover, means that most Israeli Air Force and some Turkish Air Force aircraft are within range of those systems the moment they take off from airbases in Israel and Turkey. That fact has not been lost on Israeli or Turkish leaders. Putin has also used conventional military forces on a limited scale in Ukraine. He relied on the naval infantry forces already deployed in Crimea, reinforced by small numbers of special forces and other units, to seize control of that peninsula in 2014. Small numbers of conventional forces battalion tactical groups and similar-sized formations helped local proxies seize and hold ground in eastern Ukraine, while highly skilled special forces elements supported them in the battle area and in the rear of the Ukrainian forces.112 Russia has provided air defense capabilities and significant electronic warfare support to its Ukrainian proxies and also to its fighters and allies in Syria. The highly targeted assistance of Russia’s conventional military is probably even more essential to Putin’s proxies in Ukraine than in Syria. The Ukrainian Armed Forces are likely to regain control over the Russian-occupied territories in Ukraine if the Russian military stops supporting its proxies on the battlefield. The current Russian way of war, therefore, truly is hybrid. It requires the use of limited numbers of highly capable conventional forces able to conduct expeditionary operations beyond Russia’s borders. However, it also relies on the creation and maintenance of a political and information environment that facilitates the presence and activities of those forces without serious opposition from any state or actor that could meaningfully challenge them. The conventional forces themselves are enablers to a larger political-informational campaign rather than being the main effort. Evidence for that assessment lies in Putin’s response to the several occasions on which his conventional forces suffered losses— specifically, the Turkish downing of a Russian aircraft in 2015; the accidental downing of another Russian plane by Syrian forces during an Israeli airstrike in 2018; and the killing of several hundred members of the Wagner PMC during an attack by that group on an outpost in eastern Syria held by the opposition, where American advisers were also present.113 Washington and the world held their breath in each case, worrying about Putin’s possible response. The U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph Dunford, reached out immediately to Gerasimov to send messages of both deterrence and de-escalation each time.114 Putin did not retaliate militarily on any of these occasions. He responded to the Turkish shoot-down by deploying Russian S-300 systems operated by Russian troops, and to the Syrian shoot-down by completing a contract with the Assad regime for S-300 systems of its own, which had long been held up. He made no meaningful response to the Wagner incident and did not even use his air defense systems to disrupt the massive U.S. air operations against the attacking Wagner forces as they were destroyed. Putin has similarly refrained from using his own S-300 and S-400 systems to shoot at Israeli aircraft during any of Israel’s repeated airstrikes against regime targets within Syria and has, reportedly, prevented the Syrians from using their S-300 system.115 Nor has Putin retaliated against Israel for those strikes or against the U.S. for the 2017 missile strikes Washington launched against the Shayrat airbase in response to Assad’s renewed use of chemical weapons. The aircraft and missile systems Putin has deployed to Syria, therefore, are clearly not meant to give him control over Syria’s skies. They are also obviously not meant to challenge the ability of the U.S., Turkey, or Israel to conduct anti-regime operations, at least within the current limits of such operations. Lastly, they are not meant to enable Putin to retaliate in any symmetrical tit-for-tat manner for Russian losses suffered directly or indirectly at the hands of the U.S., Turkey, or Israel. The relative inaction of Russia’s aircraft against those states could be at least partially explained by Moscow’s focus on fighting the opposition. But the air defense systems can only be intended to defend against the U.S., Turkey, and Israel, since the opposition has never had aircraft against which those systems are effective.116 The Kremlin has, in other words, deployed systems to defend against attacks that have, in fact, come—and yet not used those systems to defend against those attacks. This conundrum can only be resolved by recognizing that the purpose of those systems is to shape the behavior of the U.S., Turkey, and Israel rather than to fight openly against them. The deployments of advanced air defense weapons, and also of some of the air-to-air-optimized aircraft Russia has periodically sent to Syria, support a political-informational campaign rather than a conventional military operation (even if we regard counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism as being in that category). Circumstances might, of course, arise in which Putin would authorize his troops to use some or all of their capabilities conventionally against the U.S. and its partners and allies. That fact drives the fear of escalation that leads the U.S. Joint Chiefs chairman to jump on the phone to Moscow every time a major incident occurs. It also shapes American, Turkish, and Israeli calculations about military options they might choose. This is exactly the point from Moscow’s perspective. Putin’s S-300 and S-400 systems in Syria work best if they are never used. Problems of Escalation—for Russia The U.S. military and those who study it are preoccupied, understandably, by its shortcomings and inadequacies. The shortcomings are real, and the military is, indeed, inadequate for the global requirements it must meet. The preoccupation with our own failings has tended to obscure an objective assessment of the relative risks to the U.S. and Russia of a conventional military confrontation in Syria, however. The U.S. has therefore tended to overestimate the likelihood that a crisis with Russia in Syria will escalate to the point of such a major confrontation and, as a result, has allowed Putin’s very limited deployment of combat power and good use of the information space to drive a high degree of American self-deterrence. Russia has rarely had more than a couple of dozen combat aircraft at its airfields in Syria at any given time.117 Most of them are usually ground-attack planes (principally Su-25 Frogfoots, which are roughly similar to the U.S. Air Force A-10), and they have limited ability to conduct air-to-air combat against U.S. fighter bombers. The rest are generally variants of the Su-30 fighter bomber, sometimes with a few more-advanced airframes optimized for air-to-air combat, including, occasionally, the Su-57 stealth fighter bomber. A single U.S. carrier strike group has around 48 strike fighters, all with air-to-air and air-to-ground capabilities. The U.S. Navy alone has more than 775 strike aircraft (including all variants of the F/A-18 and the F-35).118 The U.S. Air Force has more than 1,240 fighters and fighter bombers, as well as around 140 strategic bombers.119 The single carrier strike group—almost invariably in the Mediterranean or in or near the Persian Gulf—thus outguns the Russian aircraft in Syria by a significant margin, and the U.S. Air Force and Navy could rapidly begin to flow crushing numbers of reinforcements to the theater. The Russian Air Force, by contrast, has a total of roughly 745 fighter bombers in its entire inventory, according to the most recently published Defense Intelligence Agency estimates.120 It has an additional 215 attack aircraft (mostly Su-25s) and another 141 strategic bombers. It is thus somewhat larger than the U.S. Navy, considerably smaller than the U.S. Air Force, and about one-third the size of both together. These numbers exclude the roughly 240 F-16s in the Turkish Air Force—which have demonstrated their ability to shoot down Russian fighters in limited engagements, and so should not be dismissed—as well as those of America’s other NATO allies, not to mention the Israeli Air Force, one of the best in the world. The U.S. thus has absolute escalation dominance in an air-to-air fight over the skies of Syria, unless one imagines that Russian aircraft and pilots are an order-of-magnitude more lethal than their American counterparts—a notion there is no evidence for, and considerable evidence against.121 Critics of this argument need not challenge this assertion, but could argue instead that it is beside the point. The U.S. military cannot focus solely on fighting the Russians in Syria. It must support American ground forces deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan; conduct counter-terrorism operations throughout Africa; and deter and be ready to respond to aggressions by China, North Korea, and Iran, at least. The concentration of aircraft, ships, and pilots needed to fight a significant air war against Russia in Syria would severely degrade the U.S. military’s ability to meet these other requirements. This fact more than any fear of confronting the Russian military in the Middle East explains the self-paralysis of the U.S. military. Putin, by contrast, has projected a willingness to mix it up in Syria. His pilots ostentatiously fly close to American aircraft, engage in risky maneuvers near them, lock targeting radars on them, and in other ways portray almost an eagerness to engage in a fight.122 The Turkish downing of a Russian aircraft in 2015 resulted from repeated violations of Turkish airspace by Russian pilots in another set of deliberate provocations.123 Putin’s message through these actions has consistently been: You will not fight me here, but I am willing to fight you. Yet on each occasion when blows have been traded, Putin has backed down. One reason is that his escalation calculus is far worse than America’s. The Russian Air Force also has essential tasks outside Syria that would prevent it from concentrating all, or even most of its available assets there. It must cover Russia’s enormous periphery, the largest land border of any country in the world, including a long border with China. Putin would be foolish to strip aircraft from St. Petersburg, a short flight from NATO airfields, while fighting the U.S. in Syria. Nor could he denude his forces in Crimea, linked to the Russian mainland by a single bridge, or his forces in and near eastern Ukraine. He could not even prudently strip his far east of all advanced aircraft. He might— or might not—decide that China would not take advantage of any weakening of his defenses, but the U.S. can threaten him from carriers in the Pacific even if Japan opts to deny the use of its bases in a conflict with Russia to which it is not party. Would the U.S. bomb St. Petersburg or Vladivostok while fighting Russia in Syria? Of course not. But strategic calculus does not work that way. It is a fact that the U.S. could conduct such attacks, and any professional military staff forced to confront the prospect of an escalation to major conventional war in one theater would have to consider the possibility that such a war might spread to other theaters. Best professional military advice in such a situation would be to maintain sufficient combat power in any other vulnerable theater to deter and, if necessary, defeat enemy attempts to transfer the conflict there. It is equally true, after all, that a rapid U.S.-Russia dustup in Syria would be very unlikely to trigger a Chinese military adventure or a North Korean invasion of South Korea. Yet the U.S. military allows the fears of just such scenarios to undermine its willingness to contemplate fighting Russia in Syria— and the Russian military will behave no differently. Even that calculation is not Russia’s most serious problem with the idea of escalation to conventional conflict in the skies over Syria. The biggest problem is actually financial. Russia could not afford to replace the losses it would inevitably take in such a fight, whereas the U.S. could. Bad as the differential in aircraft looks for the Russians, we must recall that the differential in overall economic power and in defense budgets looks much worse. The Russian economy and defense budgets are less than one-tenth the size of America’s. Its military is struggling to “modernize” to a level of technology similar to what the U.S. has had for decades. The cost of having to replace many lost modern aircraft would disrupt Russian defense programs for years. The U.S. could make good such losses in short order if it chose.

Nuclear Escalation

The prospect of the world’s two largest nuclear powers going to war, even in a limited conventional way, is of course terrifying. The U.S. certainly should do everything in its power to achieve its objectives without resorting to major combat operations against Russia—that is the guiding principle of current national security documents and of this report.

The straightforward equation sometimes made between any such local conflict and global nuclear war, however, is entirely unjustified. It simply is not the case that any major conventional war will lead inevitably, or even probably, to nuclear war.

One can trace escalation paths from a conventional war Putin is losing in Syria to his use of a theater nuclear weapon, either to change the odds or to try to force the U.S. to back down. He could use such a weapon to destroy a U.S. airfield in one of the regional states (Turkey, perhaps, or Kuwait) or a U.S. aircraft carrier strike group. The destruction of any single airbase or carrier would not prevent the U.S. from carrying forward an air war to successful conclusion. There are simply too many bases and carriers the U.S. could use for the elimination of a single one to terminate a campaign. Unless Putin were willing to destroy many airbases in many different countries (most of them NATO members) and sink every carrier moving into the theater, he could not prevent the U.S. from destroying his assets in the Middle East.

It is impossible to predict the American response to such a use of nuclear weapons—regardless of the occupant of the White House. The U.S. could respond by using theater nuclear weapons of its own against Russian forces in the Middle East (which this report emphatically does not support or recommend)—and here, a single nuclear device dropped on the airfield near Latakia would pretty much destroy Russian capabilities to continue the air war in the region. Alternatively, Washington could engage in either conventional or nuclear retaliation against Russian forces beyond the region, including in Russia proper (and, again, this report does not support or recommend using nuclear weapons under any circumstances, except possibly in extremis situations far more dire than those under consideration here).

Putin would then be forced to decide whether to escalate further. He could conduct a larger nuclear strike against NATO (since any effort seriously to disrupt U.S. military capabilities in and around Europe would require breaking or badly damaging the alliance). He could also go directly for a strike on the U.S. homeland. If he chose the latter and launched an all-out strike, the U.S. president would likely respond in kind, leading to the destruction of both Russia and the U.S.—and possibly life on Earth. One could endlessly consider lesser variants, but they all lead to dramatically increased risk of Armageddon.

Thus, the real questions are, would Putin risk Armageddon for Syria, or is he likely to miscalculate an American response to a nuclear escalation badly enough to end up there against his will?

Full-scale global thermonuclear war is an insane undertaking. The reason for maintaining large arsenals of strategic nuclear weapons is to deter such a war, not to fight it. A tiny handful of leaders in the past have been willing to accept their own total destruction in pursuit of some larger cause—Hitler being the prime exemplar of this, as of so many evils—but none of them, mercifully, has had nuclear weapons. Putin does not fall anywhere near this category. He is a thoroughly rational actor who has prospered by taking prudent risks and backing down, rather than escalating, on almost every occasion when the breaks did not go his way.124 He holds to no ideology that transcends his own existence sufficiently to cause him to prefer obliteration to defeat. Considerable evidence opposes the idea that he would accept, let alone embrace, full-scale nuclear war if given any choice to avoid it.

The real risk of such a war emerging from a regional crisis, therefore, comes from the risk of miscalculation. It comes, in other words, from the notion that Putin might persuade himself that he could safely use a nuclear weapon of his own without triggering a nuclear retaliation that could escalate to total destruction.

Putin himself has set conditions, for fear of precisely this kind of miscalculation, through his discussions of “de-escalation” with regard to scenarios for warfare in the Baltic states. The Russian military has openly discussed using one or a small number of nuclear weapons to terminate a conventional, even a regional or local, conflict on its own terms.125 It is by no means clear, of course, that all three of the nuclear NATO states (the U.S., Britain, and France) would choose not to retaliate against a nuclear attack on another NATO member state. But neither is it obvious, in the current circumstances, that they would. Putin might have some reason to think he could successfully “escalate to de-escalate,” given the general ambivalence within some NATO capitals about the desirability of even fighting for the Baltics to begin with.

It is harder to imagine him making such a calculation in the context of the Syria scenario being considered here, however. In this scenario, the conflict involves American versus Russian forces directly, and the attack would be on American troops, with thousands or tens of thousands killed in the nuclear strike. The U.S. president would already have demonstrated a willingness to escalate to a high level conventionally, a fact that would weigh heavily against the notion that that president would tamely accept a Russian escalation to a higher level of conflict. Putin would have to be an imbecile, or a gambler of epic proportions, to persuade himself that he could safely escalate to de-escalate in such a conflict. Assuming deterrence continues to work at the strategic level, in other words, it is very likely to continue to work at the operational and tactical levels, even in a major conventional conflict involving American and Russian forces, at least outside of Russian territory.

The purpose of the foregoing discussion was not in any way to suggest that a U.S.-Russian conventional war in Syria or anywhere else is safe, would definitely not spread, and could not lead to nuclear war. Still less was it a brief to advocate for any such conflict. The aim, rather, was to show that the escalation paths from the current situation to higher levels of conflict look much worse for Putin than they do for the U.S., and that even adding the notion of the risk of nuclear war or escalation to de-escalate, Putin has every reason to believe that outright confrontation with the American military will end badly for him.

That is one of the main reasons behind his preference for hybrid warfare. It is the reason he is unlikely to abandon that preference any time soon but seems, rather, to be doubling down on it. This has implications far beyond Syria. It goes into the Baltics, Poland, NATO, and even Ukraine and Belarus with various important modifications. The current Russian way of war reflects the realities of Russia’s situation and the correlation of forces between Russia and the U.S. for the foreseeable future. This is the way of war against which the U.S. and its allies must most urgently prepare, and from which they must not allow themselves to be distracted, even while taking necessary steps to address deficiencies in conventional combat power and other areas. Hybrid war is not a façade or a fad— it is the only realistic way Putin has to achieve his objectives by force.

THE BLOWBACK PHENOMENON

Putin has suffered significant harm as the result of two of his major foreign undertakings—his response to the EuroMaidan Revolution in Ukraine in 2014 and his interference with the U.S. election in 2016. He achieved some, but not all of his original objectives in both cases, but also ended up paying a much higher price than he intended. This phenomenon presents an opportunity for the U.S. to develop a counter-strategy for Russia’s hybrid warfare approach.

The 2014 Ukrainian revolution caught Putin by surprise. It ousted President Viktor Yanukovich, who was largely pro-Russian, and brought pro-Western Petro Poroshenko to power. Putin tried to save Yanukovich for a time, but had to adopt new objectives and means and a new timeline when Yanukovich fled Kyiv. Putin first focused on securing the Crimean Peninsula, important to Russia because the port of Sevastopol had remained the home base of the Russian Black Sea Fleet after the Soviet Union’s fall. He then intervened in the heavily Russian-speaking areas of eastern Ukraine as part of a larger effort to collapse the new government and regain dominant influence in Ukraine. That effort failed at the time. Putin likely perceives an opportunity to influence President Zelensky, but he has not yet achieved his aim of warping Kyiv back into Moscow’s orbit.126

He has paid a very high price for his efforts in Ukraine, however. For the foreseeable future, Putin has eliminated the option of having a leader in Kyiv who is openly pro-Russian and politically viable. Both the U.S. and the EU imposed an escalating series of sanctions on various Russian individuals and entities, which have seriously harmed the Russian economy and constrained Putin’s access to foreign direct investment, technology transfer, and other important resources. Those sanctions proved surprisingly durable, despite considerable Russian pressure on EU members to abandon them. Putin has failed utterly thus far to persuade any state that is not a proxy or close ally to recognize his annexation of Crimea.

Putin’s operations in Ukraine have also changed the situation in that country to Russia’s detriment in ways that are likely to endure even into, and possibly through, a pro-Russian presidency. His invasion and occupation of Ukrainian territory injected significant energy into the development of a distinctive Ukrainian national identity and sense of independent statehood. It drove Kyiv to create a reasonably effective military out of the post-Soviet decrepitude into which its armed forces had fallen. The Ukrainian security services have also learned how to work with Western militaries and advisors against the Russian armed forces—a small but potentially important step toward facilitating ultimate Ukrainian integration into NATO. Russian actions have even led the Ukrainian Rada (parliament) to alter the constitution to call for Ukraine’s accession into that alliance.127 Zelensky’s presidency, or a future Ukrainian government, may nullify the push toward NATO and undermine some of these other trends, but it will not quickly reverse the consolidation of a sense of Ukrainian nationhood that had simply not existed in its current form before 2014.

Putin’s interference in the 2016 American presidential elections has also resulted in backlash that he surely did not expect or desire. He had apparently set out to ensure that Hillary Clinton did not become president (that was his aim before Donald Trump was a serious candidate).128 Hillary Clinton is not president—so, in that sense, Putin got his wish. But Putin opposed Clinton because he did not want a president who would take the U.S. in a strongly anti-Russia direction and feared that she would do so. Trump surely does not seem to want to take a strong stand against Russia, but mistrust of Russia in general is far stronger in the U.S. than it has been since the end of the Cold War. Around 15 percent of Americans named Russia the top threat to the U.S. before the election. Forty-six percent of Democrats and 34 percent of independent voters identified Russia in that way in February 2019.129 A majority of Americans now see Russia’s military power as threatening vital American national interests for the first time since the fall of the Soviet Union. These attitudes have had concrete impacts on U.S. policy toward Russia. President Obama imposed sanctions on Russia for its interference in the elections in 2016, and President Trump refused to block or waive those sanctions, despite efforts by Russian proxies to persuade his administration to do so. The U.S. under Trump has imposed additional sanctions for malign Russian cyber activity and provided greater military support to Ukraine.130 The Trump Administration has not pushed back on Russia’s presence or activities in Syria (apart from crushing an attempted attack by Russian PMC Wagner on a base occupied by U.S. troops), but, then, neither had Obama. Clinton might have pushed back harder—Putin certainly thought she would—but he is at risk of creating an enduring mistrust and fear of Russia in the U.S., which had been far lower before 2016.

These policies were in contrast to the U.S. approach toward Russia for the past two decades. The U.S. tried to improve relations with Russia several times after the Soviet Union’s collapse. The West hesitated for years to impose penalties on Moscow for repeated violations of international laws and norms, including its invasion of Georgia and cyberattacks on Estonia. Only gradually did the West start to impose sanctions on Russia after persistent human rights violations, including the high-profile case of a lawyer, Sergey Magnitsky, killed in the custody of Russian authorities, or indisputable aggression like the occupation of the Crimean Peninsula. However, it was not until the Kremlin’s interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election that most Americans and the U.S. national security establishment began to coalesce around the notion that Russia was principally a threat demanding greater attention.

These examples offer insight into the major vulnerabilities of Russia’s hybrid and information operations and part of the basis for an effort to counter them. In the case of the U.S. elections, Putin attempted a significant covert activity that was blown. The attempt at secrecy made the revelation of the effort not only major news (which it would have been anyway), but also sudden and shocking. It also stoked fear, justified for the most part, that Putin is engaged in other covert actions that have not yet been revealed. The blowback against these blown covert operations has done more than lead to sanctions and changes in public opinion toward Russia; it has also sown deeper suspicion about Russia and created a drive to look for similar covert Russian activities around other elections in the U.S. and elsewhere. That suspicion and search will make it more difficult for Putin to conduct such activities and increase the likelihood of renewed outrage if, and as, others are exposed. In Ukraine, the Kremlin made major miscalculations about the dynamics on the ground, the loyalties of local powerbrokers and the population, and the nature of the pushback Russia would experience. This happened despite the extensive networks Russia had in Ukraine; the understanding of the situation there that those networks should have been able to provide; and the cover they should have been able to give to Russian stealth operations.

This blowback can and should form part of the basis for a new American and Western approach to responding to Russian hybrid warfare.

#### Chinese soft power is on the brink --- it leads to successful claims to the SCS

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--SoPo in SCS controls the conversation and how disputes are resolved – unclear territorial claims now so trusting them is a key part of their claims

--Lets them project themselves as a responsible scs stakeholder – seen as “good guys”

--US ahead now but very fragile – if China seen as good, they won’t be contained

Chinese Soft Power in the SCS

The research indicates that China’s use of soft power in its handling of the SCS disputes has three strategic aims:

1. Control the terms of discussion. China’s goal is to strengthen the legitimacy of its claims in the SCS. This is done by redefining the legal basis upon which maritime boundary delimitation occurs, establishing the history of its claims, and controlling the manner in which disputes are managed and resolved. Controlling the terms of discussion allows China to increase the likelihood that the disputes will ultimately be resolved in its favor.
2. Make China a preferred partner. By increasing its value to countries in the region, particularly among claimant states, and projecting an image of constructive participation in regional affairs, China hopes to soften the opposition by other states to its activities in the SCS, and encourage claimant states to work with China in resolving the disputes in a manner that it deems appropriate.
3. Prevent interference. By reducing the extent to which non-claimant states influence developments in the SCS, China increases its leverage over claimant states. This pertains especially to the US, which possess the economic, military, and political heft to both counter China unilaterally and maintain a tacit coalition of states that are able to work together to oppose China in the SCS. It also ensures that China is able to isolate other claimant states through bilateral negotiations.

These strategic aims are inferred based on the observed application of sources, tools, and modes by China in its handling of the SCS disputes. The subsequent sections present the components of soft power that support each strategic aim, as well as the links between the various components. 53

China’s first strategic aim is to control the terms of discussion, and by doing so increase the likelihood that the SCS disputes are managed and eventually resolved in its favor. This strategic aim draws on informational, institutional, and diplomatic sources of power to achieve two effects: (1) establish China’s version of the facts, and (2) redefine the rules to China’s advantage (see figure 2). Establish the Facts China’s efforts in establishing the facts serve its goal of influencing what the facts are. Through a combination of official statements, products from official Chinese media, and participation by Chinese academics in the ongoing intellectual discourse on developments in the SCS, China seeks to convince the global public of the historical basis of its claims in the SCS. It argues that “the Chinese people [were] the first to discover, name, develop and administer the Islands in the South China, and that the Chinese government was the first to peacefully and effectively exercise continuous sovereign jurisdiction on South China Sea Islands,” citing both occidental and oriental historical maps as corroborating evidence.54 China has left no stone unturned in its efforts to “educate” the world. In 2016, China ran a video advertisement in Times Square, New York City, providing evidence for the validity of its claims in the SCS. The three-minute-long video ran 120 times a day for a period of 10 days, and included soundbites from both Chinese and non-Chinese government officials.55 Official Chinese media outlets like China Central Television (CCTV) and Xinhua have established dedicated online sites in English that reiterate China’s position on what the facts are.56 These sites supplement the official online repository maintained by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) that details the Chinese’s governments position on all SCS-related matters.57 CCTV has also produced online videos that convey similar information, but use an animated format that is likely to have greater appeal among online viewers.58 China’s attempts at shaping intellectual discourse on the SCS go beyond the efforts of individual Chinese policymakers and academics. At the institutional level, China has established think tanks and institutions with a sole focus on the SCS. Among them are the Collaborative Innovation Center for South China Sea Studies (CICSCSS) established in 2012, and the National Institute for South China Sea Studies (NISCSS) established in 2013 as the successor to the Hainan Research Institute for the South China Sea. The NISCSS in turn sponsors the Institute of China-American Studies (ICAS) which is based in Washington, DC. ICAS “has a relatively low profile in Washington but has become [a] frequent contributor to American events discussing the South China Sea disputes.”59 These institutions provide China with the means to promulgate its version of the facts to non-Chinese academics and policymakers without drawing as much attention to China’s underlying agenda. Redefine the Rules China also seeks to redefine the rules by influencing which facts are relevant, and how disputes should be resolved. By determining which facts are relevant, China hopes to redefine the legal basis by which international maritime boundaries are delimited, and “shape international opinion in favor of a distorted interpretation of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.”60 Here again, official statements frequently point to China’s historical claim to territory in the SCS and reference “traditional fishing areas” as the basis on which China claims economic rights in various parts of the SCS. In terms of the manner in which disputes should be resolved, Chinese officials reference China’s past successes in resolving boundary issues with its neighbors as an indication that bilateral negotiations are the best way forward in the SCS.61 Institutions like the CICSCSS, NISCSS, and ICAS serve the dual purposes of providing China with a platform to share its interpretation of the rules among experts in the field, and a means by which to grow its own cadre of researchers and academic experts to bolster its institutional capacity to inform the intellectual discourse. While China can easily establish think tanks and academic institutions to enhance its intellectual soft power, growing its influence in the area of maritime law poses a much greater challenge. Legal institutions, particularly those that function in the realm of international law, draw their legitimacy from the body of states that recognize their authority. This has not stopped China from trying to establish its own alternative legal institutions. In 2016, the chief justice of the Supreme People’s Court announced that China would unilaterally establish an International Maritime Judicial Center (IMJC) that will adjudicate on maritime disputes. 62 By publicizing its judgements and judicial views, China hopes that the IMJC will enable it to reshape legal norms in maritime disputes to its advantage—an approach informally termed by observers as “lawfare.” Soft Power Strategic Aim 2: Make China a Preferred Partner China’s second strategic aim is to present itself as a preferred partner to the member states of ASEAN, and by doing so soften their opposition to China’s activities in the SCS and increase their receptivity to China’s espoused approach to resolving the territorial disputes. This strategic aim draws on informational, institutional, diplomatic, military, and economic sources of power to achieve two effects: (1) conveying China’s strategic intent, and (2) elevating China’s role in the region (see figure 3). Convey Strategic Intent China seeks to communicate a version of its strategic intent that will allay the fears of ASEAN member states and convince them of China’s desire to work towards outcomes that are beneficial to all parties. At every opportunity, Chinese officials have reiterated their government’s commitment to “rules and mechanisms for management and control of differences of opinion,” “realizing mutual benefits through cooperation,” “safeguarding freedom of navigation in and flight over the South China Sea,” and, more generally, “peace and stability in the South China Sea.”63 Official Chinese media outlets and Chinese academics from state-linked institutes sing a similar refrain. To back up its rhetoric, China has pointed to its support for ASEAN-China maritime cooperation, which includes a half-billion-dollar fund that it established in 2011, as well as its proposals for Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) and “hotlines” to better manage potential conflicts in the SCS. It has also reiterated its support for the implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), and continued consultation on the ASEAN-China SCS Code of Conduct (COC). These efforts in practical security cooperation serve to demonstrate China’s commitment to making its “dual-track” approach work—resolution of disputes through bilateral negotiations between claimant states, supported by a multilateral ASEAN-China effort to maintain peace and stability in the SCS. China has also communicated its intent to maintain stability in the SCS through its willingness to work with the US. For example, China agreed to a Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES) at the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) in 2014.64 It has since participated in bilateral CUES exercises with the US Navy, and employed CUES during its encounters with the US naval vessels in the SCS. To allay concerns over its construction of dual-use facilities on its islands in the SCS, China has couched these developments as a way for China to “better perform [its] international responsibilities and obligations.”65 Elevate China’s Role in the Region China has taken steps to increase its value and links with member states of ASEAN and in regional structures, in order to increase its attractiveness as a regional partner. In terms of the regional security architecture, China has continued to increase its participation in “multilateral dialogues and cooperation mechanisms such as the ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting Plus (ADMM+), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ShangriLa Dialogue (SLD), Jakarta International Defence Dialogue (JIDD) and Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS).”66 It has also embarked on its own initiatives, such as the Xiangshan Forum—a track 1.5 regional security dialogue, which was inaugurated in 2009 but has significantly expanded in recent years—and the establishment of the ChinaASEAN Defence Ministers’ Informal Meeting in 2015. China has also stated that it “resolutely supports ASEAN exhibiting a leading role in cooperation in the East Asia region” and has taken on a series of projects to demonstrate this support in a concrete manner.67 China is an active participant in the ARF and has led more than 40 cooperation projects, constituting one-third of the total number of projects, and the highest number among member states. 68 Practical security cooperation has also featured as one of China’s soft power tools. China conducted HADR operations in support of the Philippines following Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, and in support of Malaysia following severe flooding in 2014. It also participated in the ARF Disaster Relief Exercise 2015 held in Malaysia. With Thailand, China has “numerous shared security interests, particularly regarding non-state threats in the Mekong River basin.”69 From an economic perspective, China’s value to the region has grown significantly. In addition to the large and growing volume of bilateral trade and investment with ASEAN member states, China’s institutional influence has been enhanced by its establishment of the AIIB. The China-ASEAN Investment Cooperation Fund, which began its operations in 2010, serves as another symbol of China’s commitment to economic development in SEA. Soft Power Strategic Aim 3: Prevent Interference China’s third strategic aim is to prevent interference from non-claimant states, particularly the US, and by doing so maintain its freedom of action in the SCS and increase its leverage in bilaterally negotiated dispute settlements. This strategic aim draws on informational, institutional, diplomatic, and economic sources of power to delegitimize extra-regional actors (see figure 4). Delegitimize Extra-Regional Actors Unlike the first two strategic aims, which serve to enhance China’s soft power, this third strategic aim focuses on reducing the soft power of extra-regional actors that pose a threat to China’s achievement of its goals in the SCS. Statements by Chinese officials and the state-run media have sought to “[malign] the [US’] role in initiating and escalating tensions.”70 China’s line of argument is that the militaristic nature of US involvement has introduced destabilizing elements in the SCS, and points to “freedom-ofnavigation operations in the South China Sea, flaunting its military force, and . . . pulling in help from cliques, supporting their allies in antagonizing China.”71 China has also sought to draw attention to what it perceives as a history of “power politics and bullying by Western Powers.”72 China argues that states in the region should be allowed to collectively develop their own approach to achieving peace and stability in the SCS without unwanted external interference. It has proposed the idea of a “security-governance method in keeping with the special characteristics of this region” or an “Asian way of comfort” that focuses on “non-aligned relationship routes,” with the goal of excluding extra-regional actors.73 China’s extensive efforts in developing ASEAN-China initiatives also serve to limit the influence of actors like the US and Japan by reducing their role in the regional security architecture. From an economic perspective, China has sought “to undermine U.S. dominance in established trade blocs while touting the benefits of a China-led order through its own initiatives.”74 Much like the AIIB, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) offers the region an economic structure that has little in the way of a role for the US. The recent withdrawal of the US from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which would have been an alternative, has only increased the attractiveness of realizing the RCEP. This regional economic framework, along with the AIIB and the various funds operated by China for ASEAN and its member states, reinforce the perception of the US’ waning economic relevance in the region. This undercuts the US’ soft power in the region and weakens its ability to maintain a grouping of countries, both claimants and non-claimants, that are willing to work with the US to block China from achieving its designs for the SCS. The Interplay of Hard and Soft Power Overall, China’s soft power strategy appears to work hand-in-hand with its hard power goals in the SCS in order to “safeguard [China’s] maritime rights and interests.”75 By controlling the terms of discussion, China is able to reshape not just the physical state of play in the SCS, but also the legal and historical aspects of the disputes. It also increases the likelihood that its preferred method of resolving the disputes—bilateral negotiations—will eventually be agreed to by other claimant states. China’s hard power goal of countering and fragmenting opposition to its claims is supported by soft power efforts to make China a preferred partner in the region and prevent interference by extraregional actors. As the de facto leader of the loose grouping of countries opposed to China’s actions in the SCS, the US will find itself hard-pressed to maintain the commitment of other states in resisting China, particularly as its soft power in the region is diminished. China, on the other hand, will benefit from the growing desire of other states in the region to work with it as its status as a preferred partner rises. Background to Cross-Strait Relations In 1949, China’s Nationalist government, the Kuomingtang (KMT), was defeated by the CPC and fled to the island of Taiwan, marking the end of the Chinese Civil War. Since then, China and Taiwan have existed in a political standoff, with the two entities both claiming to be the legitimate government of the territory of China. In the intervening decades, the state of affairs between China and Taiwan, commonly referred to as CrossStrait relations, has vacillated between stable cooperation and military crisis. China’s fundamental position has remained essentially unchanged—it sees Taiwan as a rogue province that must eventually be reunified with China under the control of the CPC. Up until 2000, Taiwan’s government also maintained the position that the territories of China and Taiwan would eventually be reunified, albeit under its control. The combination of these two political end-states was captured in the 1992 Consensus that developed out of a meeting between representatives of the CPC and KMT, and is the basis for the current interpretation of the “One China principle.”76 The election of Chen Shui-bian from the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) as President of Taiwan in 2000 marked the beginning of a period of increased turbulence in Cross-Strait relations. Unlike the KMT, the DPP has not publicly accepted the 1992 Consensus, and while it has not attempted to make a formal declaration of Taiwanese independence, it is a strong proponent of a distinct Taiwanese identity. From 2000 to 2008, the Chinese government employed a host of coercive measures to dissuade the DPP from putting Taiwan on a path to independence, including the suspension of high-level interactions with the Taiwanese government, the passing of the Anti-Secession Law, and intensified diplomatic isolation of Taiwan.77 During this eight-year period, no agreements were signed between China’s Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) and Taiwan’s Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF), nor were there any formal interactions between the two organizations.78 The return to a KMT-led Taiwanese government in 2008 resulted in an immediate improvement in Cross-Strait relations and steadily increasing levels of cooperation between China and Taiwan in a variety of areas. However, the relatively healthy political situation is at odds with social trends among the Taiwanese population. “Since the 1992 consensus, the proportion of people on the island who identify themselves simply as Taiwanese has more than tripled to almost 60%; the share of those who call themselves Chinese has plunged to just 3%.”79 This issue of identity is even more pronounced among Taiwanese youth, and most notably manifested as student-led protests in the 2014 Sunflower Student Movement.80 In the 2016 round of elections in Taiwan, the DPP gained control of both the executive and legislative branches for the first time in Taiwan’s history. While the current Taiwanese president, Tsai Ing-wen, has taken a more conciliatory approach to CrossStrait relations than Chen so far, China remains wary about her political goals, and has made repeated calls for her to recognize the 1992 Consensus as a precursor to any further improvement in ties between China and Taiwan. The 2016 election also saw the emergence of the New Power Party, which has its roots in the Sunflower Student Movement and advocates independence for Taiwan. This points to trends in Taiwan’s political landscape that will likely have an increasingly deleterious impact on Cross-Strait relations. An Overview of Chinese Hard Power in Cross-Strait Relations Hard power features extensively in China’s management of Cross-Strait relations and spans the diplomatic, military, and economic realms. As China’s geopolitical weight has burgeoned, the hard power leverage that it has over Taiwan has increased correspondingly. In terms of diplomatic actions, China continues to lean on countries to sever diplomatic ties with Taiwan and recognize China instead. São Tomé and Príncipe was the latest country to do so, severing its diplomatic ties with Taiwan in 2016, leaving only 21 countries that still recognize Taiwan, in comparison with the 174 that recognize China. This diplomatic strangulation extends beyond state-to-state relations to include Taiwan’s participation in regional and international organizations. In 2015, China denied Taiwan’s application to join the AIIB as “China-Taipei,” requiring instead that Taiwan apply through China’s Ministry of Finance as Hong Kong had done.81 China has also opposed Taiwan’s bid to join the International Civil Aviation Organization. In 2016, China insisted for the first time that Taiwan attend the World Health Organization’s annual assembly as part of China, unlike in past years where Taiwan had participated as an independent observer. China has also used diplomatic actions to signal to the Taiwanese population that it is far more willing to work with the KMT than the DPP in the hope of influencing how the Taiwanese vote. In the lead up to the 2016 Taiwan elections, Xi Jinping and Ma Ying-jeou, then-President of Taiwan, met in Singapore. This was the first-ever meeting between the heads of government of China and Taiwan—a clear signal to the Taiwanese public that their support for the KMT would translate into Cross-Strait stability. Following the DPP’s win in 2016 and Tsai’s subsequent refusal to accept the 1992 Consensus, China made its displeasure clear through the suspension of high-level sever diplomatic ties with Taiwan and recognize China instead. São Tomé and Príncipe was the latest country to do so, severing its diplomatic ties with Taiwan in 2016, leaving only 21 countries that still recognize Taiwan, in comparison with the 174 that recognize China. This diplomatic strangulation extends beyond state-to-state relations to include Taiwan’s participation in regional and international organizations. 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Following the DPP’s win in 2016 and Tsai’s subsequent refusal to accept the 1992 Consensus, China made its displeasure clear through the suspension of high-level interactions between ARATS and SEF, as well as the China’s Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) and Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council (MAC). Unsurprisingly, official exchanges between representatives of the CPC and KMT have continued unabated. Other actions by China contribute to the undermining of Taiwanese sovereignty in general. In recent years, there have been a number of instances of Taiwanese citizens who have been apprehended in third countries for illegal activities being deported to China for prosecution. In addition to the implied message that China considers the Taiwanese people a part of China, it serves as a reminder that China is in a position to deny Taiwan the rights that are afforded to sovereign states. Military hard power has long been a major element of China’s approach to CrossStrait relations. On top of the large military force postured in Taiwan’s direction, China has conducted a variety of aggressive military actions that warn Taiwan against a move towards independence. In 2015, CCTV aired footage of a People’s Liberation Army (PLA) exercise that showed Chinese troops conducting “a raid on a building that [looked] strikingly like the Presidential Office Building in Taipei.”82 More recently, China has flown and sailed bombers, fighters and its aircraft carrier in the vicinity of Taiwan.83 “There have also been reports that China is considering amending its ‘anti-secession’ law . . . to say it could invade if Taiwan’s leader refuses to endorse the 1992 consensus.”84 Whether or not an amendment is actually passed, it sends the message that China’s tolerance for pro-independence groups in Taiwan is running low. China has also employed economic hard power against Taiwan, though less extensively than military or diplomatic hard power. An example of this is China’s apparent regulation of the number of Chinese tourists visiting Taiwan.85 Following Tsai’s inauguration as president, the number of Chinese tourists that visited Taiwan fell significantly, affecting Taiwan’s tourism industry.86 China points to other causes for the drop in tourist numbers, but the timing and magnitude suggest government intervention. Overall, China’s employment of hard power in its handling of Cross-Strait relations is indicative of two components in its overarching strategy: (1) delegitimizing Taiwan as a sovereign entity through diplomatic isolation; and (2) providing the Taiwanese government with disincentives for pursuing a path towards independence. Chinese Soft Power in Cross-Strait Relations The research indicates that China’s use of soft power in its handling of CrossStrait relations has two strategic aims: 1. Build robust social ties. China’s goal is to undercut the emergence of a strong Taiwanese identity that is entirely separate from China. This is done by playing up the common historical identity that Taiwan shares with China, and by creating an environment that promotes social re-integration between the Chinese and Taiwanese after decades of isolation from each other. Deep social ties serve as an anchor to prevent Taiwan drifting away from China towards independence. 2. Engender a sense of shared prosperity. China seeks to convince the Taiwanese population that a close relationship is essential for Taiwan’s continued prosperity. This involves developing a high level of economic interdependence between China and Taiwan, as a well as creating the perception that China is committed to supporting Taiwan’s interests. By portraying China as a guarantor of Taiwan’s continued prosperity, the Taiwanese will be less likely to support a political agenda that puts the stability of Cross-Strait relations at risk. These strategic aims are inferred based on the observed application of sources, tools, and modes by China in its handling of Cross-Strait relations. The subsequent sections present the components of soft power that support each strategic aim, as well as the links between the various components.87 Soft Power Strategic Aim 1: Build Robust Social Ties China’s first strategic aim is to build robust social ties, and by doing so provide a counter to the emergence of a Taiwanese identity that is entirely separate from China. This strategic aim draws on cultural, political, and informational sources of power to achieve two effects: (1) promote social integration, and (2) reinforce a common identity (see figure 5). Promote Social Integration China seeks to promote the integration of the Taiwanese population into Chinese society through a combination of tools. The first of these has been to grow the number of people-to-people exchanges, “especially among ordinary citizens.”88 Cross-Strait tourism appears to be one of the ways that this being achieved, and is generally viewed as “a peace-building mechanism.”89 Beyond the rising number of direct air routes and flights between China and Taiwan, entry requirements for Taiwanese to enter China have been eased. In 2015, per-visit entry permits were replaced with electronic travel passes that allow for multiple trips within a fixed duration. 90 China is also specifically targeting Taiwanese youth, as this segment of the Taiwanese population identifies very weakly with China and, consequently, serves as a strong base of support for the proindependence agenda. Chinese officials have declared their intention to “boost the loyalty of young people from Taiwan . . . by organizing ‘study trips’ and exchanges for them to visit the mainland.”91 This proliferation of people-to-people exchanges also extends to the realm of academia. The number of Taiwanese students in Chinese universities has increased significantly over the past few years, from 928 in 2011 to 2,734 in 2014.92 In 2016, a Cross-Strait think tank forum involving academics and experts was included for the first time in the annually-held Cross-Strait Forum, adding to a growing number of opportunities for exchanges between Chinese and Taiwanese academics.93 As evidenced by the suspension of high-level TAO-MAC and ARATS-SEF interactions in May 2016, the DPP’s control of the Taiwanese government may appear to constitute a major dampener on people-to-people exchanges between China and Taiwan. However, the reality is that this is largely political theater and only affects interactions between the top tiers of the two governments. In contrast, exchanges between city governments, professional associations, academic groups, etc. have not been affected. Policy measures have also been taken by the Chinese government to support the social integration of the Taiwanese into China. This includes preferential policies that “cover employment, social insurance and living needs” and “facilitate Taiwanese to live and work on the mainland.”94 China has made it easier for Taiwanese professionals to work in China. For example, Taiwanese law firms have been allowed to establish representative offices in China since 2011, and a sizeable number of Taiwanese are now qualified to practice law in China.95 In 2012, the Chinese government established an association specifically to provide assistance to these Cross-Strait couples across “a wide spectrum of social services such as employment, social security, medical care, education and child bearing and raising.”96 The number of inter-marriages between Chinese and Taiwanese people has also grown significantly over time, increasing by more than 10,000 couples annually. Reinforce a Common Identity China has sought to reinforce the common historical identity that it shares with Taiwan. In their remarks, Chinese officials consistently refer to the Taiwanese in some form or other as “our own flesh and blood.”97 At the historic 2015 Xi-Ma meeting, Xi remarked that “we [Taiwanese and Chinese] are closely-knit kinsmen, and blood is thicker than water.”98 China has also couched this common identity in the form of a shared future by referencing the “Chinese dream” and the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese people” in the context of Cross-Strait relations.99 Chinese officials have even gone as far as appealing to a sense of shared duty or national obligation by framing the disputes in the SCS and ECS as a responsibility to be borne by both Taiwan and China collectively.100 China has also leveraged historical symbols to emphasize the common identity between China and Taiwan. In 2011, a joint forum on Sun Yat-sen—the founder of the KMT—was held in Guangzhou, and included high-level representation from the CPC. The forum coincided with the 100th anniversary of the 1911 Revolution and focused on the “philosophy and ideas of Sun,” “the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation,” and Sun’s role in the overthrowing of the Qing Dynasty.101 In 2015, China commemorated the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, which included a series of Cross-Strait events that drew attention to the contributions of the Communists and Nationalists in defeating the Japanese, with victory “only possible through the efforts of the entire nation.”102 Both KMT and CPC veterans were included at the front of the internationally televised and widely attended 2015 China Victory Day Parade. China’s willingness to acknowledge and publicize the involvement of the Nationalists in modern Chinese history points to the increased emphasis it has placed on reinforcing a common Chinese identity among the Taiwanese. Soft Power Strategic Aim 2: Engender a Sense of Shared Prosperity China’s second strategic aim is to engender a sense of shared prosperity, and use this to encourage Taiwan to pursue a political future where it remains hitched to China. This strategic aim draws on economic, political, informational, and institutional sources of power to achieve two effects: (1) deepen economic interdependence between China and Taiwan, and (2) show China’s support for Taiwan’s interests (see figure 6). Deepen Economic Interdependence China’s goal is to develop a sufficiently deep level of economic integration with Taiwan such that the Taiwanese will consider a stable relationship with China essential to a prosperous future. Developing Cross-Strait economic links has long been a component of China’s “embedded reunification” strategy; however, its potential has increased as China’s economy has surged and Taiwan’s has slowed. 103 China has pushed this economic integration through a combination of government policies and increased institutional links. In terms of government policies, China and Taiwan signed the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) in 2010—the first ever Cross-Strait trade agreement. The economic benefits of the agreement are generally tilted in Taiwan’s favor. For example, “China eliminates tariffs on almost twice as many goods as Taiwan,” and “opens up more of its service sector for Taiwanese entrepreneurs to invest in on the mainland.”104 This suggests that China’s motivations for establishing the agreement lie beyond the apparent economic benefits. Since then, China and Taiwan have established a plethora of additional economic agreements, covering areas like taxation, finance, aviation, shipping, and services. This has continued even in Tsai’s first term as president, with the launch of a preferential customs clearance program in the second-half of 2016.105 In general, Chinese officials have made clear their intention to pursue economic policies that are preferential towards the Taiwanese.106 For example, a comprehensive economic zone was established on Pingtan Island, in Fujian, China, as a pilot area for Cross-Strait cooperation. Businesses in the area can conduct banking in both Chinese and Taiwanese currency and benefit from tax reductions. There are also preferential policies that make it easier for Taiwanese professionals to be employed within the zone.107 More broadly, Chinese companies have invested approximately USD 1.7 billion in Taiwan since being given the green light to do so in 2009, creating 11,400 Taiwanese jobs in the process.108 China has also increased its institutional links with Taiwan, which in turn support the growth of economic ties. In terms of financial institutions, Taiwan-based banks have been allowed to open branches in China since 2011, and a growing number of Taiwanese securities firms now have a presence in China.109 A Cross-Strait Industrial Cooperation Forum has been established to “[strengthen] cooperation in hi-tech and new industries.”110 This is in addition to numerous other economic forums that have for years been promoting cooperation across a wide variety of industries. China has also expressed a desire to have ARATS and SEF establish “cross-Strait offices” in Taiwan and China respectively, though this has yet to come to fruition.111 Show Support for Taiwan’s Interests Simply establishing strong economic ties is unlikely to be sufficient to convince the Taiwanese that China is deeply invested in Taiwan’s long-term future. To this end, China has made an effort to demonstrate its support for Taiwan’s interests through its rhetoric and actions. Beyond references to the shared realization of the “Chinese dream” and the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese people,” Chinese officials have explicitly stated that “the Chinese mainland will continue to strengthen the protection of the rights and interests of Taiwan compatriots.”112 In 2014, the TAO established an office specifically tasked to “manage public petitions related to Taiwan affairs” and “listen to the complaints and demands of Taiwan compatriots and Taiwanese spouses in the mainland and try to solve their problems.”113 In terms of practical cooperation and assistance, China has offered humanitarian relief to Taiwan on a number of occasions. In 2012, China donated USD 100,000 to Taiwan to assist with rainstorm-relief efforts.114 In the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, China offered its assistance to Taiwanese in Nepal, saying that “both sides are of one family.”115 China has also cooperated with Taiwan on issues of cross-border crime since a mechanism for mutual assistance was established in 2009. In 2012, a joint ChinaTaiwan police operation resulted in a successful raid against a human-trafficking ring.116 These actions are intended to convince the Taiwanese public that China’s support for Taiwan extends beyond pure economic interest. The Interplay of Hard and Soft Power While the ultimate aim of all Chinese actions in regards to Cross-Strait relations is to prevent Taiwan from seeking independence and steer it towards eventual reunification, it appears that China’s hard and soft power strategies are directed at different audiences. On the one hand, hard power has been primarily applied in a political context to influence he policies of the Taiwanese government—a combination of diplomatic strangulation as well as political tit-for-tat. On the other hand, soft power has focused on maintaining a favorable perception of China among the Taiwanese population—“to place hopes in the Taiwanese people” as the “slogan frequently uttered by Chinese leaders” goes.117 This distinction in the aims of China’s hard and soft power strategies comports with the Taiwanese perception of “relatively low ‘people-targeted’ hostility” and comparably higher “’government-targeted’ hostility” from China.118 Having successfully identified the various components and strategic aims of Chinese soft power in the two cases that were studied, the thesis will next present possible generalizations about the role of soft power in China’s security strategy. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS For it is in the creative combination of both hard and soft power that true strategy emerges. — Robert D. Kaplan, Geography Rules The purpose of this study was to determine the role of soft power in China’s security strategy. Based on a “soft use” conception of soft power, two cases involving China’s external security interests were studied—the territorial disputes in the SCS and China’s handling of Cross-Strait relations. Data on China’s actions and intentions were coded into matrices of sources, tools, and modes of power, allowing inferences to made about the overarching strategic aims in each case. China’s soft power strategic aims in the SCS disputes were identified as: (1) controlling the terms of discussion, (2) making China a preferred partner of SEA countries, and (3) preventing interference from extra-regional powers such as the US and Japan. Here, soft power was assessed as primarily reinforcing hard power—targeting the same audiences and directed towards the same general objectives. In the case of CrossStrait relations, China’s soft power strategic aims were identified as: (1) building robust social ties between the Chinese and Taiwanese, and (2) engendering a sense of shared prosperity. It was observed that soft power and hard power were being employed to achieve separate objectives and were targeted at different audiences—hard power was used at the political-level to maintain the status quo in the short-term, whereas soft power was being applied to create a favorable disposition towards China among the Taiwanese in the long-term. he final chapter of this thesis will draw on the results of the research to comment on three issues. First, do the results point to a generalizable role of Chinese soft power in security strategy writ-large? Second, what are the immediate and potential future implications of the results for policymakers dealing with security issues involving China? Third, based on the results, what areas merit further research and how might this research be carried out? Towards a Generalized Theory of Chinese Soft Power While small-N studies are inherently limited in their generalizability, a series of meaningful observations can still be made based on the results of the case studies. First, the fundamental question of whether soft power has a distinct role in China’s security strategy is answered in the affirmative. As was demonstrated in both case studies, varied combinations of sources, tools, and modes are employed by China to support a series of strategic aims. Consequently, any analysis of Chinese security strategy that deals with hard power alone or merely offers a superficial treatment of soft power should be questioned for its completeness. Second, Chinese soft power draws on a wide range of sources—from commonly recognized sources of soft power such as culture and institutions to the traditionally “hard” domains of economic and military power. That being said, not every source of soft power is present across all cases. The common social roots that the Chinese and Taiwanese share is unique to Cross-Strait relations, making culture a natural source of soft power. This is hardly applicable in the SCS disputes given the diverse range of players. On the other hand, the historical and political dynamics between China and Taiwan preclude the use of the military as a source of soft power. This differs markedly from the SCS disputes where militaries can simultaneously compete and cooperate with one another, enabling the PLA to be employed as hard and soft power. Third, the relationship between soft and hard power varies depending on the specific issue that is being dealt with. As highlighted in the analyses of the two cases, soft power and hard power are mutually reinforcing components of China’s strategy in the SCS disputes. In the case of Cross-Strait relations, the purpose of exercising soft power is fundamentally different than that of hard power. It differs in time horizon (long-term rather than short-term), objective (promoting reunification rather than preventing independence), and target audience (people rather than politics). This suggests that the role of soft power is not limited to enhancing the effects of hard power; under certain circumstances, soft power may be employed to achieve aims that hard power simply cannot. If one considers China’s dynastic history as an indicator for how China might approach strategy in the modern world, the appearance of soft power in China’s security strategy should come as little surprise. For two thousand years, Chinese emperors used the diverse cultural and economic products of the “middle kingdom” as a means to maintain the Imperial Chinese tributary system across Asia. During periods of dynastic weakness, when China was unable to secure its borders against foreign invaders, the Chinese strategy was to control the invading regime from within, through the institutional influence of the mandarins. Over time, the manner in which the invaders ruled would become effectively indistinguishable from that of the Chinese rulers they had sought to displace. In a sense, soft power has long been a major part of the Chinese security strategy—as China’s most famous military strategist remarked, “to win without fighting is the acme of skill.”119 A modern corollary of this can be found in the well-known PLA publication Unrestricted Warfare: “Spaces in nature including the ground, the seas, the air, and outer space are battlefields, but social spaces such as the military, politics, economics, culture, and the psyche are also battlefields.”120 Implications for Policymakers The immediate implication for policymakers is self-evident: any strategy for dealing with Chinese actions that hopes to be effective must account for both the hard and soft power strategies employed by China. As an example, if the US’ withdrawal from the TPP is considered solely from the perspective of hard power, it would appear to have little direct impact on the SCS disputes. Ostensibly, the withdrawal has implications for US influence in the Asia-Pacific in general, but it is difficult to identify how it might relate to China’s strategy in the SCS disputes specifically. If, however, we consider the soft power strategic aim of “making China a preferred partner,” then it becomes apparent that the withdrawal provides China with a strategic opportunity to advance this aim through a competing agreement like the RCEP, which advances China’s agenda of substituting US leadership of the regional economic order with its own. By understanding China’s soft power strategy, policymakers can more accurately and comprehensively assess the impact of their decisions. With the SCS disputes, ignoring Chinese soft power may lead policymakers to underestimate the extent to which China can influence the various actors involved and shape the situation to its advantage. That being said, while a hard power-centric counter-strategy may fall short to some degree, it would not be misdirected in this particular case. With Cross-Strait relations, however, a lack of attention given to Chinese soft power is likely to have more serious consequences. A hard power analysis would fail to identify an entire aspect of China’s strategy—Chinese actions directed at the people of Taiwan, rather than just the politics of Taiwan.

A second set of implications concerns the growth of China’s soft power. As was highlighted in the introductory chapter of this thesis, many major powers currently have more soft power at their disposal than China does. If this differential in soft power narrows, or even flips in favor of China, these states may find that their existing strategies for managing China’s rise are no longer as effective. Simply put, policymakers dealing with security issues involving China will need to pay careful attention to changes in Chinese soft power, and be prepared to adjust their national strategies accordingly.

#### Expansion into the SCS causes extinction

Wong, 18 – Reporter with the South China Morning Post, where she focuses on China’s diplomacy and defense policy; she is citing Aaron Rabena, programme convenor at the Manila-based Asia-Pacific Pathways to Progress Foundation

Catherine Wong, “China’s rising challenge to US raises risk of South China Sea conflict, Philippines warns.” South China Morning Post. February 20, 2018. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2133864/chinas-rising-challenge-us-raises-risk-south-china-sea>

--Miscalc likely – close proximity with other ships

--America lead now but conflict will spill over bc the SCS is a “game changer” – conflict there is a battleground for gpw

The risk of “miscalculation” and armed conflict in the South China Sea is rising as China starts to challenge US dominance in the disputed waters, according to the Philippines’ envoy to Beijing. The assessment comes as Beijing appears to have expanded its communications links and other facilities on artificial islands in the area. At a forum in Manila on Monday, ambassador Chito Sta. Romana said the balance of power in the region was shifting as the two global powers vied for control of the waters. He added that the Philippines should not become entangled in the tense maritime rivalry. “Whereas before the South China Sea was dominated by the US 7th Fleet, now the Chinese navy is starting to challenge the dominance,” Sta. Romana said. “I think we will see a shift in the balance of power.” But he also said the South China Sea had not become “a Chinese lake”. “Look at the US aircraft carrier, it’s still going through the South China Sea,” he added, referring to the USS Carl Vinson, which has patrolled the disputed waters and is on a visit to the Philippines. He compared the two powers to elephants fighting and trampling on the grass, saying: “What we don’t want is for us to be the grass.” The Carl Vinson, with a fleet of about 40 fighter jets and roughly 5,000 American sailors, arrived in Manila this week in a display of American presence in the Philippines. The United States is also poised to send an aircraft carrier to Vietnam in March, the first time in more than four decades. But the presence of the warship would not change China’s established advantage in the region, according to Xu Liping, a researcher on Asian-Pacific studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. “The aircraft carriers’ visits are only symbolic – to show that America still has a military presence in the region and that it is still a hegemon,” Xu said. “But with the military construction programme on the three major islands in the South China Sea, China has built an effective network of intelligence gathering and defence abilities.” In a US congressional hearing last week, Admiral Harry Harris, head of the US Pacific Command, said Beijing had unilaterally built seven new military bases in the South China Sea, with new facilities including “aircraft hangers, barracks facilities, radar facilities, weapon emplacements [and] 10,000-foot runways”. US think tank CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative also said last week that the northeastern corner of Fiery Cross Reef, known as Yongshu Reef in China, had been equipped with a communications or sensor array bigger than those found on other artificial islands in the Spratlys chain. It said the facility could potentially serve as a signals intelligence or communications hub for Chinese forces in the area. Aaron Rabena, programme convenor at the Manila-based Asia-Pacific Pathways to Progress Foundation, described China’s reclamation activities in the South China Sea as a “real game-changer” that challenged the US’ prior dominance in the region. “Strategic advantage and balance of power draws from both geography and capability – China now has both in the South China Sea,” he said. And, as a defence treaty ally of the US and a smaller regional player, Manila could be caught in the crossfire. “An armed conflict in the South China Sea could mean a full-blown great power war between Beijing and Washington,” Rabena said. “The Philippines might get entangled and be drawn into a conflict.”

### 1NC – OFF

#### CP: States ought to break up any space monopolies based on the Herfindahl–Hirschman Index.

#### The CP solves. It diversifies competition, has precedent, and stops market concentration which independently attracts new competitors.

**USDOJ** (The United States Department of Justice, also known as the Justice Department, is a federal executive department of the United States government tasked with the enforcement of federal law and administration of justice in the United States. “HERFINDAHL-HIRSCHMAN INDEX”.)

**The** term “HHI” means the **Herfindahl–Hirschman Index, a commonly accepted measure of market concentration. The HHI is calculated by squaring the market share of each firm competing in the market and then summing the resulting numbers**. For example, for a market consisting of four firms with shares of 30, 30, 20, and 20 percent, the HHI is 2,600 (302 + 302 + 202 + 202 = 2,600). **The HHI takes into account the relative size distribution of the firms in a market. It approaches zero when a market is occupied by a large number of firms of relatively equal size and reaches its maximum of 10,000 points when a market is controlled by a single firm.** The HHI increases both as the number of firms in the market decreases and as the disparity in size between those firms increases. **The agencies generally consider markets in which the HHI is** between 1,500 and 2,500 points to be moderately concentrated, and consider markets in which the HHI is **in excess of 2,500 points to be highly concentrated**. See U.S. Department of Justice & FTC, Horizontal Merger Guidelines § 5.3 (2010). Transactions that increase the HHI by more than 200 points in highly concentrated markets are presumed likely to enhance market power **under the Horizontal Merger Guidelines issued by the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission.** See id.

### 1NC—Case

#### Space monopolization is good – otherwise the industry collapses due to stringent exploration requirements.

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**SpaceX is the only American company right now capable of sending astronauts to the International Space Station, NASA said in awarding the company additional flights.** The Hawthorne, California-based firm received a sole-source modification to the existing contract between NASA and SpaceX. The modification will allow the agency to acquire up to three additional flights to the International Space Station using its Crew Dragon system; these would follow the six crewed flights already arranged. **NASA did solicit other companies before** awarding the contract, by asking in October for any other offers for astronaut taxi rides. **But SpaceX remains the only firm** currently **capable** of the service under its Commercial Crew Transportation Capabilities (CCtCap) contract, first awarded in 2014. "SpaceX's crew transportation system is the only one certified **to meet** **NASA’s** safety **requirements** to transport crew to the space station, and to maintain the agency’s obligation to its international partners in the needed timeframe," NASA said in a Dec. 3 statement. The agency is working to send larger crews to the space station to boost its science and to make the facility attractive to commercial companies, such as Axiom Space, which will launch the first all-private mission to the complex in early 2022. NASA used to send astronauts aloft in the space shuttle, but retired the program in 2011 following 30 years of service. The agency then spent several years helping American companies develop replacement commercial crew vehicles before awarding SpaceX and Boeing transportation contracts in 2014. (In the interim, NASA astronauts flew on Russian Soyuz capsules, paid for by the seat.) Although SpaceX sent the first crewed spacecraft to the ISS in 2020, Boeing's Starliner is not ready for flight yet. Starliner had a difficult uncrewed test flight in December 2019 that did not reach the orbiting complex due to a series of glitches. Boeing's attempt to run a second uncrewed test flight in 2021 got derailed by problems with an oxidizer valve, sidelining the system until at least 2022. **So NASA awarded the new contract, which is expected to take effect in 2023, to SpaceX,** allowing the agency to turn its attention back to helping Boeing with the flight certification, according to the statement.

#### **Schaefer ev -- concedes private sector circumvents and they’re only in the context of “on-orbit activities” not all appropriation.**

Schaefer, Matthew. "The contours of permissionless innovation in the outer space domain." U. Pa. J. Int'l L. 39 (2017): 103. https://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1953&context=jil

PERMISSIONLESS INNOVATION FOR NEW ON-ORBIT ACTIVITIES: THE INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATION LIMIT, THE NATIONAL SECURITY LIMIT, AND THE INVESTOR CERTAINTY LIMIT Thus, for traditional space activities we observe a range of regulatory models: 1) an FAA launch and reentry and human space flight framework that certainly is closest to the permissionless in- novation ideal; 2) a NOAA remote sensing regime that is perhaps overbroad, impacting innovative small satellite ideas, and that struggles with establishing a permissionless innovation esprit de corps in the interagency process as participants have yet to fully reassess benefit-cost analysis of national security concerns in an environment where foreign remote sensing systems are increasingly sophisticated; and 3) an FCC spectrum licensing regime that by necessity, given the properties of spectrum and the demands of the satellite business case, must have significant ex ante government involvement. All those regulatory models are long-established and will take considerable effort to change. In contrast, regulating new on-orbit space activities begins with a relatively clean slate. There is no formal regulatory framework in place, although the government has leveraged its launch licensing authority, especially its payload review prong, to a degree to partially fill the gap. The only other exception to this clean slate is that for well over a decade NOAA and the FCC have imposed debris mitigation requirements on licensees—presumably relying on their “public interest” authority to do so—although some believe even this limited on-orbit regulation constitutes “competence creep.”103 Staunch permissionless innovation advocates might say this essentially clean slate is a victory and should be maintained. In essence, companies are free to conduct new on-orbit activities if they so choose, and the government need not authorize those activities, nor may the government prohibit those activities. In fact, permissionless innovation advocates might say this is almost an ideal scenario, in that the current state of affairs achieves (near) pure or unadulterated permissionless innovation. However, the irony is that the benefits of permissionless innovation will not be achieved in this (nearly) pure state. **There** **are** at least three major **risks** to allowing calls **for** a pure or unadulterated permissionless innovation **regulatory model with respect to new on-orbit activities**. First, it is very clear that U.S. international obligations require “authorization” of and the provision of “continuing” supervision, by the government of commercial activities in outer space. Thus, any pure version of permissionless innovation would run afoul of U.S. international obligations in the primary space treaty, the Outer Space Treaty. Second, with the national security implications of many space activities, it is unrealistic to expect adoption of a pure permissionless innovation regulatory model to govern such activities; the industry largely recognizes this dynamic. Third, a large number of businesses and investors in the space sector seek a minimal amount of regulation to ensure a transparent framework for approval of their on-orbit activities so that regulatory uncertainty and foreign hostility to their activities is minimized.104 For each of these reasons, a failure by Congress to create explicit “light touch” authorization and supervision authority in an Executive Branch agency will actually defeat the purposes of permissionless innovation. Of course, the Executive Branch will have incentives to continue to leverage its payload review authority to try to ensure that U.S. international obligations are met and that U.S. national security is not endangered, and to give companies and their investors a degree of regulatory approval and certainty they desire. Chairman Babin and former FAA officials have argued that because the OST’s Article VI is not a self-executing international obligation, and thus not automatically part of the U.S. legal system, the Administration cannot seek to authorize or supervise new on-orbit space activities unless Congress passes a law delegating authorization and supervision responsibility to the Executive Branch.105 This may well be true but the situation is slightly more complex. Congress has already delegated payload review authority to the FAA, and a factor to consider under a payload review is U.S. international obligations.106 One might argue ensuring no violation of international obligations (self-executing or not) is thus an objective the FAA can consider in a payload review. However, the counterpoint is that the Executive Branch lacks the power to consider international obligation compliance for on-orbit activities because Congress, when granting re-entry licensing authority in 1997, indicated it did not want to grant on-orbit authority at that time.107 This places the U.S. Executive Branch in a difficult position—the Hobbesian choice of complying with international obligations or acting consistently with apparent Congressional intent. **Similarly, space businesses—the innovators—are also put in a poor position. They could simply seek to pursue any on-orbit activity they like, and then pursue litigation if the Executive Branch blocks an activity that, for example, the government believes would violate U.S. international obligations or endanger U.S. national security.** The “pursue and litigate” strategy is not an attractive option for many space companies. Litigation consumes time and money, and global competitors may advance during that time. Additionally, the dynamics of the space business are such that the government is always a considerable part of the customer base, and suing one’s customer is not necessarily an attractive option. If the U.S. Executive Branch chooses the alternate path and stands down by not blocking the activity nor authorizing it, then space businesses, particularly those involved with international partners or an international customer base, would need to worry about potential foreign government actions for failure by the U.S. government to meet international obligations. For example, a foreign government might block cooperation by a partner or prevent customers in its territory from purchasing goods or services connected with the activity. That is why on-orbit businesses have been “knocking on the door” of various agencies, including the State Department, the last several years, in essence asking who will give them a stamp of approval. It is an uncertain process currently— one that U.S. space businesses desire to be made certain and transparent. We explore each of these three risks—international obligation risk, national security risk, and regulatory uncertainty risk—below, with particular emphasis on meeting U.S. international obligations. Particular emphasis is placed on meeting U.S. international obligations because it appears that a drive for a (nearly) pure form of permissionless innovation is leading to misguided treaty interpretations of the Outer Space Treaty that do not respect long-standing rules of treaty interpretation binding the United States and constitutes a development that can damage U.S. interests in other treaty regimes too. The analysis below reveals that the U.S. Congress can establish an authorization regime that meets U.S. international obligations, allows the U.S. government to protect national security, and provides regulatory certainty for U.S. space business investors, while at the same time achieving the benefits, and retaining the essence, of permissionless innovation thinking.

#### They have a floating debris scenario -- we’ll answer that here—

#### There’s no space debris impact

Park 18

Ye Joo Park, citing NASA studies on orbital debris, How Dangerous is Space Debris?, Research Association for Interdisciplinary Studies, RAIS Conference Proceedings, November 19-20, 2018, DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.1572516, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3303541>

Other factors to consider concerning collisions in Space

While it’s true that there are thousands of space objects directly above Earth in an 800-kilometer band, space is so vast that it’s helpful to pause for a moment and reflect... in the area directly above the entire continental U.S., there are typically only three or four items orbiting above 3.1 million square miles. Therefore, the likelihood of collisions between satellites, spacecraft and orbiting objects is very small (NASA 2018).

In fact, in 2013 it was reported that the probability of a collision between an orbiting asset and space debris larger than 1 cm (0.4in.) will be once every 1.5-2 years, according to the Head of the Russian Hall/ History of Space Debris 8 Figure 5 [NASA] Space Agency. This compares with a 2010 estimate giving the likelihood of once every 5 years (Sorokin 2013).

The Feasibility of Practically Reducing Space Debris

Reducing orbital debris is incredibly difficult. Therefore, the most important action that space experts and policy makers currently recommend is to prevent the unnecessary creation of additional orbital debris. This can be done through prudent vehicle design and operations ((UNOOSA 2014).

The International Academy of Astronautics or IAA is a significant, global organization of scientists and space experts from many countries who meet regularly to discuss the importance of space debris as a policy issue. The subject-matter experts of the IAA published their fifth update Situation Report on Space Debris in August 2017 (Bonnal and McKnight 2017). In the executive summary, the IAA reported that if an orbiting satellite impacts with small bits of debris - even as small as 5 mm - the result will be grave, e.g. the collision would likely disrupt or terminate a satellite’s operations (Bonnal and McKnight 2017, 5).

The serious warnings expressed in this conclusion are offset by the positive findings of the IAA that there has been a reduction of the space debris created from the two extraordinary satellite destruction events (2007 and 2009) cited earlier in this paper. According to the IAF report, a large amount of debris from the satellite explosions were frictionally burned when reaching the Earth’s atmosphere after gradually sinking due to the scientific principle of atmospheric drag (in the science of Physics), which is a deterioration in the strength of an orbit because of an object hitting gas molecules in space. Small bits of space junk sink as the orbit gets weaker... then they burn. This is a positive trend “for keeping the short-term collision hazard under control at the lower altitudes (i.e., less than 650 km)” (Bonnal and McKnight 2017, 7).

#### **Military space satellites have already been broken up by space debris – their escalation scenario is absurd**

Wall ‘21 Home News Spaceflight Space collision: Chinese satellite got whacked by hunk of Russian rocket in March By Mike Wall published August 17, 2021 We may see more and more of these orbital smashups in the coming years. //RD Debatedrills

Yunhai 1-02's wounds are not self-inflicted. In March, the U.S. Space Force's 18th Space Control Squadron (18SPCS) reported the breakup of Yunhai 1-02, a Chinese military satellite that launched in September 2019. It was unclear at the time whether the spacecraft had suffered some sort of failure — an explosion in its propulsion system, perhaps — or if it had collided with something in orbit. We now know that the latter explanation is correct, thanks to some sleuthing by astrophysicist and satellite tracker Jonathan McDowell, who's based at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Sponsored Links Cupertino: Startup Is Changing the Way People Retire SmartAsset Related: The worst space debris events of all time Click here for more Space.com videos... CLOSE On Saturday (Aug. 14), McDowell spotted an update in the Space-Track.org catalog, which the 18SPCS makes available to registered users. The update included "a note for object 48078, 1996-051Q: 'Collided with satellite.' This is a new kind of comment entry — haven't seen such a comment for any other satellites before," McDowell tweeted on Saturday. He dove into the tracking data to learn more. McDowell found that Object 48078 is a small piece of space junk — likely a piece of debris between 4 inches and 20 inches wide (10 to 50 centimeters) — from the Zenit-2 rocket that launched Russia's Tselina-2 spy satellite in September 1996. Eight pieces of debris originating from that rocket have been tracked over the years, he said, but Object 48078 has just a single set of orbital data, which was collected in March of this year. "I conclude that they probably only spotted it in the data after it collided with something, and that's why there's only one set of orbital data. So the collision probably happened shortly after the epoch of the orbit. What did it hit?" McDowell wrote in another Saturday tweet. Yunhai 1-02, which broke up on March 18, was "the obvious candidate," he added — and the data showed that it was indeed the victim. Yunhai 1-02 and Object 48078 passed within 0.6 miles (1 kilometer) of each other — within the margin of error of the tracking system — at 3:41 a.m. EDT (0741 GMT) on March 18, "exactly when 18SPCS reports Yunhai broke up," McDowell wrote in another tweet. Thirty-seven debris objects spawned by the smashup have been detected to date, and there are likely others that remain untracked, he added. Despite the damage, Yunhai 1-02 apparently survived the violent encounter, which occurred at an altitude of 485 miles (780 kilometers). Amateur radio trackers have continued to detect signals from the satellite, McDowell said, though it's unclear if Yunhai 1-02 can still do the job it was built to perform (whatever that may be). Space Junk Clean Up: 7 Wild Ways to Destroy Orbital Debris Click here for more Space.com videos... McDowell described the incident as the first major confirmed orbital collision since February 2009, when the defunct Russian military spacecraft Kosmos-2251 slammed into Iridium 33, an operational communications satellite. That smashup generated a whopping 1,800 pieces of trackable debris by the following October. However, we may be entering an era of increasingly frequent space collisions — especially smashups like the Yunhai incident, in which a relatively small piece of debris wounds but doesn't kill a satellite. Humanity keeps launching more and more spacecraft, after all, at an ever-increasing pace. "Collisions are proportional to the square of the number of things in orbit," McDowell told Space.com. "That is to say, if you have 10 times as many satellites, you're going to get 100 times as many collisions. So, as the traffic density goes up, collisions are going to go from being a minor constituent of the space junk problem to being the major constituent. That's just math." We may reach that point in just a few years, he added. The nightmare scenario that satellite operators and exploration advocates want to avoid is the Kessler syndrome — a cascading series of collisions that could clutter Earth orbit with so much debris that our use of, and travel through, the final frontier is significantly hampered. RELATED STORIES — Who's going to fix the space junk problem? — Space junk removal is not going smoothly — The world needs space junk standards, G7 nations agree Our current space junk problem is not that severe, but the Yunhai event could be a warning sign of sorts. It's possible, McDowell said, that Object 48078 was knocked off the Zenit-2 rocket by a collision, so the March smashup may be part of a cascade. "That's all very worrying and is an additional reason why you want to remove these big objects from orbit

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#### Thompson- isolates that the plan has alt causes-it’s also in the context of things like space stations- which *aren’t appropriation and means the scenario gets thumped*

Thompson 20 [(Clive, author of Coders: The Making of a New Tribe and the Remaking of the World, a columnist for Wired magazine, and a contributing writer to The New York Times Magazine) “Monetizing the Final Frontier The strange new push for space privatization,” December 3, 2020 <https://newrepublic.com/article/160303/monetizing-final-frontier>] TDI

“Physics tells us that two things can’t occupy the same space at the same time or else bad things happen,” Jah said dryly. Indeed, there’s already been one collision that produced sprawling orbital pollution. In 2009, a satellite owned by the U.S. firm Iridium slammed into a decommissioned Russian government satellite at more than 26,000 mph. The crash produced 2,300 pieces of debris, spraying off in all directions. And debris is a particularly gnarly problem in space, because when it’s traveling at thousands of miles an hour, even a marble-size chunk is like a bullet, capable of rendering a damaged satellite inoperable and unsteerable—the owner can no longer fire its boosters to guide it into a higher or lower orbit. There are currently an estimated 500,000 marble-size chunks up there. Decades of space travel by governments left plenty of refuse, ranging from parts of rocket boosters to stray bits of scientific experiments. One particularly grim vision of the future that haunts astronomers is the “Kessler syndrome,” proposed by the astrophysicist Donald Kessler in 1978. Kessler hypothesized that space clutter could reach a tipping point: One really bad collision could produce so much junk that it would trigger a chain reaction of collisions. This disaster scenario would leave hundreds of satellites eventually destroyed, and create a ring of debris that would make launching any new satellites impossible, forever. “Near space is finite—it’s a finite resource,” Jah said. “So now you have this growing trash problem that isn’t being remediated.... And if we exceed the capacity of the environment to carry all this traffic safely, then it becomes unusable.” That’s why a growing chorus of critics are already making the case that space is the next major environmental area to protect, after the oceans and land on Earth. “People seem to really treat resources in space as being infinite,” said Erika Nesvold, an astrophysicist who’s the cofounder of The JustSpace Alliance. “As we’ve seen, people don’t really intuitively understand exponential growth.” That’s the dilemma in a nutshell: The available room in the sky is limited, but the plans for growth are exponential. SpaceX isn’t the only New Space firm looking to toss up satellites. Satellite and rocket start-ups are now lining up en masse, atop new waves of investment. There are satellites geared up to connect to “the internet of things” so companies can communicate among proprietary networks of household devices. There are floating cameras pointing down—so as to gather “geospatial intelligence,” which is to say data streamed from “the vantage point you get from satellites looking down on Earth and giving us information about our planet,” as the venture capitalist Anderson told me. And new forms of satellite vision are emerging all the time, such as cameras that can see at night, or are specially designed to see agriculture. Experiments abound, and so satellite launches will inevitably multiply in their wake. Part of what makes near-Earth orbit so chaotic is that it is, at the moment, remarkably unregulated—not unlike the internet of the early ’90s. An American firm has to get permission from the Federal Communications Commission to launch a satellite, but once it’s in orbit, there’s no federal agency that can compel it to move out of the path of a collision. Satellite owners generally don’t like to move if they can avoid it, because their satellites have a limited amount of fuel; any movement decreases their usable lifespan. On top of that, there are dozens of nations shooting satellites into low-Earth orbit—but no international body coordinating their flight paths. Last fall, the European Space Agency realized one of SpaceX’s new Starlink satellites was on a dangerously close path to an ESA satellite. SpaceX said it had no plans to move the satellite; so the ESA decided to fire its thrusters and get clear. This high-stakes negotiation was conducted via email. What’s more, space debris is extremely hard to source. If a British satellite slams into yours, you can probably figure out who hit you. But if your satellite is wrecked by a random piece of junk, nobody has any clue where that debris came from. It is, in this way, a neat parallel to the problem of C02, where a ceaseless barrage of tiny commercial decisions creates a sprawling problem—one that’s all but designed to ensure that everyone who caused it can deny responsibility. And damage is asymmetric: A company with a small $60,000 satellite could smash into a wildly expensive one paid for by U.S. taxpayers. “A National Reconnaissance Office satellite is at least a billion dollars, if not more, so they have a lot more to lose if something hits a satellite,” Bhavya Lal, a researcher at the IDA Science and Technology Policy Institute, noted. “As more private activity starts to happen, there’s more chances of that loss of control, too.” One might dismiss all this anxiety as a sort of sci-fi version of hippie environmentalism—except that even the administrator of NASA is deeply worried about the chaos and destruction likely to be sown by commercial activity in near-Earth orbit. Jim Bridenstine, the Trump-appointed head of NASA, is as pro-market as one can be. He praises SpaceX every chance he gets; he talks about privatizing the space station. But when I asked him about the looming danger of space debris, during a press-conference call, he conceded that it’s a huge, unresolved issue.

“More satellites mean more risk,” he said. “And we as a nation have not yet caught up to the risk that currently exists in space.” In September, a few months after Bridenstine and I spoke, the space station had to fire its thrusters for 150 seconds to [move out of the way](https://blogs.nasa.gov/spacestation/2020/09/22/station-boosts-orbit-to-avoid-space-debris/) of dangerously approaching space junk, while the crew huddled in a Soyuz capsule in case the station’s hull was breached and they had to flee to Earth.

Apart from the fate of the station, one could ask who cares if a commercial stampede blights Earth’s orbit, and wrecks anyone’s ability to keep satellites aloft? Maybe it’ll just hurt a bunch of investors. And maybe we need less surveillance from deathless orbiting eyes, not more.

There are, though, plenty of civically significant reasons to keep low-Earth orbit usable. Satellite monitoring isn’t solely a spy activity—these days, it has become a powerful tool for climate scientists to figure out how the oceans are warming, and to puzzle out our adaptations to climate change. Other nonprofit concerns use satellites to monitor injustices on Earth: Global Forest Watch, for example, takes data from the 140-satellite array of the firm Planet and uses it to help [bust illegal deforestation](https://www.planet.com/pulse/planet-ksat-and-airbus-awarded-first-ever-global-contract-to-combat-deforestation/).

So it’d certainly be good to keep low-Earth orbit from becoming a junkyard. But there’s no ready consensus on how to do that. Some government regulation could help: Bridenstine wants Congress to pass a bill funding a department in charge of “compelling somebody to maneuver if it’s necessary.” Moriba Jah would like a federal law requiring space firms to openly publish the location of their satellites. (Some, like Planet, already do, but most, as Jah has found, make it very difficult for others to pin down the exact locations of their satellites.) “You can’t enforce anything unless you know what’s happening,” Jah said, and a name-and-shame system could help: “Once people can assign a first and last name, it’s like, OK, these assholes aren’t complying.”Better tech might also assist; the U.S. firm [LeoLabs](https://www.leolabs.space/" \t "_blank) is building a radar-dish array that can track pieces of space junk as small as a few centimeters. Others are working on as-yet-untested ways of actually cleaning up orbital junk, possibly by pushing it down to burn up on reentry.

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New Space firms themselves, however, want to be left alone to deal with this problem. Most I spoke to argued—quite against the weight of industrial history—that the free market would self-regulate, since each firm wants orbits clean enough to make money in. But even some ardent champions of the new commercial boom worry things may get worse before anyone snaps to attention. “Sometimes I think that we might need to have some terrible collision event happening for the world to kind of come together and take it seriously,” Lal told me.

Satellites are the big commercial opportunity in space right now, though there are plenty of others in various states of gestation. Each one raises a handful of intriguing possibilities for a commercial boom, and its own blizzard of questions for earthbound society. One rough rule of thumb for sizing them up might go something like this: The farther out you go from Earth, the weirder the questions become.

**The most proximal market, according to investors, is probably the development of**[**manufacturing in near-Earth orbit**](https://www.space.com/40552-space-based-manufacturing-just-getting-started.html)**, on space stations. Microgravity, it turns out, makes it possible to create materials that can’t easily be pulled together on Earth.** The range of product lines for off-planet factories runs from specially shaped contact lenses (designed to correct deep vision problems) to optical fibers capable of carrying more data than cables made on Earth. One firm, [Nanoracks](https://nanoracks.com/" \t "_blank), currently contracts out room for commercial start-ups on the International Space Station. Its early client list boasts a diverse array of for-profit activities—everything from running science experiments to launching small, inexpensive “[Cubesats](https://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/cubesats/overview" \t "_blank)” that can fit in your hand and mostly do remote sensing (like monitoring the atmosphere) for research or industry. In the long run, Nanoracks aims to launch its own space station to offer complex manufacturing capabilities that wouldn’t currently fit in the International Space Station’s limited confines.

“There’s a lot of work you can do, a lot of research and a lot of exciting things when you’re not connected to a gigantic, humongous modular space station that has different gravity tensions, different forces acting on it, disturbing the microgravity,” Nanoracks CEO Jeffrey Manber noted.

**The next generation of space stations will probably be built—like Manber’s hoped-for one—mostly by private interests.** Such installations will continue to do plenty of work for governments. Manber would rather make a fully robotic space station—it’s far more profitable for New Space moguls not to shoulder the, ahem, astronomical costs of keeping people alive in outer space—but he anticipates that a major early customer would likely be NASA, and one of NASA’s main scientific areas of study is how humans react to living in space. Any for-profit space station NASA’s contracting agents would bring on would thus likely need to host a crew.

Beyond the space station beckons another old NASA stomping ground—the moon, which has become newly lucrative. After the last Apollo visit in 1972, NASA and Congress abandoned the moon; reaching it had been a quest to beat the Soviets, and, that race won, public support for the incredible expense evaporated. But over the last decade, moon activity has rebooted. Trump [announced](https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2019/03/trump-nasa-moon-2024/585880/) the goal of returning NASA astronauts to the lunar surface; India [tried and failed](https://www.npr.org/2019/11/26/782890646/2-months-after-failed-moon-landing-india-admits-its-craft-crashed) to put a lander down; and last year, [China succeeded](https://www.space.com/42981-china-moon-far-side-panorama-chang-e-4.html). NASA is currently planning to build a lunar [Gateway](https://www.nasa.gov/gateway), a space station orbiting the moon, to assist in regular traffic back and forth; SpaceX has a $7 billion contract for launching its components.

What, exactly, made the moon sexy again? The [discovery of water](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/8544635.stm). Beginning in the late aughts, moon probes have found that craters in the lunar poles contain water ice—some 600 million tons of it, according to one estimate. This instantly changed the moon’s geopolitical and economic import, because water is an enormously precious commodity in space. It’s crucial for life—not just as a fluid, but broken into its constituent molecular parts: oxygen that lets you breathe, and hydrogen for fuel. One scientist’s rough estimate found that the amount of water on the moon could power one space shuttle launch every day for 2,200 years. Several companies announced their eventual goal would be to create landing craft that could reach the moon and mine the water. One such concern, [the Moon Express](https://www.theverge.com/2017/7/12/15958164/moon-express-robot-landers-private-mining-outpost), pitches its mission in a heady compound of colonialist new frontier rhetoric—equal parts Star Trek and Rudyard Kipling: “The Moon is Earth’s 8th continent,” the firm announces on its website.

But even assuming the wet new lunar frontier can be tamed—for all the space-booster rhetoric, it’s still a very spec-ulative prospect, both logistically and economically—there’s a whole host of untested questions about property rights in the great beyond. Space law, it turns out, is very ambiguous about who’s empowered to exploit space resources, and to what geopolitical-cum-commercial ends. There’s an [Outer Space Treaty](https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/isn/5181.htm), signed in 1967 by most major industrial countries, which seeks to establish space as a shared resource for humanity. It lets corporations engage in commercial activities on other celestial bodies—but neither they nor countries can claim property rights; and whatever a corporation does in space, its host country is on the hook for. There is also a Moon Treaty, created in 1979, that bans property rights on the moon and requires equitable use of lunar resources by all nations. But the Moon Treaty is [mostly toothless](https://www.thespacereview.com/article/1954/1); no country that has launched humans into space ever signed it.

The force of those treaties was never certain. But now that there’s possible money at hand, individual countries are openly defying the treaties—writing laws under their own steam to allow property rights in the heavens. In 2015, Obama signed the [SPACE Act](https://psmag.com/social-justice/outer-space-treaties-didnt-anticipate-the-privatization-of-space-travel-can-they-be-enforced), which explicitly gives U.S. firms the rights to any resources they mine from a celestial body. The Trump administration is [actively pushing](https://www.theguardian.com/science/2020/may/05/trump-mining-moon-us-artemis-accords) for firms to mine the moon. Other countries courting New Space firms—[hello, Luxembourg](https://www.technologyreview.com/2019/11/26/131822/why-its-now-the-perfect-time-to-start-a-small-space-agency/)—are following suit.

History, of course, would suggest that treaties crumble when serious money comes into play. Western settlers signed treaties with indigenous people in the Americas, then ignored them, as Lucianne Walkowicz, an astronomer at the [Adler Planetarium](https://www.adlerplanetarium.org/) and another cofounder of the JustSpace Alliance, noted.

“In many cases,” she told me, “treaties are good until somebody discovers something that they want.” She’s a fan of the Outer Space Treaty, finding it “a very, like, hopeful, peaceful, almost Star Trek-esque view of what space is.” She hopes it proves stronger than it looks.

Historically, however, law tends to follow the facts on the ground rather than shape them. When a new geography for commerce opens, whoever shows up first to exploit the resources sets the norm—and then law is written to validate the first movers. “‘First come, first serve’ is essentially what’s going to happen when people start to do things on the moon,” Peter Ward, author of [The Consequential Frontier](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/610858/the-consequential-frontier-by-peter-ward/), said.

Yet before the great water rush on the moon starts in earnest, one key point is worth pausing over: The supply of ice on the moon is limited. The estimated water reserves up there may be eye-popping at first glance, but they’re not that big. They likely add up to “three to five cubic kilometers of water, based on the studies that have come up,” said James Schwartz, a philosopher who also studies the ethics of space exploration. “Not a lot of water compared to even moderate- or small-size lakes on Earth.” It wouldn’t be that hard for a concerted explosion of commercial activity to chew through it all.

That may sound far-fetched, but, as all these space ethicists note, to the eyes of nineteenth-century explorers and industrialists, our planet seemed limitless, too—and it only took another century-plus of rapid commercial activity to tear through a diminishing store of finite resources. The environmental implications of exhausting the moon seem ludicrously sci-fi and far-off right now, and they’ll remain so for a long time—until, abruptly, they’re not. As with low-Earth orbit, outer space becomes much smaller and more cramped when you start thinking at commercial scale.

In any event, the moon is chiefly envisioned as a way-station project among the most ambitious cohort of space privatizers. A settled moon colony would serve as the push-off point for the main event, commercially speaking, for New Space entrepreneurs: mining the asteroid belt.

Asteroids are almost comically rich in precious materials. The asteroid Ryugu, for example, has about $82 billion in nickel and iron, according to the “[Asterank](https://www.asterank.com/" \t "_blank)” asteroid-value–ranking project. Another, Bennu, boasts a cool $669 million worth of iron and hydrogen. “You could totally collapse the gold and platinum market on Earth by mining asteroids,” joked Jacob Haqq Misra, a senior research investigator with the [Blue Marble Space Institute of Science](https://www.bmsis.org/), a nonprofit that encourages space exploration.

But there’s a hitch: Nobody has much of an idea how you’d actually mine an asteroid. Despite what you’ve seen in lumbering sci-fi epics like Armageddon, merely grabbing hold of a comparatively small, city-block–size object in microgravity is a forbidding physics puzzle—to say nothing of actually refining whatever you find.

One thing’s clear, however: In order to reach an asteroid, you’d need a lot of fuel for robotic probes. (Oxygen, too, if you’re bringing along a human crew.) This would likely be too expensive to do from Earth, given its gravity. The moon, on the other hand, is a sweet spot to base one’s commercial mining endeavors: enough gravity so humans can live in a base and assemble a rotating corps of mining robots, but sufficiently little gravity that launching mining probes at asteroids is easy.

“It takes so much energy to escape Earth’s orbit, by the time you do that, you’re basically halfway to anywhere in the universe,” Anderson said. “The moon as a launchpad—there’s a lot of commercial value there.”

Some New Space firms harbor still greater plans, in line with the classic “civilizing mission” that animated so many colonial land rushes in recent terrestrial history. Jeff Bezos wants to build space stations that rotate fast enough to simulate Earth gravity—and large enough to host entire cities full of residents. It’s a vision he built from a youth steeped in sci-fi. At Princeton, he took a class with Gerard O’Neill, a physicist who’d been [arguing since the 1960s](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-05-13/why-jeff-bezos-s-space-habitats-already-feel-stale) that humanity had to slip the surly bonds of Earth in order to survive over the long haul. O’Neill argued that living in space and mining asteroids represented the only path forward for the human race to continue growing and prospering without laying waste to planet Earth. He laid it out as a simple proposition of geology: If you were to mine the entire Earth down half a mile, leaving it a honeycombed crater, you’d still only get 1 percent of the metals and substances from the three biggest asteroids.

**Bezos has eagerly endorsed the space-colony vision.** In the short term, Bezos’s plans are the standard-issue vision for the New Space entrepreneur: building rockets and spacecraft that NASA will hire in order to resume landing astronauts on the moon. But in the long run—decades hence—building space colonies is, as he has argued, the only mission he can find big enough to devote his life and riches toward. “The only way that I can see to deploy this much financial resource,” Bezos [told Business Insider](https://www.businessinsider.com/jeff-bezos-interview-axel-springer-ceo-amazon-trump-blue-origin-family-regulation-washington-post-2018-4), “is by converting my Amazon winnings into space travel.”

The unexpected costs of Bezos-style space exploitation are, as yet, a little distant—decades, at least. But if there’s one thing we’ve learned from observing the human and environmental wreckage of the industrial era, it’s that history is like space travel: The path you set at the beginning is critical. Changing course later on is much harder. So it behooves us to plan now. Are there ways to avoid the worst possible outcomes in space? How is commercial life in space going to unfold?

The world’s small community of space ethicists has, in recent years, been increasingly pondering this, and they’ve come to some unsettling conclusions. First off, they note, the big winners in space will likely be ... the big winners on Earth. “I think it’s going to benefit the wealthy people that are running these mining firms,” Schwartz said bluntly. There are, as New Space investors today will tell you, winner-take-all dynamics. Bezos built a supply chain that is helping Amazon gradually dominate the world. Space will probably have room for only a few winners. So in order to envision the future contours of space conquest, it’s probably a safe bet to take all the harms of monopoly we see on this planet and project them on to a literally cosmic scale.

And that leads, in turn, to a corollary prophecy: Human rights in space are likely to be execrable, if they’re left up to the private sector.

Consider that anyone working in space will be reliant upon their employer for the most basic stuff of life. That’s not just food and water, but breathable oxygen, on a minute-by-minute basis. Plenty of science fiction has, over the years, war-gamed the bleak implications of these precarious situations. In Ridley Scott’s [Alien](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0078748/) (1979), the employees of “The Company” are sent unwittingly to encounter a vicious alien life-form, with The Company hoping it would get a profitable specimen out of this. More recently, the TV show [The Expanse](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3230854/) depicts the lives of asteroid miners as an outright form of slavery. One could, again, regard this as the typical pessimism of left-wing creative types—until one ponders workers’ rights on Earth as they exist now. Employees in Amazon’s warehouses are already [peeing into bottles](https://www.theverge.com/2018/4/16/17243026/amazon-warehouse-jobs-worker-conditions-bathroom-breaks) and [collapsing from heat exhaustion](https://www.businessinsider.com/amazon-warehouse-2011-9) in their attempt to satisfy their employer’s relentless work quotas; imagine if the company also controlled their breathable air.

Charles Cockell is a professor of astrobiology at the University of Edinburgh who’s written at length about the question of freedom in space settlements. He’s generally a libertarian, so he’s concerned about concentrations of power in both governments and private-sector firms in space.

“The controls on freedom of movement on the moon or Mars are worse than in North Korea,” he told me. “You can’t just walk out of a settlement.” Control of oxygen, he predicted, will empower the worst instincts of authoritarians of any stripe. “It will attract the coercively inclined and petty officialdom like all these things do…. It will attract people who crave power. You have to assume that that will lead to tyranny.”

These thought experiments don’t all conclude in grim dead-ends, however. There’s a whole arm of space ethics and philosophy devoted to asking the questions: Could the prospect of settling space positively serve society and justice? Could it offer up new ways of thinking about how we organize civic relations?

Coping with scarcity in space might impel settlers to reconsider some of the basic tent­poles of Western society. One is prison: On Mars, jailing someone would cost billions. A settlement would, as the astrophysicist and ethicist Nesvold noted, wonder, “Is it even worth it?” They’d be far more liable to consider styles of justice that don’t involve locking people up. The same goes for environmental thinking. Water and air will be so precious to space settlers that “the people who are living in space are going to be much more concerned about resource conservation,” Schwartz said. “It could be the attitudes that we get there are ones that are helpful to send back [to Earth].”

The idea of space as a fresh slate for political thinking is enticing. But it’s hemmed in by the very nature of the market forces currently reaching for the skies. Would any private-sector firms heading to space agree to limit their power when they’re beyond Earth’s grasp? Nesvold and Lucianne Walkowicz think it’s possible. There is, they believe, a window of opportunity right now, while commercial space activity is still ramping up, to convince everyone in New Space—from the firms to their early (and crucial) governmental clients—to take space ethics seriously. They’ve been pursuing two tracks of inquiry along these lines: first, talking directly to New Space companies about the political, social, and environmental aspects of space exploitation. (The smaller firms, Nesvold noted, are often eager to talk; the big ones—the SpaceXs and Blue Origins—not so much.) Walkowicz has also been holding public events to get everyday citizens to discuss, as she put it, “becoming interplanetary.”

“I think making the infrastructure of getting to spaceflight cheaper and more sustainable, reusable, all of that stuff is great—I love watching rocket launches as much as the next person,” Walkowicz told me. But she wants a much broader cross-section of the public to have a voice on how space is used. As she frames things, it’s a simple matter of public accountability: For all the self-mythologizing among New Space titans about the new, scrappy, and libertarian cast of modern space exploration, it’s still NASA—and by extension, the people’s treasury—that’s projected to supply the biggest revenue stream for much New Space activity today, and in the near future. In other words, we the people are paying for many of these rocket launches, and the huge outlays that will help bankroll the hard stuff, like future human colonies on the moon.

So the public ought to have more input on how the projected settlement and exploitation of outer space actually happens. Walkowicz and Nesvold want to create a bigger sample of people informed about the stakes in the new space race, people who’d lobby Congress to help lay down the new American road rules for space—from keeping orbits clean to the question of who gets to ride on those taxpayer-funded rockets in the first place.

Space, in other words, needs to be “decolonized.” That’s a coinage gaining currency among some space thinkers, including Lindy Elkins-Tanton. She’s a planetary scientist with one foot in the world of New Space, and another in the world of space ethics. She’s the head of the NASA [“Psyche” project](https://www.jpl.nasa.gov/missions/psyche/), which is launching a probe next year to explore the metallic asteroid Psyche. On the one hand, she is herself benefiting directly from the lower costs that New Space has created, so she’s generally a fan of commercial interests making space more viable. Her probe will launch on a SpaceX rocket, and it’s so much cheaper than NASA’s older launches that it makes her science far more affordable. (“I’m sure I’m not supposed to tell you, but I’ll tell you: It’s a lot of money,” she said.)

Yet as Elkins-Tanton noted, the story of new frontiers being settled is the history of colonization, fueled by moneyed interests. Whether it was Europeans heading to North America or Africa or parts of Asia, it was generally huge state interests putting up the money for risk-taking explorers—with the explorers getting rich, the states amassing power, the new frontiers becoming gradually stripped of resources, and their indigenous populations either killed or impoverished.

“Decolonization,” as she and other New Space ethicists put it, would be a different route. It’d be the act of exploring space with that history in mind, and working deliberately in concert to avoid its brutalities. What would that mean? Elkins-Tanton argued, like Walkowicz and Nesvold, that any voyages to space need to have much greater democratic participation. For years, she’s been organizing annual projects that bring together a disparate array of thinkers—astrophysicists, artists, indigenous scholars—to plan for things such as how a Mars colony might exist without becoming a human rights nightmare.

#### Blatt 20- No space wars caused by satellite collision

Triezenberg, 17

Bonnie Triezenberg, Senior engineer at RAND. Previously, she was the senior technical fellow at the Boeing Company, specializing in agile systems and software development. “Deterring Space War: An Exploratory Analysis Incorporating Prospect Theory into a Game Theoretic Model of Space Warfare,” RAND Corporation. 2017. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/rgs_dissertations/RGSD400.html>

The above discussion suggests that a likely means to achieve deterrence of acts of war in outer space is to increase civilian dependence on space to support day-to-day life—if everyone on earth is equally dependent on space, no one has an incentive to destroy space. Largely by accident, this dependence appears to have, in fact, occurred. The space age was born in an age of affluence and rapid economic expansion; space quickly became a domain of international commerce as well as a domain of national military use. Space assets and the systems they enable have transformed social, infrastructure and information uses perhaps more visibly than they have transformed military uses. In fact, in the current satellite database published by the Union of Concerned Scientists, of the 1461 satellites in orbit 40% support purely commercial ventures, while only 16% have a strictly military use.46 The first commercial broadcast by a satellite in geo-synchronous orbit was of international news between Europe and the United States.47 The first telephony uniting the far flung islands of Indonesia was enabled by satellite48. Those of us who are old enough remember the 1960s “magic” of intercontinental phone calls and international “breaking news” delivered by satellite. Today, most social and infrastructure uses of space are taken for granted – even in remote locales of Africa, people expect to be able to monitor the weather, communicate seamlessly with colleagues and to find their way to new and unfamiliar locations using the GPS in their phones. All of us use space every day.49 These unrestricted economic and social uses of space may be the best deterrent, making everyone on all sides of combat equally dependent on space and heightening the taboo against weaponizing space or threatening space assets with weapons.

#### Falco 19- that says that hackers will hack satellites- there’s no reason why they wouldn’t hack into public entities.

#### Also, satellites aren’t appropriation- not a t argument but a solvency deficit because they don’t touch it.

**UCOSTA 86** (U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment “Space Stations and the Law: Selected Legal Issues -- Background Paper” (1986). Documents on Outer Space Law. 12)

The Legal Character of Outer Space. **Outer space is considered** by most jurists **to be res communis**; that is, a place that is owned by no one but is **free for** use by **everyone**. Article II of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty states: "outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies, is not subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other means." **Although space may not be "appropriated**," it is "free for exploration and use by all States. ,,11 In some circumstances this "**use" may** even be **exclusive**. For example, a **country that places a broadcasting satellite in geostationary orbit**12 **prevents other countries from placing broadcasting satellites in that identical position** in that orbit. **Such exclusive use** is allowed because it **constitutes neither a permanent "appropriation" nor an attempt to extend state sovereignty.**13 A similar situation exists in maritime law. Nations may not claim sovereignty over portions of the high seas; however, when conducting activities such as naval maneuvers, satellite launch or recovery at sea, or missile tests, nations have in the past exercised temporary control over portions of the high seas. 14 In both maritime law and space law, temporary exclusive use is allowed as long as it is accomplished with "due regard" for the corresponding interests of other states. 15