# Pen Finals: Making the Unipolar Moment

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#### Cicero once said “A nation can survive its fools, and even the ambitious. But it cannot survive treason from within."

Brands 18 [Hal, Henry Kissinger Distinguished Professor at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies and a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments." American Grand Strategy in the Age of Trump." Page 21-23]

Fifth and finally, sustaining America’s post–Cold War strategy entails persuading the American public to recommit to that strategy and the investments it requires. The state of American opinion on that subject is currently ambiguous. Polling data indicates that public support for most key aspects of American internationalism has recovered somewhat from where it was in 2012–13, and is again at or near postwar averages.32 But the 2016 election cycle and its eventual outcome revealed strong support for candidates who advocated rolling back key elements of post–Cold War (and post–World War II) grand strategy, from free trade to U.S. alliances. This atmosphere reflects discontent with the failures and frustrations of U.S. grand strategy in the post–Cold War era, no doubt, yet it also reflects the fact that American strategy seems at risk of becoming a victim of its own success.33 By helping to foster a comparatively stable and congenial environment, American policies have made it more difficult for Americans to remember why significant investments in the global order are needed in the first place.

Today, this ambivalence is becoming increasingly problematic, for the simple reason that properly resourcing American strategy requires making politically difficult trade-offs with respect to entitlements and other ballooning domestic costs. It is also becoming problematic, of course, because even if the American public seems to support particular aspects of American grand strategy, the public has shown itself willing to elect a president who appears to care little for the successful postwar and post–Cold War tradition, even if he has, so far, maintained more aspects of that tradition as president than his campaign rhetoric might have led one to expect. In the future—and indeed, looking beyond Trump’s presidency— sustaining American grand strategy will thus require more intensive political efforts.

American leaders will need to more effectively make the case for controversial but broadly beneficial policies such as free trade, while also addressing the inevitable socioeconomic dislocations such policies cause.34 They will need to more fully articulate the underlying logic and value of alliances and other commitments whose costs are often more visible—not to say greater—than their benefits. They will need to remind Americans that their country’s leadership has not been a matter of charity; it has helped produce an international order that is exceptional in its stability, liberalism, and benefits for the United States. Not least, they will need to make the case that the costs that the country has borne in support of that order are designed to avoid the necessity of bearing vastly higher costs if the international scene returned to a more tumultuous state. After all, the success of American statecraft is often reflected in the bad things that don’t happen as well as in the good things that do. Making this point is essential to reconsolidating domestic support now and in the future—and to preserving a grand strategy that has delivered pretty good results for a quarter century.

#### We affirm that American liberal hegemony is just - vote aff to embrace the terrifying scream of our precision guided missiles hot off the production line from their contract with Lockheed Martin whistling to strike an overseas target.

#### Be highly skeptical of heg bad arguments – their evidence is epistemologically suspect and bought off by revisionist powers

Gilsinan 20 [(Kathy, a St. Louis-based contributing writer at The Atlantic. Her book, The Helpers: Profiles From the Front Lines of the Pandemic, comes out in March 2022. She was previously an editor at World Politics Review.) “How China Is Planning to Win Back the World” The Atlantic, 5/28/2020. https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2020/05/china-disinformation-propaganda-united-states-xi-jinping/612085/] BC

This was a bizarre salvo in China’s propaganda war with the United States over the coronavirus, and it showcased Beijing’s latest information weaponry. Misleading spin, obfuscation, concealment, and hyperbole have been hallmarks of the Chinese Communist Party’s propaganda campaign, before and during the coronavirus era. But the pandemic appears to have given rise to more forceful attacks on foreign governments, as well as a new level of flirtation with outright disinformation.

The party has never waged a global struggle quite like this one—and its battle with the U.S. over where the virus came from and whose failures made the pandemic worse have marked a serious deterioration in the two countries’ ties. Just months ago, Trump was praising Xi Jinping for how he handled the outbreak; now Trump is toying with cutting off relations with the Chinese government altogether.

Seven decades ago, Mao Zedong publicly embraced a benevolent view of propaganda, as if he were a latter-day prophet spreading the communist gospel: “We should carry on constant propaganda among the people on the facts of world progress and the bright future ahead so that they will build their confidence in victory,” he mused in 1945. Just a few months ago, Xi Jinping urged state journalists to spread “positive propaganda” for the “correct guidance of public opinion.” Indeed, Beijing’s global propaganda efforts in recent years have been more about promoting China’s virtues than about spreading acrimony and confusion, à la Russian information ops and election meddling. Moscow wants a weakened and divided West, one that leaves Russia free to dominate its self-appointed sphere of influence—but Russia in 2016 was also an economically sluggish, oil-dependent nation with an economy a tenth the size of America’s, and lacked the resources to remake the world in its image.

Beijing has a much bigger prize in mind and a much longer-term plan to get it: The contest isn’t about who gets to run the U.S. It’s about who deserves to run the world. And China, with its economy poised to overtake that of the United States, has already plowed billions into crafting an image as a responsible global leader, and billions more into cultivating global dependence on Chinese investments and Chinese markets.

“While the [Chinese Communist Party] has long sought to be a global influencer, their efforts today are aggressive and sophisticated,” Bill Evanina, the director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center, wrote in an email. “In short, they’re looking to reshape the history of coronavirus and protect their reputation at home and around the world.”

Before the coronavirus hit, the party was becoming bolder in its propaganda efforts overseas as China grew richer and more powerful, trying to promote around the world the orthodoxy it enforced at home, about the beneficence and goodness of the CCP. This involved publicizing Chinese investments in the developing world, arm-twisting diplomats to toe a pro-China line, ruthlessly trying to stifle even other countries’ freedom to dissent—to the point of sanctioning Norway in 2010 when the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded its peace prize to the imprisoned democracy activist Liu Xiaobo, who died in 2017. Xi has elevated the role of propaganda even further as he has vowed to build China’s power and prosperity, declaring, “The superiority of our system will be fully demonstrated through a brighter future.”

The coronavirus outbreak and the global outcry against China’s failures of transparency and containment were not part of the plan. They sparked an international backlash that, by Beijing’s reported reckoning, was worse than anything it had faced since the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989. So Beijing leaped to seize, or at least confuse, the global story of the virus and its cast of heroes and villains.

This has involved unleashing techniques Russia perfected during the U.S. presidential election in 2016. “We’ve seen China adopt Russian-style social media manipulation tactics like using bots and trolls to amplify disinformation on COVID-19,” Lea Gabrielle, the special envoy and coordinator for the State Department’s Global Engagement Center, wrote to me in an email. “Both countries repress information within their countries while taking advantage of the open and free information environments in democracies to push conspiracy theories that seek to undermine those environments.”

As the world realized the virus was spreading out of control, Chinese diplomats, official media, and Twitter influencers launched an aggressive frenzy of defense, scrambling to preserve the Chinese Communist Party’s cratering reputation at home and overseas. And then they went on offense, with an assist from perhaps thousands of fake or hacked Twitter accounts, according to the investigative site ProPublica. The result was a coordinated campaign of attacks on the United States, and the spread of disinformation and confusion about where the virus really came from and whose screwup it was, really, that led to so much death.

Other countries’ faltering responses to the virus have only bolstered this narrative, and the CCP has gleefully trumpeted America’s failures in particular. “Loose political system in the US allows more than 4000 people to die of pandemic every day,” Hu Xijin, the editor in chief of the Global Times newspaper, tweeted in April. “Americans are so good tempered.” Beyond the immediate crisis, this kind of narrative also serves the longer-term goal. In the words of Matt Schrader, a former China analyst with the Alliance for Securing Democracy at the German Marshall Fund: “Ultimately it’s about the [Chinese Communist Party] being the most powerful political entity on the planet.”

The CCP has evolved in its themes and tactics over the course of the coronavirus information war so far, as it battles to bolster its own reputation and degrade that of the United States. The campaign has been widespread and highly focused at the same time. And the party has grown even more emboldened in the belief that it’s too big to fail, and that the reeling world may condemn it but still depends on it.

#### US leadership in this decade solves global war and results in a peaceful end to Chinese revisionism **Erickson and Collins 10/21** [(Andrew, A professor of strategy in the U.S. Naval War College’s China Maritime Studies Institute)(Gabriel, Baker Botts fellow in energy and environmental regulatory affairs at Rice University’s Baker Institute for Public Policy) “A Dangerous Decade of Chinese Power Is Here,” Foreign Policy, 10/18/2021] \*brackets for ableist language **U.S. and allied policymakers are facing the most important foreign-policy challenge of the 21st century. China’s power is peaking; so is the political position of Chinese President Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) domestic strength. In the long term, China’s likely decline after this peak is a good thing. But right now, it creates a decade of danger from a system that increasingly realizes it only has a short time to fulfill some of its most critical, long-held goals.**

Within the next five years, China’s leaders are likely to conclude that its deteriorating demographic profile, structural economic problems, and technological estrangement from global innovation centers are eroding its leverage to annex Taiwan and achieve other major strategic objectives. As Xi internalizes these challenges, his foreign policy is likely to become even more accepting of risk, feeding on his nearly decadelong track record of successful revisionist action against the rules-based order. Notable examples include China occupying and militarizing sub-tidal features in the South China Sea, ramping up air and maritime incursions against Japan and Taiwan, pushing border challenges against India, occupying Bhutanese and Tibetan lands, perpetrating crimes against humanity in [Xinjiang](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/11/16/world/asia/china-xinjiang-documents.html), and coercively enveloping Hong Kong.

The relatively low-hanging fruit is plucked, but Beijing is emboldened to grasp the biggest single revisionist prize: Taiwan.

Beijing’s actions over the last decade have triggered backlash, such as with the so-called AUKUS deal, but concrete constraints on China’s strategic freedom of action may not fully manifest until after 2030. It’s remarkable and dangerous that China has paid few costs for its actions over the last 10 years, even as its military capacities have rapidly grown.

Beijing will likely conclude that under current diplomatic, economic, and force postures for both “gray zone” and high-end scenarios, the 2021 to late 2020s timeframe still favors China—and is attractive for its 68-year-old leader, who seeks a historical achievement at the zenith of his career.

U.S. planners must mobilize resources, effort, and risk acceptance to maximize power and thereby deter Chinese aggression in the coming decade—literally starting now—and innovatively employ assets that currently exist or can be operationally assembled and scaled within the next several years. That will be the first step to pushing back against China during the 2020s—a decade of danger—before what will likely be a waning of Chinese power.

As Beijing aggressively seeks to undermine the international order and promotes a narrative of inevitable Chinese strategic domination in Asia and beyond, it creates a dangerous contradiction between its goals and its medium-term capacity to achieve them. China is, in fact, likely nearing the apogee of its relative power; and by 2030 to 2035, it will cross a tipping point from which it may never recover strategically. Growing headwinds constraining Chinese growth, while not publicly acknowledged by Beijing, help explain Xi’s high and apparently increasing risk tolerance. Beijing’s window of strategic opportunity is sliding shut.

China’s skyrocketing household debt levels exemplify structural economic constraints that are emerging much earlier than they did for the United States when it had similar per capita GDP and income levels. Debt is often a wet blanket on consumption growth. A 2017 analysis published by the Bank for International Settlements found that once the household debt-to-GDP ratio in a sample of 54 countries exceeded 60 percent, “the negative long-run effects on consumption tend to intensify.” China’s household debt-to-GDP ratio surpassed that empirical danger threshold in late 2020. Rising debt service burdens thus threaten Chinese consumers’ capacity to sustain the domestic consumption-focused “dual circulation” economic model that Xi and his advisors seek to build. China’s growth record during the past 30 years has been remarkable, but past exceptionalism does not confer future immunity from fundamental demographic and economic headwinds.

As debt levels continue to rise at an absolute level that has accelerated almost continuously for the past decade, China also faces a hollowing out of its working-age population. This critical segment peaked in 2010 and has since declined, with the rate from 2015 to 2020 nearing 0.6 percent annually—nearly twice the respective pace in the United States. While the United States faces demographic challenges of its own, the disparity between the respective paces of decline highlights its relative advantage compared to its chief geopolitical competitor. Moreover, the United States can choose to access a global demographic and talent dividend via immigration in a way China simply will not be able to do.

Atop surging debt and worsening demographics, China also faces resource insecurity. China’s dependence on imported food and energy has grown steadily over the past two decades. Projections from Tsinghua University make a compelling case that China’s oil and gas imports will peak between 2030 and 2035. As China grapples with power shortages, Beijing has been reminded that supply shortfalls equal to even a few percentage points of total demand can have outsized negative impacts.

Domestic resource insufficiency by itself does not hinder economic growth—as the Four Asian Tigers’ multi-decade boom attests. But China is in a different position. Japan and South Korea never had to worry about the U.S. Navy interdicting inbound tankers or grain ships. In fact, the United States was avowedly willing to use military force to protect energy flows from the Persian Gulf region to its allies. Now, as an increasingly energy-secure United States pivots away from the Middle East toward the Indo-Pacific, there is a substantial probability that energy shipping route protection could be viewed in much more differentiated terms—with oil and liquefied natural gas cargoes sailing under the Chinese flag viewed very differently than cargoes headed to buyers in other regional countries.

Each of these dynamics—demographic downshifts, rising debts, resource supply insecurity—either imminently threatens or is already actively interfering with the CCP’s long-cherished goal of achieving a “moderately prosperous society.” Electricity blackouts, real estate sector travails (like those of Evergrande) that show just how many Chinese investors’ financial eggs now sit in an unstable $52 trillion basket, and a solidifying alignment of countries abroad concerned by aggressive Chinese behavior all raise questions about Xi’s ability to deliver. With this confluence of adverse events only a year before the next party congress, where personal ambition and survival imperatives will almost drive him to seek anointment as the only Chinese “leader for life” aside from former leader Mao Zedong, the timing only fuels his sense of insecurity. Xi’s anti-corruption campaigns and ruthless removal of potential rivals and their supporters solidified his power but likely also created a quiet corps of opponents who may prove willing to move against him if events create the perception he’s lost the “mandate of heaven.” Accordingly, the baseline assumption should be that Xi’s crown sits heavy and the insecurity induced is thereby intense enough to drive high-stake, high-consequence posturing and action.

While Xi is under pressure to act, the external risks are magnified because so far, he has suffered few consequences from taking actions on issues his predecessors would likely never have gambled on. Reactions to party predations in Xinjiang and [Hong Kong](https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/financial-sanctions/recent-actions/20210716_33) have been restricted to diplomatic-signaling pinpricks, such as sanctioning responsible Chinese officials and entities, most of whom lack substantial economic ties to the United States. Whether U.S. restraint results from a fear of losing market access or a belief that China’s goals are ultimately limited is not clear at this time.

While the CCP issues retaliatory sanctions against U.S. officials and proclaims a triumphant outcome to its hostage diplomacy, these tactical public actions mask a growing private awareness that China’s latitude for irredentist action is poised to shrink. Not knowing exactly when domestic and external constraints will come to bite—but knowing that when Beijing sees the tipping point in its rearview mirror, major rivals will recognize it too—amplifies Xi and the party’s anxiety to act on a shorter timeline. Hence the dramatic acceleration of the last few years.

Just as China is mustering its own strategic actions, so the United States must also intensify its focus and deployment of resources. The United States has taken too long to warm up and confront the central challenge, but it retains formidable advantages, agility, and the ability to prevail—provided it goes all-in now. Conversely, if Washington fails to marshal its forces promptly, its achievements after 2030 or 2035 will matter little. Seizing the 2020s would enable Beijing to ~~cripple~~ [destroy] the free and open rules-based order and entrench its position by economically subjugating regional neighbors (including key U.S. treaty allies) to a degree that could offset the strategic headwinds China now increasingly grapples with.

Deterrence is never certain. But it offers the highest probability of avoiding the certainty that an Indo-Pacific region dominated by a CCP-led China would doom treaty allies, threaten the U.S. homeland, and likely set the stage for worse to come. Accordingly, U.S. planners should immediately mobilize resources and effort as well as accept greater risks to deter Chinese action over the critical next decade.

The greatest threat is armed conflict over Taiwan, where U.S. and allied success or failure will be fundamental and reverberate for the remainder of the century. There is a high chance of a major move against Taiwan by the late 2020s—following an extraordinary ramp-up in People’s Liberation Army capabilities and before Xi or the party state’s power grasp has ebbed or Washington and its allies have fully regrouped and rallied to the challenge.

So how should policymakers assess the potential risk of Chinese action against Taiwan reaching dangerous levels by 2027 or possibly even earlier—as emphasized in the testimonies of Adms. Philip Davidson and John Aquilino? In June, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Gen. Mark Milley testified to the House of Representatives that Xi had “challenged the People’s Liberation Army to accelerate their modernization programs to develop capabilities to seize Taiwan and move it from 2035 to 2027,” although China does not currently have the capabilities or intentions to conduct an all-out invasion of mainland Taiwan.

U.S. military leaders’ assessments are informed by some of the world’s most extensive and sophisticated internal information. But what’s striking is open-source information available to everyone suggests similar things. Moving forward, a number of open-source indicators offer valuable “early warning lights” that can help policymakers more accurately calibrate both potential timetables and risk readings as the riskiest period of relations—from 2027 onward—approaches.

Semiconductors supply self-sufficiency. Taiwan is the “OPEC+” of semiconductors, accounting for approximately two-thirds of global chip foundry capacity. A kinetic crisis would almost certainly disrupt—and potentially even completely curtail—semiconductor supplies. China presently spends even more each year on semiconductor imports (around $380 billion) than it does on [oil](http://english.customs.gov.cn/Statics/0aba4bfd-f8ed-477c-9d16-dc3def897b7b.html), but much of the final products are destined for markets abroad. Taiwan is producing cutting-edge 5-nanometer and 7-nanometer chips, but China produces around 80 percent of the rest of the chips in the world. The closer China comes to being able to secure “good enough” chips for “inside China-only” needs, the less of a constraint this becomes.

Crude oil, grain, strategic metals stockpiles—the commercial community (Planet Labs, Ursa Space Systems, etc.) has developed substantial expertise in cost-effectively tracking inventory changes for key input commodities needed to prepare for war.

Electric vehicle fleet size—the amount of oil demand displaced by electric vehicles varies depending on miles driven, but the more of China’s car fleet that can be connected to the grid (and thus powered by blockade-resistant coal), the less political burden Beijing will face if it has to weather a maritime oil blockade imposed in response to actions it took against Taiwan or other major revisionist adventures. China’s passenger vehicle fleet, now approximately 225 million units strong, counts nearly 6.5 million electric vehicles among its ranks, the lion’s share of which are full-battery electrics. China’s State Council seeks to have 20 percent of new vehicles sold in China be electric vehicles by 2025. This target has already basically been achieved over the last few months, meaning at least 3.5 to 4 million (and eventually many more) new elective vehicles will enter China’s car fleet each year from now on.

Local concentration of maritime vessels—snap exercises with warships, circumnavigations, and midline tests with swarms of aircraft highlight the growing scale of China’s threat to [Taiwan](https://www.andrewerickson.com/2021/06/quick-look-cmsis-4-6-may-2021-conference-large-scale-amphibious-warfare-in-chinese-military-strategy-taiwan-strait-campaign-focus/). But these assets alone cannot invade the island. To capture and garrison, Beijing would need not only air, missile, naval, and special operations forces but also the ability to move lots of equipment and—at the very least—tens of thousands of personnel across the Taiwan Strait. As such, Beijing would have to amass maritime transport assets. And given the scale required, this would alter ship patterns elsewhere along China’s coast in ways detectable with artificial intelligence-facilitated imagery analysis from firms like Planet Labs (or national assets).

Only the most formidable, agile American and allied deterrence can kick the can down the road long enough for China’s slowdown to shut the window of vulnerability. Holding the line is likely to require frequent and sustained proactive enforcement actions to disincentivize full-frontal Chinese assaults on the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific. Chinese probing behavior and provocations must be met with a range of symmetric and asymmetric responses that impose real costs, such as publishing assets owned by Chinese officials abroad, cyber interference with China’s technological social control apparatus, “hands on” U.S. Navy and Coast Guard enforcement measures against Maritime Militia-affiliated vessels in the South China Sea, intensified air and maritime surveillance of Chinese naval bases, and visas and resettlement options to Hong Kongers, Uyghurs, and other threatened Chinese citizens—including CCP officials (and their families) who seek to defect and/or leave China. U.S. policymakers must make crystal clear to their Chinese counterparts that the engagement-above-all policies that dominated much of the past 25 years are over and the risks and costs of ongoing—and future—adventurism will fall heaviest on China.

Bombastic Chinese reactions to emerging cohesive actions verify the approach’s effectiveness and potential for halting—and perhaps even reversing—the revisionist tide China has unleashed across the Asian region. Consider the recent nuclear submarine deal among Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Beijing’s strong public reaction (including toleration of [nuclear threats](https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202109/1234460.shtml) made by the state-affiliated *Global Times*) highlights the gap between its global information war touting China’s irresistible power and deeply insecure internal self-perception. Eight nuclear submarines will ultimately represent formidable military capacity, but for a bona fide superpower that believes in its own capabilities, they would not be a game-changer. Consider the U.S.-NATO reaction to the Soviet Union’s commissioning of eight Oscar I/II-class cruise missile subs during the late Cold War. These formidable boats each carried 24 SS-N-19 Granit missiles specifically designed to kill U.S. carrier battle groups, yet NATO never stooped to public threats.

With diplomatic proofs of concepts like the so-called AUKUS deal, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, and hard security actions like the Pacific Deterrence Initiative now falling into place, it is time to comprehensively peak the non-authoritarian world’s protective action to hold the line in the Indo-Pacific. During this decade, U.S. policymakers must understand that under Xi’s strongman rule, personal political survival will dictate Chinese behavior. Xi’s recreation of a “one-man” system is a one-way, high-leverage bet that decisions he drives will succeed.

If Xi miscalculates, a significant risk given his suppression of dissenting voices while China raises the stakes in its confrontation with the United States, the proverbial “leverage” that would have left him with outsized returns on a successful bet would instead amplify the downside, all of which he personally and exclusively signed for. Resulting tensions could very realistically undermine his status and authority, embolden internal challengers, and weaken the party. They could also foreseeably drive him to double down on mistakes, especially if those led to—or were made in the course of—a kinetic conflict. Personal survival measures could thus rapidly transmute into regional or even global threats.

If Xi triggered a “margin call” on his personal political account through a failed high-stakes gamble, it would likely be paid in blood. Washington must thus prepare the U.S. electorate and its institutional and physical infrastructure as well as that of allies and partners abroad for the likelihood that tensions will periodically ratchet up to uncomfortable levels—and that actual conflict is a concrete possibility. Si vis pacem, para bellum (“if you want peace, prepare for war”) must unfortunately serve as a central organizing principle for a variety of U.S. and allied decisions during the next decade with China.

Given these unforgiving dynamics and stakes, implications for U.S. planners are stark: Do whatever remains possible to “peak” for deterrent competition against China by the mid-to-late 2020s, and accept whatever trade-offs are available for doing so.

Nothing we might theoretically achieve in 2035 and beyond is worth pursuing at the expense of China-credible capabilities we can realistically achieve no later than the mid-to-late 2020s.

#### China long-term can’t become a hegemon because of slow growth and international constraints- BUT short-term lunges for power trigger immediate war . ONLY deterrence solves

Beckley and Brands 12-17 -- Associate Professor of Political Science at Tufts University and Jeane Kirkpatrick Visiting Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute

[Michael, and Hal Brands, Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies and a Resident Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, "Competition With China Could Be Short and Sharp," Foreign Affairs, 12-17-20, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-12-17/competition-china-could-be-short-and-sharp, accessed 12-20-20]

In foreign policy circles, it has become conventional wisdom that the United States and China are running a “superpower marathon” that may last a century. But the sharpest phase of that competition will be a decadelong sprint. The Sino-American contest for supremacy won’t be settled anytime soon. Yet history and China’s recent trajectory suggest that the moment of maximum danger is just a few years away. China has entered a particularly perilous period as a rising power: it has gained the capability to disrupt the existing order, but its window to act may be narrowing. The balance of power has been shifting in Beijing’s favor in important areas of U.S.-Chinese competition, such as the Taiwan Strait and the struggle over global telecommunications networks. Yet China is also facing a pronounced economic slowdown and a growing international backlash. The good news for the United States is that over the long term, competition with China may prove more manageable than many pessimists believe. Americans may one day look back on China the way they now view the Soviet Union—as a dangerous rival whose evident strengths concealed stagnation and vulnerability. The bad news is that over the next five to ten years, the pace of Sino-American rivalry will be torrid, and the prospect of war frighteningly real, as Beijing becomes tempted to lunge for geopolitical gain. The United States still needs a long-term strategy for protracted competition. But first it needs a near-term strategy for navigating the danger zone. RED FLAGS Much debate on Washington’s China policy focuses on the dangers China will pose as a peer competitor later this century. Yet the United States actually faces a more pressing and volatile threat: an already powerful but insecure China beset by slowing growth and intensifying hostility abroad. China has the money and muscle to challenge the United States in key areas. Thanks to decades of rapid growth, China boasts the world’s largest economy (measured by purchasing power parity), trade surplus, financial reserves, navy by number of ships, and conventional missile force. Chinese investments span the globe, and Beijing is pushing for primacy in such strategic technologies as 5G telecommunications and artificial intelligence (AI). Add in four years of disarray in the U.S.-led world order under President Donald Trump, and it is hardly surprising that Beijing is testing the status quo from the South China Sea to the border with India. Yet China’s window of opportunity may be closing fast. Since 2007, China’s annual economic growth rate has dropped by more than half, and productivity has declined by ten percent. Meanwhile, debt has ballooned eightfold and is on pace to total 335 percent of GDP by the end of 2020. China has little hope of reversing these trends, because it will lose 200 million working-age adults and gain 300 million senior citizens over the next 30 years. And as economic growth falls, the dangers of social and political unrest rise. Chinese leaders know this: President Xi Jinping has given multiple speeches warning about the possibility of a Soviet-style collapse, and Chinese elites are moving their money and children abroad. Meanwhile, global anti-China sentiment has soared to levels not seen since the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. Nearly a dozen countries have suspended or canceled participation in Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects. Another 16 countries, including eight of the world’s ten largest economies, have banned or severely restricted use of Huawei products in their 5G networks. India has been turning hard against China since a clash on their shared border killed 20 soldiers in June. Japan has ramped up military spending, turned amphibious ships into aircraft carriers, and strung missile launchers along the Ryukyu Islands near Taiwan. The European Union has labeled China a “systemic rival”; and the United Kingdom, France, and Germany are sending naval patrols to counter Beijing’s expansion in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean. On multiple fronts, China is facing the blowback created by its own behavior. HISTORY RHYMES Many people assume that rising revisionists pose the greatest danger to international security. But historically, the most desperate dashes have come from powers that had been on the ascent but grew worried that their time was running short. World War I is a classic example. Germany’s rising power formed the strategic backdrop to that conflict, but German fears of decline triggered the ultimate decision for war. Russia’s growing military power and mobility menaced Germany’s eastern flank; new French conscription laws were changing the balance in the West; and a tightening Franco-Russian-British entente was leaving Germany surrounded. German leaders ran such catastrophic risks in the July crisis for fear that geopolitical greatness would elude them if they did not act quickly. The same logic explains imperial Japan’s fatal gamble in 1941, after the U.S. oil embargo and naval rearmament presented Tokyo with a closing window of opportunity to dominate the Asia-Pacific. In the 1970s, Soviet global expansion peaked as Moscow’s military buildup matured and the slowing of the Soviet economy created an impetus to lock in geopolitical gains. Given that China is currently facing both a grim economic forecast and a tightening strategic encirclement, the next few years may prove particularly turbulent. The United States obviously needs a long-term strategy to compete with China. But it also needs to blunt a potential surge of Chinese aggression and expansion this decade.

#### It’s sustainable but not impervious to collapse

Hal Brands, 5-1-2021, Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor At The Johns Hopkins School Of Advanced International Studies, China’s Creative Challenge—and the Threat to America, Commentary Magazine, https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/hal-brands/chinas-geopolitical-challenge-threat-to-america//Khan

FINALLY, CHINA is testing the patterns of history simply by taking on the United States. America is the most lethal competitor of the modern era, and it now has its sights set squarely on Beijing. Consider the historical record. In an environment populated mostly by hostile autocracies, America became a continental behemoth and the world’s strongest economy within a century. It then achieved something no other modern great power has managed—lasting, if periodically contested, hegemony in its home region. During the 20th century, America or the coalitions it supported decisively defeated a series of illiberal powers—Germany (twice), Japan, the Soviet Union—that challenged its vital interests. Along the way, Washington peacefully wrested global leadership from the United Kingdom. For over a century, the surest path to destruction has been inviting the focused hostility of the United States. America’s formidable record is the product of many factors. Vast resource endowments and uniquely advantageous geography have allowed America to project power globally without facing severe geopolitical threats near home. Similarly, the fact that America is powerful and far away leads countries all around the Eurasian periphery to ally with the United States against nearby predators that threaten their independence. The country’s relatively open economy has created great dynamism and innovation; its democratic institutions have allowed it, more often than not, to use its other advantages effectively. And the slowness with which America sometimes mobilizes to confront threats contributes to the single-mindedness with which it eventually combats them. The type of superpower America is also matters. Because America is a liberal nation, it has taken a liberal approach to global power. Since 1945, it has delivered freedom of the seas, a global reserve currency, and a massive market for foreign goods, in addition to providing security and stability in key regions. Those attributes have made other countries support the American cause, which makes American hegemony even harder to overturn. Neither China nor any other country can compete on these dimensions: Beijing lacks the ability to act as a global security provider and the willingness (as a neo-mercantilist actor) to anchor a truly open global economy. It cannot fully open its market without exposing key industries to competition and wrecking plans to reduce strategic dependence on the West. Even if China’s raw power exceeded America’s, its ability to act as a comparatively benign and popular hegemon would not. Having helped the United States defeat the Soviet Union, Chinese leaders understood the peril of provoking American hostility: This was the crux of Deng Xiaoping’s famous dictum about “hiding” capabilities and “biding” time. Chinese statecraft in the post-Tiananmen era was meant to increase Beijing’s power while delaying an American response. The building of deep commercial and financial ties with the United States not only fueled Chinese growth; it also made it more painful for America to turn toward competition. The cultivation of American elites in academia, business, and politics strengthened supporters of continued engagement. Even as Chinese statecraft become more assertive after 2008, Beijing moved incrementally—in the South China Sea and elsewhere—to avoid giving America an eye-opening “Sputnik moment.” And even as the relationship deteriorated during the Obama years, the Chinese leadership used the lure of cooperation on climate change and talk of a “new type of great-power relations” to discourage a sharper pivot in American policy. Historians will one day marvel at how well this strategy—combined with America’s post-9/11 distraction—worked. It took two decades, from the time serious observers began warning about the Chinese challenge, for the United States to adjust its statecraft decisively. During that time, China gained access to technology, capital, and markets that powered its ascent; there emerged an incredibly complex interdependence that continues to retard multilateral mobilization against Beijing. If the United States loses the competition with China, it will be—in no small part—because Beijing successfully anesthetized Washington to a growing peril. The bad news, from Xi’s vantage point, is that the game is up. Predatory economic behavior that America once tolerated has become more threatening as Beijing worked its way up global value chains. Small nibbles at the status quo eventually added up to larger, more alarming shifts. The Chinese government prematurely let the mask slip after the 2008–09 financial crisis, with more assertive diplomacy that gradually made the thesis of America’s engagement policy—that Beijing would mellow over time—impossible to defend. And by the Trump era, China had simply gotten tired of waiting and disguising its ambitions. COVID then did more than any Committee on the Present Danger could ever have done to reveal both the utterly cynical nature of the CCP regime—which sought to stymie the virus’s spread within China even as it allowed continued travel from Wuhan to the world—and the fact that this behavior could mortally imperil Americans’ well-being. China is no longer the “stealth superpower”—there is now a bipartisan consensus that America must thwart its global designs. From here onward, Beijing must forcefully wrest influence from a dangerous hegemon that is alert to a new authoritarian challenge. STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS don’t determine everything: History wouldn’t be very interesting if they did. The United States always had profound advantages over the Soviet Union, but it wouldn’t have won the Cold War had it not worked feverishly to shore up Western Europe in the late 1940s and maintain a military balance that made Soviet aggression seem suicidal. Strategic urgency and commitment were what ultimately allowed America to make the most of its strengths. That’s worth keeping in mind today. The fact that Chinese power and influence have grown so markedly in recent decades and that the resulting challenge has become so stark show the impact that determined, innovative strategy can have. The dilemmas that the United States confronts, in areas from 5G technology to the military balance in the Taiwan Strait, illustrate the costs of strategic lethargy. Indeed, America is fully capable of squandering its advantages if it degrades or destroys its own democracy, declines to make domestic reforms and investments to maintain its competitive edge, fails to rally the overlapping coalitions needed to resist Chinese ambitions, or delays in driving the military innovation required to shore up a sagging balance in the Western Pacific. The list of hard policy problems America must urgently solve to prevail against China is itself long and formidable. And even if Washington does prevail in that rivalry, America may absorb significant setbacks—and the international order may absorb significant damage—in the process. Yet as rough as the road ahead looks from Washington, it ought to look even rougher from Beijing. The Chinese Communist Party runs a profoundly illiberal regime that is trying to overcome centuries of liberal dominance. China is straining against a strategic geography and international system that surely seem more constraining than inviting. Chinese strategists must find a way of breaking America’s position in the Western Pacific while avoiding the potential cataclysm of major war. And Beijing is taking on a superpower that has thrashed all previous comers. Smart strategies have permitted Beijing to do remarkably well, so far, in managing these problems. But many of those strategies face an uncertain future, in part because the international complacency that allowed them to flourish has been replaced—gradually, but increasingly—with international concern. This isn’t to say that China’s ambitions are hopeless illusions. In the coming years, there will be an intense interaction between an America that is adapting its strategies to deal with a pressing threat and a China that will have to adjust its own approaches in light of that response. Even American success in this interaction could bring new dangers: If Chinese leaders perceive that their window to achieve grand geopolitical goals is closing, then the regime could become even more aggressive in seeking to revise the global order while it still can. Much thus hinges on the quality of decisions made in Washington and other capitals around the world. But the fact that so many characteristics of modern great-power politics seem to favor the United States probably gives the reigning superpower better options and more room for error than its autocratic challenger. Nothing is predetermined: Beijing may still succeed in displacing the United States as the primary power in Asia and, eventually, the world. Yet if it does, that outcome will represent a catastrophic failure of American statecraft—or an awesome triumph of Chinese strategy in overcoming the great obstacles that litter Beijing’s path to hegemony.

#### Overwhelming power is key — uncertainty alone emboldens revisionism and erodes alliances.

Brands & Edel, 19 — Hal Brands; PhD, Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. Charles Edel; PhD, Senior Fellow and Visiting Scholar at the United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney. (“The Lessons of Tragedy: Statecraft and World Order;” Ch. 6: The Darkening Horizon; Published by *Yale University Press*; //GrRv)

Concerns about American reliability are not new, of course, and too much U.S. activism can be as discomfiting as too little. But the fact remains that there is now surging global uncertainty about the future of U.S. foreign policy, and that uncertainty is itself a destabilizing factor in international affairs.

It may promote hedging by U.S. allies and partners who no longer believe that America’s security commitments are so ironclad and its red lines so red. It may provoke stronger revisionist challenges from aggressors who assess that their moment has arrived because the forces arrayed against them are no longer so purposeful or unified. Most broadly, if Washington continues to behave so erratically on the international stage, the perception of U.S. steadiness of purpose that has traditionally backstopped the international order could be eroded.

All these processes will take time to unfold, but they are occurring already. Countries such as the Philippines seem to be adjusting their geopolitical postures due to doubts about U.S. effectiveness and resolve; debates about the future of alliance with America are intensifying in other countries.65 European countries are discussing measures they might take to protect themselves in a post-American age. As the United States turns toward protectionism, countries are cutting trade deals that exclude Washington or increasingly looking to Beijing as an economic partner.66 And Chinese leaders appear to be sensing that their window of opportunity is opening. “China has never seen such a moment,” writes Evan Osnos, “when its pursuit of a larger role in the world coincides with America’s pursuit of a smaller one.”67 A period of growing international turmoil and danger is a bad time to sow doubt about America’s global role, but this is precisely what is happening. The effects are unlikely to be either trivial or benign.

#### Primacy and allied commitments solves arms races and great power war---reject old defense that ignores emerging instability and compounding risk. Unipolarity is sustainable and stops power vacuums and escalation across the globe

Brands 18 [Hal, Henry Kissinger Distinguished Professor at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies and a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments." American Grand Strategy in the Age of Trump." Page 129-133]

Since World War II, the United States has had a military second to none. Since the Cold War, America has committed to having overwhelming military primacy. The idea, as George W. Bush declared in 2002, that America must possess “strengths beyond challenge” has featured in every major U.S. strategy document for a quarter century; it has also been reflected in concrete terms.6

From the early 1990s, for example, the United States consistently accounted for around 35 to 45 percent of world defense spending and maintained peerless global power-projection capabilities.7 Perhaps more important, U.S. primacy was also unrivaled in key overseas strategic regions—Europe, East Asia, the Middle East. From thrashing Saddam Hussein’s million-man Iraqi military during Operation Desert Storm, to deploying—with impunity—two carrier strike groups off Taiwan during the China-Taiwan crisis of 1995– 96, Washington has been able to project military power superior to anything a regional rival could employ even on its own geopolitical doorstep.

This military dominance has constituted the hard-power backbone of an ambitious global strategy. After the Cold War, U.S. policymakers committed to averting a return to the unstable multipolarity of earlier eras, and to perpetuating the more favorable unipolar order. They committed to building on the successes of the postwar era by further advancing liberal political values and an open international economy, and to suppressing international scourges such as rogue states, nuclear proliferation, and catastrophic terrorism. And because they recognized that military force remained the ultima ratio regum, they understood the centrality of military preponderance.

Washington would need the military power necessary to underwrite worldwide alliance commitments. It would have to preserve substantial overmatch versus any potential great-power rival. It must be able to answer the sharpest challenges to the international system, such as Saddam’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990 or jihadist extremism after 9/11. Finally, because prevailing global norms generally reflect hard-power realities, America would need the superiority to assure that its own values remained ascendant. It was impolitic to say that U.S. strategy and the international order required “strengths beyond challenge,” but it was not at all inaccurate.

American primacy, moreover, was eminently affordable. At the height of the Cold War, the United States spent over 12 percent of GDP on defense. Since the mid-1990s, the number has usually been between 3 and 4 percent.8 In a historically favorable international environment, Washington could enjoy primacy—and its geopolitical fruits—on the cheap.

Yet U.S. strategy also heeded, at least until recently, the fact that there was a limit to how cheaply that primacy could be had. The American military did shrink significantly during the 1990s, but U.S. officials understood that if Washington cut back too far, its primacy would erode to a point where it ceased to deliver its geopolitical benefits. Alliances would lose credibility; the stability of key regions would be eroded; rivals would be emboldened; international crises would go unaddressed. American primacy was thus like a reasonably priced insurance policy. It required nontrivial expenditures, but protected against far costlier outcomes.9 Washington paid its insurance premiums for two decades after the Cold War. But more recently American primacy and strategic solvency have been imperiled.

THE DARKENING HORIZON For most of the post–Cold War era, the international system was— by historical standards—remarkably benign. Dangers existed, and as the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, demonstrated, they could manifest with horrific effect. But for two decades after the Soviet collapse, the world was characterized by remarkably low levels of great-power competition, high levels of security in key theaters such as Europe and East Asia, and the comparative weakness of those “rogue” actors—Iran, Iraq, North Korea, al-Qaeda—who most aggressively challenged American power. During the 1990s, some observers even spoke of a “strategic pause,” the idea being that the end of the Cold War had afforded the United States a respite from normal levels of geopolitical danger and competition. Now, however, the strategic horizon is darkening, due to four factors.

First, great-power military competition is back. The world’s two leading authoritarian powers—China and Russia—are seeking regional hegemony, contesting global norms such as nonaggression and freedom of navigation, and developing the military punch to underwrite these ambitions. Notwithstanding severe economic and demographic problems, Russia has conducted a major military modernization emphasizing nuclear weapons, high-end conventional capabilities, and rapid-deployment and special operations forces— and utilized many of these capabilities in conflicts in Ukraine and Syria.10 China, meanwhile, has carried out a buildup of historic proportions, with constant-dollar defense outlays rising from US$26 billion in 1995 to US$226 billion in 2016.11 Ominously, these expenditures have funded development of power-projection and antiaccess/area denial (A2/AD) tools necessary to threaten China’s neighbors and complicate U.S. intervention on their behalf. Washington has grown accustomed to having a generational military lead; Russian and Chinese modernization efforts are now creating a far more competitive environment.

#### A strong alliance network is an impact filter — solves great-power war, growth, and democracy.

Brands & Edel, 19 — Hal Brands; PhD, Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. Charles Edel; PhD, Senior Fellow and Visiting Scholar at the United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney. (“The Lessons of Tragedy: Statecraft and World Order;” Ch. 7: Rediscovering Tragedy; Published by *Yale University Press*; //GrRv)

What’s true for America is equally true for its broader coalition of like-minded states. In geopolitics as in many things, there is great strength in numbers. Yet that strength will hold only if the supporters of the international order lock arms and commit fully to its defense. Preventing great-power war and international aggression, promoting an open global economy that averts depression and privation, upholding democracy and human rights in the face of authoritarian resurgence, and defending liberal norms that are being assaulted are goals that can be achieved only through strong partnerships and collective effort. If the democracies are divided, the autocracies will exploit those divisions; if America and its allies struggle to achieve unity of action, they will be outmaneuvered or overawed by revisionist powers. The trend in today’s environment is, in many ways, toward greater fragmentation within what was once called the “free world.” But a tragic mindset requires understanding that greater coordination and solidarity is required if that free world is to prosper.

For defenders of the international order, then, the question is not whether such coordination and solidarity is desirable, but how it can best be achieved. Here there is no escaping the centrality of American leadership. It is fair enough to point out that America pays a disproportionate share of the costs of sustaining an order that benefits so many. It is entirely reasonable, at a time when threats are rising and challenges multiplying, to demand that collective sacrifices be distributed more evenly, if only because Americans themselves will tire of supporting that order if they feel that they are doing it alone. To put the matter baldly, Americans will not be forever willing to send their ~~sons and daughters~~ to die for NATO if some of the richest countries in that alliance refuse to field minimally capable militaries of their own.

What Americans must remember, though, is that the strong collective measures required to preserve the international order are far more likely to emerge when America itself is fully committed. Allies and partners will be more willing to run risks and confront revisionist powers if they are assured of U.S. support than if they doubt it. An Asia-Pacific without American leadership would not be a region better positioned to resist Chinese expansionism; it would be a weaker and more divided region, increasingly at Beijing’s mercy. Likewise, supporters of free markets and democracy are more likely to stand up for those arrangements if the world’s preeminent free-market democracy is in the vanguard; collective action to meet the greatest global challenges will materialize more successfully if the United States acts as the convener. America was “the one nation that has the necessary political, military, and economic instruments at our disposal to catalyze a successful collective response,” James Baker said during the Persian Gulf crisis in 1990; no other nation can play this role, even today.13 Finally, Americans must keep in mind that if Washington pursues protectionist economic policies that impoverish its partners, if it forsakes the liberal principles that have formed the ideological core of its alliances, if it extorts tribute from its allies like some mafia protection racket, then it will lose the attractive power that allowed it to lead such formidable coalitions in the first place. America endures its share of inequities and burdens in the service of global order. Yet as a tragic sensibility reminds us, some burdens are tolerable because they help prevent something far, far worse.

#### But offshore balancing fails—weak American responses spark global instability

Ted R. **Bromund et. al 17**--(Ted R. Bromund, Studies Anglo-American relations, U.S. relations with Europe and the EU, and the U.S.’s leadership role in the world, Reclaiming American Realism, American Affairs Journal, accessed 6-28-2019, https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2017/05/reclaiming-american-realism/)//ND

As Americans, we should know what it is to live in a tough, competitive world, because it was the world our nation was born into. That world endures, and no amount of post–Cold War fantasizing will make it disappear. From the start, we made our way in that world thanks to our alliances—for it was a military alliance with France that helped us win our independence. Provided that we retain the power to decide if we will fight—and we do—our alliances today raise no questions of principle. After all, we claimed the right to contract alliances in the Declaration of Independence itself. Nor are our alliances an act of charity. First and foremost, they have mostly been made with strategically important countries, traditionally those that have been able to help uphold order in their regions. Today, there is little disagreement in America that our allies should pay more, so as to do more. Every president since Eisenhower has asked for that, and with rare exceptions—such as Britain under Margaret Thatcher—they have asked in vain. We cannot sustain our alliances unless the American people believe that every member nation is making a fair contribution. But the problem is not that our allies are free riding on us, for when we cut our defenses, they do not increase theirs. It is that the history, culture, and politics of our allies now make them unwilling to accept that military strength is vital to diplomacy and deterrence alike. They have profound incentives to minimize, dismiss, and ignore threats—and hence not to spend enough on defense. For our European allies and Japan, the demands of the social welfare state, mixed with an understandably lingering horror at the memories of war, have combined over decades to make unpalatable most discussion of hard power and the need for martial readiness. The fear that returning to the world of machtpolitik will put at risk all they have built since 1945 is understandable, if unsuited to the current geopolitical environment. Yet we should still appreciate what we have in our allies. Tens of thousands of brave Americans gave their lives to create the alliances we have today. The costs we pay now are maintenance expenses on the peace they won. Of course, our allies benefit from this. But precisely because we are on top, we benefit most from the world as it is today, even if our complacency sometimes allows others to take advantage of the stability we created for their own malignant purposes. Our democratic allies, who wish—a little too hard—only to live in peace, feel the same way about the status quo. That does not mean we need to excuse the failings of our allies, indulge their supranational fantasies, outsource the defense of our interests to them, or allow them to completely outsource theirs to us. Instead, we need to have just as much realism about our allies as we have about our enemies. That means recognizing that what our allies lack is the luck that we in the United States enjoy. We are fortunate to have Canada and Mexico as neighbors; our allies, unfortunately, are next door to China, Russia, autocrats, and Islamists. Given our good fortune, and our strength, it is inevitable that we are the ones who are forward deployed, because we are the ones who have the geopolitical freedom to help. But we should remember that our deployments defend our place in the world—and the ability of Americans to be free in it—just as much as they defend our allies. Without our close alliances and the forward yet benign deployment of our forces, we would look out onto an unwelcoming Middle East and an increasingly troubled Asia, where Americans would be seen simply as outsiders, not as welcome partners by some. Moreover, the allies we have, such as the United Kingdom, Israel, Japan, and South Korea, are part of a global network of liberal societies and economies that dynamically interact and add immeasurably to global wealth, not least back in the United States. We cannot avoid becoming involved merely by retreating from our allies. American indifference or perceived weakness can engender instability that is not in our interests, and which forces us to consider more risky forms of involvement. For example, China’s buildup of forces in the South China Sea, and its efforts to dominate strategic waterways and raise doubts about future freedom of navigation, occurred in part due to its perception that America’s lack of active military alliances in Southeast Asia would make the United States unable to counter its expansion. To China, America is an interloper in areas it has traditionally dominated and considered part of its sphere of influence; thus, it believed that U.S. naval and air forces (which currently can only be transiently present in Southeast Asia), were a paper tiger and could be intimidated into eventual withdrawal.

#### Pursuit’s inevitable – Biden’s a hardliner

Tepperman 21 – a former editor in chief of Foreign Policy and the author of The Fix: How Countries Use Crises to Solve the World’s Worst Problems. (Jonathan, "Biden Was Right: America Is Back," Foreign Policy, 2-23-2021, https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/02/23/biden-was-right-america-is-back/, Accessed 11-17-2021, LASA-SC)

President Joe Biden’s declaration to the Munich Security Conference last Friday that “America is back”—lest anyone miss it, he repeated the line three times—hasn’t gone down very well in the days since. While I suspect many in the Zoom audience were quietly relieved to hear it, public responses have ranged from skeptical to hostile. At the same conference, for example, French President Emmanuel Macron insisted that France stake out greater “strategic autonomy” from the United States. His German counterpart, Angela Merkel, reminded the audience that U.S. and German interests “will not always converge.” And back in the United States, former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said: “I don’t think the American people can afford to go back to eight more years of Barack Obama’s foreign policy.” While Pompeo’s sneering is easy to dismiss (why waste time worrying about the opinions of the worst secretary of state in U.S. history), the other comments deserve more attention. Yet they and the critiques of various pundits who have argued that the president’s pledge was both premature and hubristic also miss the key point. Biden surely didn’t mean to suggest that the United States has returned to the level of power, prestige, and importance it enjoyed in 2016. Or that it has recaptured its moral standing. He wasn’t arguing that he’d already repaired all the damage done by his predecessor; of course not. What Biden likely meant to convey—and what allies and adversaries should pay attention to—is the fact that Washington is trying again: trying to mend ties and restore cooperation with its friends. Trying to push back against authoritarian regimes and defend universal values. Trying to protect public goods like the environment. And, like it or not, trying to lead. If you have any doubt that America is back in this sense, just compare any of the five weeks Biden has been in office to any one of Donald Trump’s 208. Since taking charge, the new president has sought to wrap the country’s traditional allies in one of his trademark bear hugs: by returning to the G-7 (which Trump spurned), for example, or by reversing Trump’s withdrawal of U.S. troops from Germany. Washington has rejoined the Paris Agreement on climate change and the World Health Organization (both of which Trump dumped). Biden has extended the New START nuclear arms treaty with Russia (which Trump was about to abandon) and broadcast his intent to reenter the Iran nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. He has stood up for democracy and human rights by imposing sanctions on the junta in Myanmar and preparing new measures to punish President Vladimir Putin and his cronies in Russia, as well as by ending U.S. support for the disastrous Saudi-led war in Yemen. And he has pledged up to $4 billion to COVAX, the global initiative to help vaccinate the developing world against COVID-19. That would be an impressive list of accomplishments for any monthlong period. When you remember that the Biden administration has pulled all this off while seriously understaffed (most of its key appointments have yet to be confirmed) and while the country is still suffering the aftershocks of last month’s violent insurrection (tremors that included Trump’s second impeachment), it looks even more remarkable—and makes recent criticisms of Biden’s foreign-policy record seem a little unfair. That’s especially so when you also factor in the administration’s overwhelming domestic to-do list, which includes small matters like passing a $1.9 trillion recovery package and speeding up the country’s COVID-19 vaccination Indeed, the fact that the administration is spending any time at all on foreign policy right now—let alone looking beyond immediate crises to longer-term priorities like restoring the country’s international standing—is yet more evidence for Biden’s claim that America is back. Such moves also firmly align the administration with a long-standing national tradition. One of the most unusual and distinguishing features of the country’s domestic and foreign-policy record isn’t the absence of mistakes—the United States makes as many or more of these than other countries. It’s the United States’ record of acting to repair the damage once it has been done and the moment has passed. The country has developed a remarkable mechanism for self-correction, a history of ensuring that, after every one of its disastrous bouts of inattention (think the interwar period) or destructive Jacksonian rage (think the aftermath of 9/11), the national pendulum swings back to the middle. Every Richard Nixon gets followed by a Gerald Ford or Jimmy Carter, every George W. Bush by a Barack Obama. Some mistakes take a lot longer to address than others. But the country often gets there in the end. American exceptionalism has become a dirty word in recent years, but this is that exceptionalism in its best form. Of course, the United States still has an enormous way to go before it can claim to be “back” to the kind of prominence it enjoyed before Trump’s election. But the fact that it’s trying so hard to get there shows it is already back in a critical sense. And that’s something we should all be grateful for.

#### Historical analysis disproves stable transition

Beckley 15 (Michael Beckley is a research fellow in the International Security Program at Harvard Kennedy School’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs., “The Myth of Entangling Alliances Michael Beckley Reassessing the Security Risks of U.S. Defense Pacts”, <http://live.belfercenter.org/files/IS3904_pp007-048.pdf>)

The finding that U.S. entanglement is rare has important implications for international relations scholarship and U.S. foreign policy. For scholars, it casts doubt on classic theories of imperial overstretch in which great powers exhaust their resources by accumulating allies that free ride on their protection and embroil them in military quagmires.22 The U.S. experience instead suggests that great powers can dictate the terms of their security commitments and that allies often help their great power protectors avoid strategic overextension.

For policy, the rarity of U.S. entanglement suggests that the United States’ current grand strategy of deep engagement, which is centered on a network of standing alliances, does not preclude, and may even facilitate, U.S. military restraint. Since 1945 the United States has been, by some measures, the most militarily active state in the world. The most egregious cases of U.S. overreach, however, have stemmed not from entangling alliances, but from the penchant of American leaders to define national interests expansively, to overestimate the magnitude of foreign threats, and to underestimate the costs of military intervention. Scrapping alliances will not correct these bad habits. In fact, disengaging from alliances may unleash the United States to intervene recklessly abroad while leaving it without partners to share the burden when those interventions go awry.

#### Conventional military overmatch is key to prevent allied prolif — it outweighs all other commitments.

Lanoszka, 19 — Alexander Lanoszka, PhD, is an assistant professor at the University of Waterloo, has held fellowships at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Dartmouth College. (“Alliances and Nuclear Proliferation in the Trump Era;” *The Washington Quarterly*; 41:4; pg. 87-88; //GrRv)

If treaty pledges are insufficient and threats of nuclear retaliation lack believability, then what information does an ally use to evaluate the strength of its received security guarantees? The answer is that the ally examines the foreign policy doctrine and military deployments of the guarantor to estimate the support the ally can expect if attacked. Foreign policy doctrine conveys information on the interests of the guarantor. Does the United States have the same threat assessment regarding a particular adversary, and does it pursue a similar strategy for containing or confronting that adversary? To what extent does the United States accord importance to the regional theater in which an ally is situated? Like rhetoric, however, foreign policy doctrine can be a noisy indicator: what a guarantor like the United States broadcasts to the world in key policy documents may not reflect what it does in a crisis. Allies thus monitor how and where the United States is spending money on its overseas deployments and military operations to evaluate the credibility of security guarantees.

The most tangible indicator is where (and to what extent) the United States is positioning its forward-deployed forces.13 Yet, the significance of conventional military deployments is often misunderstood since many analysts usually regard all frontline troops as tripwires. According to tripwire theory, these forces are garrisoned on an ally’s territory in order to create additional risks for an adversary. If the adversary attacks the ally and U.S. soldiers happen to die in action, then Washington would be under pressure to retaliate by expanding the conflict beyond what the adversary is willing to tolerate. The tripwire effect is important because it enhances deterrence-by-punishment. But forward-deployed U.S. forces have an additional, often obscured, advantage if they can mass firepower. They can have the capacity to raise the costs of aggression directly by killing an adversary’s attacking soldiers. That is, they can enhance local deterrence-by-denial, which refers to the ability to hinder the adversary from achieving operational success on the battlefield or from executing military faits accomplis at acceptable cost.

The history of nuclear proliferation demonstrates that the military infrastructure undergirding an alliance matters for curbing states’ appetites for nuclear weapons. During the 1950s, West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer appeared satisfied with U.S. security guarantees despite the Eisenhower administration’s stated rhetorical reliance on nuclear weapons to deter Soviet aggression in its New Look strategy. But Adenauer’s confidence appeared to rest in the U.S. troop presence in his country. He so valued that presence that when he read in the New York Times that the U.S. military was planning massive personnel cuts (which in turn would reduce U.S. forces in Europe), he became despondent and lost faith in U.S. security guarantees. Shortly thereafter, Adenauer entered into an arrangement with France and Italy to develop a European nuclear deterrent.14 This initiative was short-lived, but questions over West Germany’s nuclear intentions troubled U.S. decision makers for another decade.

#### Decline causes unstable nuclear alliances that cause war

Hayes 18 [Peter Hayes, Nautilus Institute, Berkeley, California, USA; Center for International Security Studies, Sydney University. Trump and the Interregnum of American Nuclear Hegemony. November 8, 2018. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/25751654.2018.1532525>]

During a **post-hegemonic era**, **long-standing** nuclear **alliances** are likely to be **replaced** by **ad hoc nuclear coalitions**, aligning and realigning around different congeries of threat and even actual **nuclear wars**, with **much higher levels** of **uncertainty** and unpredictability **than** was the case in the **nuclear hegemonic system**.

There are a number of ways that this dynamic could play out during the interregnum, and these dynamics are likely to be inconsistent and contradictory. In some instances, the sheer **momentum** of past policy combined with bureaucratic inertia and the potency of political, military service and corporate interests, may ensure that **residual aspects** of the formerly **hegemonic postures** are adhered to even as formal nuclear alliances rupture. Even as they **reach for** the **old anchors**, these states may be forced to adjust and retrench strategically, or start to **take** their own **nuclear risks** by making **increasingly explicit nuclear threats** and deployments against nuclear-armed adversaries – as **Japan** has begun to do with reference to its “technological deterrent” since about 2012.9 This period could last for many years **until and when** **nuclear war breaks out** and leads to a post-nuclear war disorder; or a new, post-hegemonic strategic framework is established to manage and/or abolish nuclear threat.

**Under** full-blown **American nuclear hegemony**, **fewer states** had **nuclear weapons**, the **major nuclear** weapons **states** entered into **legally binding restraints** on force levels and they learned from nuclear near-misses to **promulgate rules** of the road and tacit understandings. The lines drawn during full-blown collisions involving nuclear weapons were stark and concentrated the minds of leaders greatly. In a nuclear duel, it was clear that only one of two sides could fire first; the only question was which one. Now, with nine nuclear weapons states, and conflicts conceivably involving three, four or more of them, no matter how much leaders concentrate, it will not be evident who is aiming at who, who may fire first, and during a volley, who fired first and even who hit whom.

In a highly proliferated world, nuclear-armed states may feel driven to obtain larger nuclear forces able to deter multiple adversaries at the same time, sufficient to conduct not only a few nuclear attacks but configured to fight **more than one** protracted **nuclear war** **at a time**, especially in nuclear states torn apart by civil war and post-nuclear attack reconstruction. The first time nuclear weapons are used since 1945 will be shocking, the second time, less so, the third time, the **new normal**.

#### Nuclear war

**Kroenig 15** (Matthew, Associate Professor and International Relations Field Chair in the Department of Government and School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, 2015. “The History of Proliferation Optimism: Does It Have a Future?” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Volume 38, Issue 1-2, 2015)

The spread of nuclear weapons poses at least six severe threats to international peace and security including: nuclear war, nuclear terrorism, global and regional instability, constrained US freedom of action, weakened alliances, and further nuclear proliferation. Each of these threats has received extensive treatment elsewhere and this review is not intended to replicate or even necessarily to improve upon these previous efforts. Rather the goals of this section are more modest: to usefully bring together and recap the many reasons why we should be pessimistic about the likely consequences of nuclear proliferation. Many of these threats will be illuminated with a discussion of a case of much contemporary concern: Iran’s advanced nuclear program. Nuclear War The greatest threat posed by the spread of nuclear weapons is nuclear war. The more states in possession of nuclear weapons, the greater the probability that somewhere, someday, there will be a catastrophic nuclear war. To date, nuclear weapons have only been used in warfare once. In 1945, the United States used nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, bringing World War II to a close. Many analysts point to the 65-plus-year tradition of nuclear non-use as evidence that nuclear weapons are unusable, but it would be naïve to think that nuclear weapons will never be used again simply because they have not been used for some time. After all, analysts in the 1990s argued that worldwide economic downturns like the Great Depression were a thing of the past, only to be surprised by the dot-com bubble bursting later in the decade and the Great Recession of the late 2000s.48 This author, for one, would be surprised if nuclear weapons are not used again sometime in his lifetime. Before reaching a state of MAD, new nuclear states go through a transition period in which they lack a secure-second strike capability. In this context, one or both states might believe that it has an incentive to use nuclear weapons first. For example, if Iran acquires nuclear weapons, neither Iran, nor its nuclear-armed rival, Israel, will have a secure, second-strike capability. Even though it is believed to have a large arsenal, given its small size and lack of strategic depth, Israel might not be confident that it could absorb a nuclear strike and respond with a devastating counterstrike. Similarly, Iran might eventually be able to build a large and survivable nuclear arsenal, but, when it first crosses the nuclear threshold, Tehran will have a small and vulnerable nuclear force. In these pre-MAD situations, there are at least three ways that nuclear war could occur. First, the state with the nuclear advantage might believe it has a splendid first strike capability. In a crisis, Israel might, therefore, decide to launch a preventive nuclear strike to disarm Iran’s nuclear capabilities. Indeed, this incentive might be further increased by Israel’s aggressive strategic culture that emphasizes preemptive action. Second, the state with a small and vulnerable nuclear arsenal, in this case Iran, might feel use them or lose them pressures. That is, in a crisis, Iran might decide to strike first rather than risk having its entire nuclear arsenal destroyed. Third, as Thomas Schelling has argued, nuclear war could result due to the reciprocal fear of surprise attack.49 If there are advantages to striking first, one state might start a nuclear war in the belief that war is inevitable and that it would be better to go first than to go second. Fortunately, there is no historic evidence of this dynamic occurring in a nuclear context, but it is still possible. In an Israeli–Iranian crisis, for example, Israel and Iran might both prefer to avoid a nuclear war, but decide to strike first rather than suffer a devastating first attack from an opponent. Even in a world of MAD, however, when both sides have secure, second-strike capabilities, there is still a risk of nuclear war. Rational deterrence theory assumes nuclear-armed states are governed by rational leaders who would not intentionally launch a suicidal nuclear war. This assumption appears to have applied to past and current nuclear powers, but there is no guarantee that it will continue to hold in the future. Iran’s theocratic government, despite its inflammatory rhetoric, has followed a fairly pragmatic foreign policy since 1979, but it contains leaders who hold millenarian religious worldviews and could one day ascend to power. We cannot rule out the possibility that, as nuclear weapons continue to spread, some leader somewhere will choose to launch a nuclear war, knowing full well that it could result in self-destruction. One does not need to resort to irrationality, however, to imagine nuclear war under MAD. Nuclear weapons may deter leaders from intentionally launching full-scale wars, but they do not mean the end of international politics. As was discussed above, nuclear-armed states still have conflicts of interest and leaders still seek to coerce nuclear-armed adversaries. Leaders might, therefore, choose to launch a limited nuclear war.50 This strategy might be especially attractive to states in a position of conventional inferiority that might have an incentive to escalate a crisis quickly to the nuclear level. During the Cold War, the United States planned to use nuclear weapons first to stop a Soviet invasion of Western Europe given NATO’s conventional inferiority.51 As Russia’s conventional power has deteriorated since the end of the Cold War, Moscow has come to rely more heavily on nuclear weapons in its military doctrine. Indeed, Russian strategy calls for the use of nuclear weapons early in a conflict (something that most Western strategists would consider to be escalatory) as a way to de-escalate a crisis. Similarly, Pakistan’s military plans for nuclear use in the event of an invasion from conventionally stronger India. And finally, Chinese generals openly talk about the possibility of nuclear use against a US superpower in a possible East Asia contingency. Second, as was also discussed above, leaders can make a ‘threat that leaves something to chance’.52 They can initiate a nuclear crisis. By playing these risky games of nuclear brinkmanship, states can increase the risk of nuclear war in an attempt to force a less resolved adversary to back down. Historical crises have not resulted in nuclear war, but many of them, including the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, have come close. And scholars have documented historical incidents when accidents nearly led to war.53 When we think about future nuclear crisis dyads, such as Iran and Israel, with fewer sources of stability than existed during the Cold War, we can see that there is a real risk that a future crisis could result in a devastating nuclear exchange. Nuclear Terrorism The spread of nuclear weapons also increases the risk of nuclear terrorism.54 While September 11th was one of the greatest tragedies in American history, it would have been much worse had Osama Bin Laden possessed nuclear weapons. Bin Laden declared it a ‘religious duty’ for Al- Qa’eda to acquire nuclear weapons and radical clerics have issued fatwas declaring it permissible to use nuclear weapons in Jihad against the West.55 Unlike states, which can be more easily deterred, there is little doubt that if terrorists acquired nuclear weapons, they would use them.56 Indeed, in recent years, many US politicians and security analysts have argued that nuclear terrorism poses the greatest threat to US national security.57 Analysts have pointed out the tremendous hurdles that terrorists would have to overcome in order to acquire nuclear weapons.58 Nevertheless, as nuclear weapons spread, the possibility that they will eventually fall into terrorist hands increases. States could intentionally transfer nuclear weapons, or the fissile material required to build them, to terrorist groups. There are good reasons why a state might be reluctant to transfer nuclear weapons to terrorists, but, as nuclear weapons spread, the probability that a leader might someday purposely arm a terrorist group increases. Some fear, for example, that Iran, with its close ties to Hamas and Hizballah, might be at a heightened risk of transferring nuclear weapons to terrorists. Moreover, even if no state would ever intentionally transfer nuclear capabilities to terrorists, a new nuclear state, with underdeveloped security procedures, might be vulnerable to theft, allowing terrorist groups or corrupt or ideologically-motivated insiders to transfer dangerous material to terrorists. There is evidence, for example, that representatives from Pakistan’s atomic energy establishment met with Al-Qa’eda members to discuss a possible nuclear deal.59 Finally, a nuclear-armed state could collapse, resulting in a breakdown of law and order and a loose nukes problem. US officials are currently very concerned about what would happen to Pakistan’s nuclear weapons if the government were to fall. As nuclear weapons spread, this problem is only further amplified. Iran is a country with a history of revolutions and a government with a tenuous hold on power. The regime change that Washington has long dreamed about in Tehran could actually become a nightmare if a nuclear-armed Iran suffered a breakdown in authority, forcing us to worry about the fate of Iran’s nuclear arsenal. Regional Instability The spread of nuclear weapons also emboldens nuclear powers, contributing to regional instability. States that lack nuclear weapons need to fear direct military attack from other states, but states with nuclear weapons can be confident that they can deter an intentional military attack, giving them an incentive to be more aggressive in the conduct of their foreign policy. In this way, nuclear weapons provide a shield under which states can feel free to engage in lower-level aggression. Indeed, international relations theories about the ‘stability-instability paradox’ maintain that stability at the nuclear level contributes to conventional instability.60 Historically, we have seen that the spread of nuclear weapons has emboldened their possessors and contributed to regional instability. Recent scholarly analyses have demonstrated that, after controlling for other relevant factors, nuclear-weapon states are more likely to engage in conflict than nonnuclear-weapon states and that this aggressiveness is more pronounced in new nuclear states that have less experience with nuclear diplomacy.61 Similarly, research on internal decision-making in Pakistan reveals that Pakistani foreign policymakers may have been emboldened by the acquisition of nuclear weapons, which encouraged them to initiate militarized disputes against India.62 Currently, Iran restrains its foreign policy because it fears major military retaliation from the United States or Israel, but with nuclear weapons it could feel free to push harder. A nuclear-armed Iran would likely step up support to terrorist and proxy groups and engage in more aggressive coercive diplomacy. With a nuclear-armed Iran increasingly throwing its weight around in the region, we could witness an even more crisis prone Middle East. And in a poly-nuclear Middle East with Israel, Iran, and, in the future, possibly other states, armed with nuclear weapons, any one of those crises could result in a catastrophic nuclear exchange.

#### China is revisionist – its ambitions aren’t regionally checked containment k2 prevent nuclear conflict

Choi 18 [Ji Young Choi, associate professor in the Department of Politics and Government and affiliated professor in the International Studies Program and East Asian Studies Program at Ohio Wesleyan University. “Historical and Theoretical Perspectives on the Rise of China: Long Cycles, Power Transitions, and China's Ascent”]

Another important aspect is that Beijing is beginning to voice its dissatisfaction with the existing international economic order and take actions that could potentially change this order. The Chinese economy has overall benefited from the post-World War II international liberal order, but the Bretton Woods institutions like the IMF and the World Bank have been dominated by the United States and its allies and China does not have much power or voice in these institutions. Both institutions are based in Washington, DC, and the United States has enjoyed the largest voting shares with its veto power. Along with other emerging economies, China has called for significant reforms, especially in the governing system of the IMF, but reform plans to give more power to China and other emerging economies have been delayed by the opposition of the US Congress (Choi 2013). In response to this, Beijing recently took the initiative to create new international financial institutions including the AIIB. At this moment, it is premature to say that these new institutions would be able to replace the Bretton Woods institutions. Nonetheless, this new development can be read as a starting point for significant changes in global economic and financial governance that has been dominated by the United States since the end of World War II (Subacchi 2015).

China's historical legacies reinforce the view that China has a willingness to become a global hegemon . From the Ming dynasty in the late fourteenth century to the start of the first Opium War in 1839, China enjoyed its undisputed hegemonic position in East Asia. "Sino-centrism" that is related to this historical reality has long governed the mentality of Chinese people. According to this hierarchical world view, China, as the most advanced civilization, is at the center of East Asia and the world, and all China's neighbors are vassal states (Kang 2010). This mentality was openly revealed by the Chinese foreign minister's recent public statement that I quoted previously: "China is a big country . . . and other countries are small countries and that is just a fact" (Economist 2012). This view is related to Chinese people's ancient superiority complex that developed from the long history and rich cultural heritage of Chinese civilization (Jacques 2012). In a sense, China has always been a superpower regardless of its economic standing at least in most Chinese people's mind-set. The strong national or civilizational pride of Chinese people, however, was severely damaged by "the Century of Humiliation," a period between the first Opium War (1839) and the end of the Chinese Civil War (1949). During this period, China was encroached on by the West and invaded by Japan, experienced prolonged civil conflicts, and finally became a semicolony of Great Britain while its northern territory was occupied by Japan. China's economic modernization is viewed as a national project to lay an economic foundation to overcome this bitter experience of subjugation and shame and recover its traditional position and old glory (Choi 2015). Viewed from this perspective, economic modernization or the accumulation of wealth is not an ultimate objective of China. Rather, its final goal is to return to its traditional status by expanding its global political and military as well as economic influence. What it ultimately desires is recognition (Anerkennung), respect (Respekt), and status (Stellung). These are important concepts for constructivists who see ideational motives as the main driving forces behind interstate conflicts (Lebow 2008). This reveals that constructivist elements can be combined with long cycle and power transition theories in explaining the rise and fall of great powers, although further systematic studies on it are needed.

Considering all this, China has always been a territorial power rather than a trading state. China does not seem to be satisfied only with the global expansion of international trade and the conquest of foreign markets. It also wants to broaden its (particularly maritime) territories and spheres of influenceto recover its traditional political status as the Middle Kingdom. As emphasized previously, the type or nature and goals or ideologies of a rising power matter. Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan (territorial powers) experienced rapid economic expansion and sought to expand their territories and influence in the first half of the twentieth century. For example, during this period Japan's goal was to create the Japanese empire in East Asia under the motto of the East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere. On the other hand, democratized Germany and Japan (trading powers) that enjoyed a second economic expansion did not pursue the expansion of their territories and spheres of influence in the post-World War II era. Twentieth century history suggests that political regimes predicated upon nondemocratic or nonliberal values and cultures (for instance, Nazism in Germany and militarism in Japan before the mid-twentieth century, and communism in the Soviet Union during the Cold War) can pose significant challenges to democratic and liberal regimes. The empirical studies of Lemke and Reed (1996) show that the democratic peace thesis can be used as a subset of power transition theory. According to their studies, states organized similarly to the dominant powers politically and economically (liberal democracy) are generally satisfied with the existing international rules and order and they tend to be status quo states. Another historical lesson is that economic interdependence alone cannot prevent a war for hegemony. Germany was one of the main trade partners of Great Britain before World War I (Friedberg 2011), and Japan was the number three importer of American products before its attack on Pearl Harbor (Keylor 2011). A relatively peaceful relationship or transition is possible when economic interdependence is supported by a solid democratic alliance between a rising great power and an existing or declining one.

Some scholars such as Ikenberry (2008) emphasize nuclear deterrence and the high costs of a nuclear war. Power transition theorists agree that the high costs of a nuclear war can constrain a war among great powers but do not view them as "a perfect deterrent" to war (Kugler and Zagare 1990; Tammen et al. 2000). The idea of nuclear deterrence is based upon the assumption of the rationality of actors (states): as long as the costs of a (nuclear) war are higher than its benefits, an actor (state) will not initiate the war. However, even some rationalists admit that certain actors (such as exceedingly ambitious risk-taking states) do not behave rationally and engage in unexpected military actions or pursue military overexpansion beyond its capacity (Glaser 2010). The state's behaviors are driven by its values, perceptions, and political ambitions as well as its rational calculations of costs and benefits. Especially, national pride, historical memories, and territorial disputes can make states behave emotionally. The possibility of a war between a democratic nation and a nondemocratic regime increases because they do not share the same values and beliefs and, therefore, the level of mistrust between them tends to be very high. China and the United States have enhanced their cooperation to address various global issues like global warming, international terrorism, energy issues, and global economic stability. But these issues are not strong enough to bring them together to overcome their mistrust that stems from their different values, beliefs, and perceptions (Friedberg 2011). What is more important is whether they can set mutually agreeable international rules on traditional security issues including territorial disputes.

#### Removing presence makes terror worse by emboldening extremism and undermining security networks necessary for counter-insurgent strategy

Brands 18 [Hal, Henry Kissinger Distinguished Professor at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies and a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments." American Grand Strategy in the Age of Trump." Page 38-40]

Take the issue of terrorism. To be clear, offshore balancers are right that U.S. onshore presence in the Persian Gulf (and the broader Middle East) has sometimes acted as a stimulant to extremist violence. The stationing of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia from 1990 onward was one important cause of al-Qaeda’s deadly campaign against American targets, and the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 and afterward helped reinvigorate a jihadist movement that had been pummeled following 9/11. More generally, scholarly research indicates that contesting foreign troop deployments and occupation is one driver of suicide terrorism.36 There is thus something to the argument that U.S. policies have fueled the fires of jihad. What is more dubious is the claim that shifting to offshore balancing would significantly ameliorate the problem.

The primary cause for doubt is that while stationing U.S. troops in Muslim countries has historically been one cause of anti-American terrorism, it has never been the only one. That phenomenon also grew out of anger at U.S. support for authoritarian Middle Eastern regimes, Washington’s relationship with Israel, the encroachment of Western cultural and economic influences on Muslim societies, and other grievances that were prominent in early al-Qaeda pronouncements and still resonate today. In 2010, for instance, an al-Qaeda spokesman announced that it would take more than withdrawing U.S. troops from Muslim lands to make jihadist attacks stop. The United States would also have to end its support to Israel, prohibit all trade and investment in that country, terminate all aid to “the hated regimes of the Muslim world,” cease “all interference in the religion, society, politics, economy, and government” of the region, and so on. Similarly, as one expert notes, “Even U.S. intelligence liaison, which involves sharing information, training, and other forms of exchange, is . . . a sensitive issue” for al-Qaeda and other jihadists. Anti-American terrorism has always had a complex genesis, and avoiding U.S. military presence would address but one of the relevant complaints.37

Were the United States to embrace offshore balancing, it would actually aggravate some of those grievances further. A true offshore balancing strategy would make the United States more reliant on authoritarian Arab regimes—in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and other countries—as bulwarks of stability in the region. It would imply an increase in military sales, intelligence partnerships, and other support for these governments, and a tolerance for precisely the sort of friendly dictators approach that Muslim radicals deplore. In the same vein, while many offshore balancers call on Washington to distance itself from Israel, Colin Kahl and Marc Lynch have rightly noted that the logic of the strategy would certainly increase U.S. dependence on that country as the strongest, friendliest military power in a very volatile region.38 In effect, then, offshore balancing would require doubling down on policies that have long stoked jihadist resentment.