### CASE – Taiwan

#### Talmadge says war unlikely AND stays conventional

Caitlin Talmadge 18, Associate Professor of Security Studies at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, November/December 2018, “Beijing’s Nuclear Option,” Foreign Affairs, Vol. 65, No. 5

As China’s power has grown in recent years, so, too, has the risk of war with the United States. Under President Xi Jinping, China has increased its political and economic pressure on Taiwan and built military installations on coral reefs in the South China Sea, fueling Washington’s fears that Chinese expansionism will threaten U.S. allies and influence in the region. U.S. destroyers have transited the Taiwan Strait, to loud protests from Beijing. American policymakers have wondered aloud whether they should send an aircraft carrier through the strait as well. Chinese fighter jets have intercepted U.S. aircraft in the skies above the South China Sea. Meanwhile, U.S. President Donald Trump has brought long-simmering economic disputes to a rolling boil. A war between the two countries remains unlikely, but the prospect of a military confrontation—resulting, for example, from a Chinese campaign against Taiwan—no longer seems as implausible as it once did. And the odds of such a confrontation going nuclear are higher than most policymakers and analysts think. Members of China’s strategic community tend to dismiss such concerns. Likewise, U.S. studies of a potential war with China often exclude nuclear weapons from the analysis entirely, treating them as basically irrelevant to the course of a conflict. Asked about the issue in 2015, Dennis Blair, the former commander of U.S. forces in the Indo-Pacific, estimated the likelihood of a U.S.-Chinese nuclear crisis as “somewhere between nil and zero.” This assurance is misguided. If deployed against China, the Pentagon’s preferred style of conventional warfare would be a potential recipe for nuclear escalation. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States’ signature approach to war has been simple: punch deep into enemy territory in order to rapidly knock out the opponent’s key military assets at minimal cost. But the Pentagon developed this formula in wars against Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Serbia, none of which was a nuclear power. China, by contrast, not only has nuclear weapons; it has also intermingled them with its conventional military forces, making it difficult to attack one without attacking the other. This means that a major U.S. military campaign targeting China’s conventional forces would likely also threaten its nuclear arsenal. Faced with such a threat, Chinese leaders could decide to use their nuclear weapons while they were still able to. As U.S. and Chinese leaders navigate a relationship fraught with mutual suspicion, they must come to grips with the fact that a conventional war could skid into a nuclear confrontation. Although this risk is not high in absolute terms, its consequences for the region and the world would be devastating. As long as the United States and China continue to pursue their current grand strategies, the risk is likely to endure. This means that leaders on both sides should dispense with the illusion that they can easily fight a limited war. They should focus instead on managing or resolving the political, economic, and military tensions that might lead to a conflict in the first place. A NEW KIND OF THREAT There are some reasons for optimism. For one, China has long stood out for its nonaggressive nuclear doctrine. After its first nuclear test, in 1964, China largely avoided the Cold War arms race, building a much smaller and simpler nuclear arsenal than its resources would have allowed. Chinese leaders have consistently characterized nuclear weapons as useful only for deterring nuclear aggression and coercion. Historically, this narrow purpose required only a handful of nuclear weapons that could ensure Chinese retaliation in the event of an attack. To this day, China maintains a “no first use” pledge, promising that it will never be the first to use nuclear weapons. The prospect of a nuclear conflict can also seem like a relic of the Cold War. Back then, the United States and its allies lived in fear of a Warsaw Pact offensive rapidly overrunning Europe. NATO stood ready to use nuclear weapons first to stalemate such an attack. Both Washington and Moscow also consistently worried that their nuclear forces could be taken out in a bolt-from-the-blue nuclear strike by the other side. This mutual fear increased the risk that one superpower might rush to launch in the erroneous belief that it was already under attack. Initially, the danger of unauthorized strikes also loomed large. In the 1950s, lax safety procedures for U.S. nuclear weapons stationed on NATO soil, as well as minimal civilian oversight of U.S. military commanders, raised a serious risk that nuclear escalation could have occurred without explicit orders from the U.S. president. The good news is that these Cold War worries have little bearing on U.S.-Chinese relations today. Neither country could rapidly overrun the other’s territory in a conventional war. Neither seems worried about a nuclear bolt from the blue. And civilian political control of nuclear weapons is relatively strong in both countries. What remains, in theory, is the comforting logic of mutual deterrence: in a war between two nuclear powers, neither side will launch a nuclear strike for fear that its enemy will respond in kind. The bad news is that one other trigger remains: a conventional war that threatens China’s nuclear arsenal. Conventional forces can threaten nuclear forces in ways that generate pressures to escalate—especially when ever more capable U.S. conventional forces face adversaries with relatively small and fragile nuclear arsenals, such as China. If U.S. operations endangered or damaged China’s nuclear forces, Chinese leaders might come to think that Washington had aims beyond winning the conventional war—that it might be seeking to disable or destroy China’s nuclear arsenal outright, perhaps as a prelude to regime change. In the fog of war, Beijing might reluctantly conclude that limited nuclear escalation—an initial strike small enough that it could avoid full-scale U.S. retaliation—was a viable option to defend itself.

#### Even if they intervene, no extinction

David J. Lonsdale 19 {David Lonsdale is the Director of the Centre for Security Studies at the University of Hull, UK. 5/17/2019. “The 2018 Nuclear Posture Review: A return to nuclear warfighting?” https://www-tandfonline-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/doi/full/10.1080/01495933.2019.1573074}//JM

The important question is: what objectives would the U.S. pursue within a nuclear conflict, and how would they be achieved? It appears that the primary objectives sought would be damage limitation (an important component of warfighting) and the reestablishment of deterrence. This fits with the preliminary qualifying statement to this section of the review, in which it is stated that the U.S. would use nuclear weapons in compliance with the law of armed conflict.86 Indeed, the NPR is at pains to note that nuclear forces would only be used for defensive purposes. One assumes that this rules out counter-value targeting (deliberate attacks against enemy population centers). This leaves counterforce operations as the only option. Strikes against enemy nuclear forces and their command and control, in conjunction with active ballistic missile defenses (BMD), would help ensure damage limitation for the U.S. and its allies.87 A focus on counterforce options is reminiscent of later Cold War strategy, when the U.S. increasingly procured weapon systems with increased accuracy and penetrative capability designed for warfighting. Indeed, Lieber and Press argue that increases in accuracy and remote sensing have enhanced the potency of counterforce options, to the point that low-casualty counterforce options are possible for the first time.88 One can reasonably assume, although it is not explicitly noted in the review, that the restoration of deterrence would be achieved through a combination of intra-war deterrence by denial (as noted above in relation to counter-escalation strategies) and punishment for coercive purposes. Inclusion of the latter is premised on references to “unacceptable consequences” resulting from nuclear attack elsewhere in the NPR. 89 However, in the face of no counter-value targeting, it is reasonable to question how these costs would be inflicted. There are three possible answers, although none of them is discussed in the NPR. First, it may be that the enemy values highly their nuclear forces; so that the loss of them would inflict unacceptable costs. Alternatively, there may be an unwritten assumption that counterforce strikes would inevitably produce “bonus” counter-value damage. Much of the nuclear force infrastructure (including command and control, airbases, etc.) is within or near population centers. Thus, even a limited counterforce strike is likely to have a significant detrimental effect on counter-value targets. This assumption, however, is somewhat thrown into question by the stated desire to procure accurate limited-yield weapons and to operate within the norms of the war convention. Low-yield accurate weapons would be ideal for counterforce missions and would minimize damage to counter-value target sets. Thus, bonus damage is likely to be limited. Finally, although again not explicitly noted in the NPR, perhaps there is a return to the notion of attacking targets associated with political control. Yet again, though, concerns over collateral damage would likely restrict a campaign aimed at the means of political control. We are, thus, left with many questions concerning how the coercive effects of nuclear weapons would be administered. This is problematic, for as Thomas C. Schelling eloquently noted, “The power to hurt can be counted among the most impressive attributes of military force.” 90 It has to be concluded that the uncertainties in this area of strategy reflect either a paradox or incomplete strategic thinking in the NPR. Clarity on these matters would be welcome, especially as it would enhance deterrence credibility still further. Although countervailing is back on the agenda in the 2018 NPR, there is no mention of prevailing in a nuclear conflict. Indeed, the review quotes Defense Secretary Mattis, echoing the early thoughts of Brodie, that nuclear war can never be won, and thus must never be fought.91 This is both curious and disappointing from a warfighting perspective, and speaks to the need for the further development of strategic thinking in U.S. nuclear strategy under Trump. Damage limitation and the reestablishment of deterrence are perfectly admirable goals within the context of nuclear conflict. However, if the U.S. is to achieve its objectives in a post-deterrence environment, it must have a comprehensive theory of victory. Damage limitation and the reestablishment of deterrence are limited negative objectives. They do not provide a positive driving force for the use of nuclear weapons. To reiterate, victory refers to a policy objective that must be achieved in the face of the enemy. And, as Clausewitz reminds us, the will of the enemy must be broken by destroying his ability to resist, or putting him in such a position as his defeat is inevitable.92 If we consider the conditions under which U.S. nuclear weapons could be used, as stipulated by the 2018 NPR, then we can assume that an enemy power (likely Russia, China, North Korea, or a state-sponsored terror group) has launched a substantial attack on either the U.S. or one of its allies. We can think in terms of a Russian assault on the Baltic States, a North Korean attack on South Korea, or perhaps a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. Alternatively, the U.S. may have been subjected to a substantial strategic attack, involving either weapons of mass destruction (including biological or chemical) or a crippling cyberattack. In any of these scenarios, more expansive objectives would be required. As Lieber and Press note, “In some cases, wars may be triggered by events that compel U.S. leaders to pursue decisive victory, conquest, and/or regime change.” 93 Thus, in order to achieve its objectives, the U.S. would variously need to: punish an aggressor to reinstate deterrence; defeat enemy forces for damage limitation or to reclaim lost territory; and, in the North Korean case, presumably overthrow a communist regime. In some of these cases, damage limitation and the reestablishment of deterrence would not be enough. Enemy forces would have to be defeated, removed, destroyed, or coerced (to withdraw from allied territory). Any operations in pursuit of these goals would need a theory of victory built on a detailed understanding of the use of nuclear weapons in the service of military objectives; i.e., nuclear warfighting. This could include defeating enemy nuclear forces for force protection of U.S. and allied conventional forces. Alternatively, U.S. nuclear forces may be required to defeat regionally superior enemy conventional forces. And yet, as previously noted, the NPR rules out a return to nuclear warfighting. This is a significant disjuncture in U.S. nuclear strategy. It is even more curious when one considers the range of modern forces the Trump administration seeks to acquire under the 2018 NPR.

#### No impact—First strike can deter and disarm nuclear use

Lieber, Professor of Poli Sci – Notre Dame, and Press, Professor of Poli Sci – University of Pennsylvania, ‘7

(Keir and Daryl, “Superiority Complex,” The Atlantic, July/August)

By putting its nuclear forces on alert, however, China’s leaders would compel a U.S. president to make a very difficult decision: to accede to blackmail (by agreeing to a cease-fire and pressuring the Taiwanese to renounce independence), to assume that the threat is a bluff (a dangerous proposition, given that each Chinese ICBM carries a city-busting 4,000-kiloton warhead), or to strike the Chinese missiles before they could be launched.

How do America’s growing counterforce capabilities affect this scenario? First, American nuclear primacy may prevent such a war in the first place. China’s leaders understand that their military now has little hope of defeating U.S. air and naval forces. If they also recognize that their nuclear arsenal is vulnerable—and that placing it on alert might trigger a preemptive strike—the leaders may conclude that war is a no-win proposition.

Second, if a war over Taiwan started anyway, U.S. nuclear primacy might help contain the fighting at the conventional level. Early in the crisis, Washington could quietly convey to Beijing that the United States would act decisively if China put its vulnerable nuclear arsenal on alert.

Finally, if China threatened to launch nuclear attacks against America’s allies, its territory, or its forces in Asia, nuclear primacy would make a preemptive first strike more palatable to U.S. leaders. Any decision to attack China’s ICBM force, though, would be fraught with danger. A missile silo might have escaped detection. Furthermore, a strike on China’s 18 ICBMs would leave Beijing with roughly 60 shorter-range nuclear missiles with which to retaliate against U.S. forces and allies in the region. However, in the aftermath of a “clean” disarming strike—one that killed relatively few Chinese—American leaders could credibly warn that a Chinese nuclear response would trigger truly devastating consequences, meaning nuclear attacks against a broader target set, including military, government, and possibly even urban centers. In light of warnings from Chinese defense analysts and from within China’s military that it might use nuclear weapons to avoid losing Taiwan, an American president might feel compelled to strike first. In this terrible circumstance, he or she would reap the benefits of the past decade’s counterforce upgrades.

#### US will stay out – their draw in warrant is horrible

Metz 2/8/19 [Steven Metz is the author of “Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy.” His WPR column appears every Friday. You can follow him on Twitter @steven\_metz. "How Committed Is the U.S. to Fending Off a War Over Taiwan?" https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/27395/how-committed-is-the-u-s-to-fending-off-a-war-over-taiwan]

But would Trump use military force to defend Taiwan? Even without large-scale U.S. involvement, China might not be able to conquer Taiwan outright. Conventional military invasions across bodies of water are extremely difficult. And time would not be on Beijing’s side since any invasion would be disruptive, even catastrophic, for both the global economy and China, which depends on exports of manufactured goods and imports of energy and raw materials to sustain its economy.

The United States might respond to a Chinese invasion of Taiwan with long-range military strikes plus standoff air defense, anti-ship, space and cyber operations. But “might” is the operative word. U.S. involvement would entail massive risk. There is the potential that Americans might simply accept the conquest of Taiwan.

Things would be even more difficult for Washington if China opted for the sort of “gray zone” aggression that Russia has used to weaken Ukraine—avoiding an outright military invasion and relying on other destabilizing methods that combine political, economic, military and technological interference to avoid provoking a devastating response from the United States. This would be particularly tricky for Washington if China were able to replicate what Russia did in Ukraine and find local allies or proxies.

#### China wouldn’t win

Roy 18 [Denny Roy is a senior fellow at the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii "What would the US do if Beijing decided to take Taiwan by force?" https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/geopolitics/article/2156237/what-would-us-do-if-beijing-decided-take-taiwan-force]

The only sure way to compel Taiwan’s surrender would be for PLA soldiers to occupy Taiwan’s major cities. But even as China’s military capabilities improve, the chances of success in an all-out invasion of Taiwan are low – even if the United States did not intervene on Taiwan’s behalf. China would need to ferry its troops, most of them packed into slow-moving and highly visible ships, across the 160km wide Taiwan Strait, where they would be highly vulnerable to attack, and then unload them and huge amounts of ammunition and other supplies while trudging through sand or mud and under heavy fire. China has the capacity to transport only a few tens of thousands of troops at a time. Much of this force would not make it across the strait. Awaiting the survivors would be 180,000 active duty Taiwanese soldiers plus 1.5 million reservists.

If the United States chose to intervene, US aircraft from bases in the region could begin flying missions within hours. China might try to impede this by firing missiles to temporarily knock out runways used by US aircraft, but this would reduce the number of missiles available to hit Taiwan, and also bring Japan’s military forces fully into a war.

Even if it won the military campaign, Beijing would face the daunting prospect of trying to rule a society that was accustomed to democratic governance and would be inveterately hostile towards China for generations to come. Tibet would appear quiescent by comparison.

#### The US won’t intervene for a non-recognized, non-allied state.

Babones 16 (Salvatore, Associate fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS), 1-12-2016, “One China, One Taiwan” https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/taiwan/2016-01-12/one-china-one-taiwan)

Although a Taiwanese declaration of independence would arouse much sympathy in the United States, it would not likely result in American diplomatic recognition. Taiwan may be a fellow democracy with free and vibrant political institutions, but the United States is a [global hegemon](http://nationalinterest.org/feature/american-hegemony-here-stay-13089) with global responsibilities and a massive stake in the stability of the Asia-Pacific region. The United States may [sell weapons](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-taiwan-arms-idUSKBN0TZ2C520151217) to Taiwan in a tit-for-tat response to [Chinese expansionism](http://www.cnbc.com/2015/11/22/china-spratlys-island-building-is-to-protect-reefs-make-civilian-facilities.html) in the South China Sea, but it is not about to start World War III over Taiwanese sovereignty. The real revolution of a DPP victory in Taiwan will be a revolution in identity. There is already a [pitched battle](http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/07/21/taiwan-textbook-controversy-china-independence-history/) in Taiwan over the teaching of history. In the old textbooks, the history of the Chinese people began in the fertile valley of the Yellow River and ended in exile on the rocky island of Taiwan. In the new textbooks, the lush island of Taiwan was buffeted by historical forces beyond its control but ultimately found its way to democracy, prosperity, and independence. The emergence of a distinctively Taiwanese identity is bitterly resisted by the old guard of the KMT, but the people of Taiwan [overwhelmingly identify](https://www.aei.org/publication/chinese-check-forging-new-identities-hong-kong-taiwan-2/) either as Taiwanese or as a mix of Taiwanese and Chinese. Nearly 90 percent of Taiwanese want [equal status](http://www.taiwan.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=13053&ctNode=1937&mp=999) for their country in the international community. While these numbers are somewhat suspect—the questions seem designed in such a way as to elicit a positive response—the [overall trend](http://esc.nccu.edu.tw/course/news.php?Sn=167) is clear. Although most can trace a Chinese heritage,[very few](http://esc.nccu.edu.tw/course/news.php?Sn=166) people in Taiwan want to be Chinese. American pundits often discuss whether the United States should accommodate China through the [Finlandization](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2010-01-01/not-so-dire-straits) of Taiwan or even [abandon Taiwan](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2011-03-01/will-chinas-rise-lead-war) to China. Such analyses are at least 30 years too late. Taiwan will never again be part of China. That train has left the station. Taiwan is a [highly successful](https://www.aei.org/publication/why-giving-up-taiwan-will-not-help-us-with-china/) country of more than 23 million people with its own politics and its own place in the world. Admittedly, that place may fall short of what many Taiwanese people want for their country, but it is nonetheless secure. January’s election won’t change that.

#### Empirics and geography prove.

Roger **Jiang, 17**, "To protect Taiwan, would the United States go to war with China if China were determined to take it back?," Quora, https://www.quora.com/To-protect-Taiwan-would-the-United-States-go-to-war-with-China-if-China-were-determined-to-take-it-back)SEM

If the US didn’t intervene militarily when Russia annexed Crimea, why do people think it will go into war with China over Taiwan? Let us first take a look at war potentials - Russia GDP was 1/5 of the US in 2016 in PPP terms while China’s GDP in PPP was about 10% higher than that of the US, according to IMF data. Moreover, Chinese manufacuring output in value terms is roughly equal to those of the US and Japan, COMBINED. China also controls most of the rare earth in the world, a key ingredient for modern electronics. And China boasts the largest ship building capacity and ouput globally - China is building FOUR 12,000 ton warships simultaneously, and the same shipyards are still working on the commercial orders at the same time, AND that is just the shipyards in Shanghai and Dalian that we are talking about - another major shipyard in Guangzhou is not yet involved. People simply have no idea how massive Chinese industrial capacity is. Lastly, Taiwan is about 200km away from mainland China but about 10,000km away from mainland US. Who do you think has the geographical advantage here? Now let us talk about economics - Russia barely had any trade with the US but China is the largest trading partner with both the US and the EU. China is the largest car market in the world where both European and American car companies have made massive investments. China is also the largest customer of Boeing, Airbus, BMW and Qualcom, etc. GE, Intel, Pfizer etc. are doing billions of business in China. And China buys tons and tons of American agricultural and fishery products. When the economic benefits are large enough, they always trump geo-political considerations - why was UK, the long time ally of the US, the first country to join China’s Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), despite strong US opposition? Didn’t the Europeans know that AIIB is China’s attempt to build another global financial framework in challenge to World Bank and IMF? I am sure the Europeans know it pretty well but they are smart enough not to let ideological difference stop them from making a buck or two. And they also wanna hedge their bets. The Brits are known for stratigic vision and they surely know how to adjust the ship when the tide is changing. Many Taiwanese have this ludicrous belief that Taiwan is of such an importance to the world that the whole world would come to Taiwan’s rescue should China invade Taiwan. But the reality is that most people outside East Asia cannot even find Taiwan on a map and couldn’t care less about a remote island somewhere in the Pacific… Yeah, the West loves talking about democracy, freedom and human rights. But to risk a global economic recession, huge loss of lives and even nuclear holocaust, to rescue some island that has always been officially recognized as a part of China by world governments? Nah… If China invades Taiwan, clearly a small skirmish is simply not enough to stop China. But a large scale fully blown war will have unbearable costs. So when fighting small wont work and fighting big is too costly, what do you do? You do nothing. So, no, the US will not go into war with China over Taiwan.

#### We’ll concede that Chinese economic collapse collapses the global economic order—no new 1AR impacts justifies infinite new 1AR addons that makes being neg impossible—rehighlighting in yellow.

Lopez 10-24 Linette Lopez 10-24-2021 "If China's economy keeps stumbling, it won't just take down Beijing - the whoel world will collapse with it" <https://archive.md/M4qjY#selection-2241.0-2250.1> (Linette is the senior finance correspondent at Business Insider, writing a combination of opinions and analysis. She joined BI in the summer of 2011 after graduating from Columbia University's School of Journalism.)//Elmer

**China's economy** — the 2nd-largest in the world — **is teetering on the brink of disaster**. Since this spring, Beijing has **canceled** initial **public offerings**, **fined tech companies** billions for antitrust violations, forcibly **shut down** China's entire for-profit **education industry**, and **sent CEOs running** for the exits to avoid the government's ire. Even more dire, the Chinese megadeveloper Evergrande recently started missing payments on its more than $300 billion in debt, shaking global markets. The convulsions have woken the world up to a startling new possibility — that Beijing may be willing to allow some of its private corporate behemoths to collapse in a bid to reshape the economic model that made China a superpower. The **upheaval**, spanning multiple industries and vast swaths of the country, **is** the result of one giant issue: **China's inability to** **borrow or buy** its **way out of its current economic crisis**. **For decades**, the country **relied on cheap labor** and eye-popping amounts of debt, handed out by government-owned banks, to fuel economic growth — pouring money into massive apartment developments, factories, bridges, and other projects at lightning speed. **Now** the **country** **needs people to actually use**, **and pay for**, **everything that's been built**. But the **bulk of China's population lacks** the **income needed to shift the economy** from one driven by state investments to one sustained by consumer spending. As a result, China finds itself stuck with a system that is overbuilt and overindebted. Take the country's $52 trillion property market, of which the Evergrande mess is the poster child. With money easy to borrow, real-estate speculation became a popular way to store and build wealth for China's young middle class. One academic described this model to me colorfully as an "addiction to real-estate cocaine." It's also been called a "treadmill to hell." As the government now attempts to deflate the real-estate bubble without bursting it, it has been forced to prepare the country for a period of slower growth and belt-tightening. And to make matters worse, China is also facing an energy crisis fueled by skyrocketing coal prices as well as a working-age population that is getting old without enough resources to retire on. In the face of all of these obstacles, Beijing has made a dubious choice. Instead of continuing to open the economy to spur growth, the Chinese Communist Party is closing it. Under President Xi Jinping, Chinese socialism is reverting to a model not seen in decades, with tighter state control over much of the economy. That's why you're seeing Beijing cancel massive IPOs and level entire industries. Economists expect this ideological shift to slow growth even more, which in turn would make China's attempts to transform its economy that much more precarious. "I think Xi is incredibly ideological, and he's focused on his legacy," Charlene Chu, a debt analyst at Autonomous Research, told me. "He really wants to reshape China and put it on the global stage — and that does require a reset from the way we've been doing things previously." The transition from open markets to state control won't be easy to manage, and there's much at stake — for all of us. If Beijing fails at its ambitious plan, it could set off shock waves that would crater the global financial system, slow trade, and devastate businesses worldwide. The resulting chaos, and the crisis of faith in the CCP that would accompany it, could lead to social instability in China, spurring the central government to place an even tighter grip on civil society. In short, Beijing is walking an economic high-wire act, trying to replace its economic model with something unknown. In the process, the weight of its old, debt-ridden system is causing China to wobble. And if the country falls, it could take the rest of the world with it. What China is and how it came to be If you want to pinpoint the moment that set China on the path to where it is today, you have to go back to 1984. That's when Deng Xiaoping, chairman of the Communist Party, approved the Decision of Reform of Economic Structure, which rewrote the rulebook for the Chinese economy. Instead of the state directly operating every industrial sector, it would now allow state-owned businesses to flourish without direct government involvement. That ideological flexibility — combined with the country's creation of a modern banking system — paved the way for the emergence of privately-owned companies. Freed from direct government oversight, and flush with free-flowing loans, China's manufacturing sector boomed. People from rural areas flocked to fill the privately-owned, debt-built factories, and a middle class took shape. In 1992, 27% of the country lived in urban areas. By 2020, the number had grown to 61%. All of this growth was supercharged in 2009, during the global financial crisis. Seeking to avoid a downturn, the CCP ordered banks to spray loans all over the economy, especially to the property sector. But as the debt bubble grew, the new buildings remained empty. Despite the booming economy, many Chinese weren't making enough money to afford the homes they were building or the goods they were producing. It was around 2011 when the world started to notice China's jaw-dropping ghost cities and bridges to nowhere. Economists wondered when the debt bubble would pop, and there were several close calls. In 2015 it looked like China's property market would collapse, along with the local governments that had helped finance them. But officials gave the sector a jolt by tearing down slums and relocating residents into new buildings. china apartment construction Chinese developers have used debt to build thousands of office and apartment buildings that are still sitting vacant — and now pose a threat to the economy's stability. Zhang Peng/LightRocket/Getty Images The following year, Beijing started the process of slowly working the debt out of the system. It allowed some companies to default on their loans, ordered local governments to shut down redundant factories, and shuttered coal mines that were no longer needed to supply them with energy. But as extreme as these efforts were, they barely made a dent in China's debt bubble. And that's just one side of the equation. Without a constant churn of new manufacturing and construction jobs, there's little hope left for hundreds of millions of Chinese citizens who left their villages to make money in the city. According to China's National Bureau of Statistics, 600 million people have barely $2,700 to spend a year. With housing prices in major cities soaring, what President Xi refers to as "The Chinese Dream" — the idea that even the poorest in the country would take part in China's rapid growth and modernization — is starting to look out of reach. Chinese socialism is changing (again) In an attempt to revive the Chinese dream, Xi is pushing the idea that China is moving toward "common prosperity." But exactly what that means is hard to say. It could mean higher taxes for the high-income citizens who benefited most from privatization — the generation of supertycoons who were allowed to "get rich first," as Deng Xiaoping urged. Or perhaps it's simply an attempt, using the socialist rhetoric of old, to steel citizens for more volatile times ahead. But either way, it won't help matters if Xi's common-prosperity agenda turns out to hurt the country's new middle class. The only certainty is that China is returning to extreme state intervention, private industry be damned. In the starkest example of state control, China wiped out its entire for-profit education sector in July, sending markets in the US, where some of the companies were listed, into a tailspin. "They took it to nearly zero in a matter of days," Chu said. "It shows a willingness to tolerate a lot more volatility and pain than people expected." Part of the upheaval, it's important to note, is also about power. By moving to rein in China's wealthiest citizens, Xi is effectively hoarding power for himself and the CCP. Jack Ma, the billionaire founder of Alibaba, was once a ubiquitous presence in Chinese society. But since the government started clamping down on his businesses, he's largely disappeared from view. The founder of ByteDance, the company that owns TikTok, also stepped down as CEO, saying he preferred "solitary activities." Even online fan clubs for pop stars are being regulated to encourage devotion to the party. Last month, the former chair of China's top liquor maker was sentenced to life in prison for taking bribes. There is danger to this lack of power sharing and pluralism of opinions. Historically, the CCP has been a tug of war between openers and closers — those who want to welcome outside market forces and those who seek to restrict foreign access. But now the balance of power has shifted. Xi is a defiant closer, and his consolidation of power — including a lifetime appointment to the presidency — has left no pro-opening opposition to push for a course correction should things go awry. Jack Ma Alibaba Founder China Tycoons like Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba, have been avoiding the spotlight as the Communist Party cracks down on private enterprise in a bid to consolidate power. Mark Schiefelbein/AP Photo And things have a good chance of going awry. As Beijing tries to move the economy toward a new, more insular model, it will have to avoid the land mines left by the old one. Consider Evergrande, now teetering on the edge of default. Xi's willingness to tolerate the credit squeeze on big developers shows just how committed he is to remaking the economy. Last summer, to deflate the property sector, Beijing introduced new credit metrics known as the three red lines. Developers were required to hold more cash so they could cover their indebtedness if things went sideways. Evergrande couldn't raise the money — and it's not the only one. Earlier this month Fantasia Holdings, a luxury-property developer, defaulted on a $206 million bond payment. Investors around the world still don't know when — or whether — the Chinese government will stop the bleeding. At the end of September, Chinese authorities met with the state-owned banks to let them know their role in all of this — above all else — would be to protect homeowners and keep the economy going, without resorting to their old debt-driven tricks. "The nuanced message from authorities is: 'Don't pull the funding so these units can't be completed, but don't fund an aggressive expansion of more new developments either,'" Chu told me. Once again, walking a tightrope. The property fiasco also means Beijing needs to run a confidence game on two fronts. Investors need to believe the Chinese government can figure out how to restructure the most indebted property developers without causing a sudden crash for the real-estate sector — a task that will become more difficult as more developers show signs of strain. And consumers need to have the confidence that buying homes with cash in the midst of a credit crunch is a smart move, in the expectation that property values will keep rising. "If confidence in presales tumbles, that could be game over," Chu said. "It would bring everything to a halt immediately." That, in turn, could trigger a plunge in real-estate values and send Chinese banks — and an entire world of investors holding their debt — careening into chaos. The balancing act would be tricky to manage under any circumstances. But it's made far more difficult by China's sudden energy crisis. Electricity prices have more than doubled this year, as pandemic lockdowns lifted and demand for goods soared. China's domestic coal stores were already down, thanks to the government's earlier wave of mine closings, and Beijing made things worse by banning coal imports from Australia, which was pushing to investigate the origins of the coronavirus pandemic. Factories in 20 of China's 31 provinces have suffered a loss of power, and companies including Tesla and Apple have said the crisis will hurt their supply chains. If Xi is initiating a power grab, it will be hard to pull it off without power. Someone find the off ramp All of these not-growing pains would be easier to deal with if the world were in a cooperative mindset with China. But it's not. Under Xi, China has become more bellicose on the world stage. It has encroached on democracy in Hong Kong, set up concentration camps for Uyghur Muslims in the Xinjiang province, intimidated its neighbors in the South China Sea, and menaced Taiwan as never before. In response, Western policymakers have dug in their heels. In May, the European Union torpedoed a trade deal with Beijing after China sanctioned members of the European Parliament for speaking out against human-rights abuses in Xinjiang. US officials, upset that China isn't purchasing nearly as many American goods as it promised to under a trade deal with the Trump administration, are also taking a hard line. Earlier this month, in a speech to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, US Trade Representative Katherine Tai made it clear Washington wanted Beijing to open its markets and respect the international rule of law. "Above all else, we must defend — to the hilt — our economic interests," Tai said. That's not what America sounds like when it's cutting another country some slack. President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping. As President Xi Jinping reins in for-profit companies, President Joe Biden has made clear that America will, in the words of his trade representative, "defend to the hilt our economic interests." Paul J. Richards/AFP/Getty Images But all the saber-rattling isn't likely to alter the economic reality. China has no real option at the moment but to slow its growth, and a slow-growth China will inevitably act as a brake on the global economy. As Joyce Chang, the global head of research for JPMorgan, observed in a recent talk, a 1-percentage-point decline in China's growth takes half a point off global growth. Morgan Stanley estimates that from 2022 to 2025, China's growth will be 0.4 percentage points lower each year than previously estimated — and that's the best-case scenario. If investment contracts sharply, **China's growth** could **drop** by 1.2 points lower each year — which in turn **would depress economies worldwide**. China's slowdown will most directly affect its near neighbors in **Asia — South Korea and Taiwan** — as well as energy and commodity suppliers, like Russia and Norway. And the entire world will feel the weight of China's weakness through slower, more expensive exports. What's more, the economic repercussions will almost certainly be accompanied by social upheaval. The Stanford economist Scott Rozelle worries that Beijing will respond to any threat to its authority by ratcheting up nationalistic sentiment. From its inception, the modern Chinese economy has been full of contradictions. It combined socialist management with a dynamic private sector. It created a massive debt bubble that failed to pop. Throughout all this economic modernization and social transformation, speedy growth kept Chinese society stable. But **if** Xi's attempts to sort out **China's** economic discrepancies cause that **growth** to **evaporate**, social stability could well vanish along with it. If that happens, **we risk** more than **the collapse of the global economic order**; we risk the shattering of global peace as well.

#### Economic growth guarantees civilizational collapse by 2050 – decoupling is impossible and tech is a pipeline dream

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Although driven by political, institutional, and discursive processes, growth is also biophysical. The economic process converts energy, resources, and matter to goods, services, and waste (34). In theory, it seems possible to decouple material throughput from economic output by improving the resource efficiency of production. Ecological economists, however, argue that in practice absolute decoupling is unlikely, even though relative decoupling is common (34). Efficiency should not be confused with scale (35): The more efficiently we use resources, the lower they cost, and the more of them we end up using (36). This is, in essence, growth. Just as increases in labor productivity lead to growth and new jobs, not to less employment, increases in resource productivity increase output and resource use (37). Capitalist economies grow by using more resources and more people, more intensively. Accelerating this is unlikely to spare resources.

Growth can become “cleaner” or “greener” by substituting, for example, fossil fuels with solar power, or scarce, environmentally intensive metals with more abundant and less intensive metals. But new substitutes have resource requirements, and life-cycle impacts that cross space and time. Energy is a vital source of useful work (38); growth has been possible because fossil fuels did things human labor alone could not do. Ending the use of fossil fuels is likely to reduce labor productivity and limit output (34). Solar and wind power are constrained only by their rate of flow, but unlike fossil fuels, they are diffuse—more like rain than a lake (3). To collect and concentrate a diffuse flow of energy, more energy is necessary and more land is required. The EROIs (energy returns on energy investment) of renewable energies are between 10:1 and 20:1, compared to more than 50:1 for earlier deposits of oil and coal (39). An economy powered by a diffuse energy flow is then likely to be an economy of lower net energy and lower output than one powered by concentrated stocks (3). Land use for solar or wind also competes with the use of land for food production, and rare materials are necessary for infrastructures and batteries that store their intermittent flows, with significant environmental effects.

Historical data corroborate ecological economic theory (40). Ayres & Warr (38) find that the use of net energy after conversion losses explains a big portion of the United States’ total factor productivity and economic growth. At the global level, GDP and material use have increased approximately 1:1. Carbon emissions have increased somewhat slower than GDP, but still have increased (34). This is unlikely to be a coincidence. Exceptions may exist, but cross-panel data analysis shows that overall, 1% growth of a national economy is associated with 0.6% to 0.8% increase in its carbon emissions (41) and 0.8% growth in its resource use (42).

Global resource use follows currently the “collapse by 2050” scenario foreseen in the “Limits to Growth” 1971 report (43–45). Domestic material use in some developed OECD economies has reached a plateau, but this is because of globalization and trade. If we take into account imported goods, then the material requirements of products and services consumed in OECD countries have grown hand in hand with GDP, with no decoupling (46). For water use, the effects of growth overwhelm any realistic savings from technologies and efficiency (47); water footprints have increased even in regions such as California where water withdrawals were stabilized (40).

Carbon emissions in some EU (European Union) countries have been declining, even after trade is taken into account, suggesting some substitution of fossil fuels by cleaner energies. [Although recession also played a role (34).] These declines are nowhere near the 8–10%, year-afteryear reductions in carbon emissions required for developed nations under scenarios compatible with a 50% chance of limiting warming to 2◦C (48). Further reductions will be harder to sustain once one-off substitutions of oil or coal with natural gas are exhausted (34).

Resource use or carbon emissions are a product of the scale of the economy (GDP) times its resource or carbon intensity (kg/GDP or kgCO2/GDP). With 1.5% annual increase in global income per capita, carbon intensity has to decline 4.4% each year for staying within 2◦C; with 0% growth, carbon intensity has to fall 2.9% each year (49). In the period 1970–2013, the average annual reduction rate for carbon intensity was less than 1.5%—and this gets harder to sustain as the share of carbon-intensive economies in global output increases (49). As Jackson (50) showed in his seminal work, it is practically impossible to envisage viable climate mitigation scenarios that involve growth. This calls for research on managing, or prospering, without growth (50, 51).

Some scenarios deem possible meeting climate targets while sustaining growth, but these generally assume after 2050 some sort of “negative emissions technology,” geo-engineering or otherwise. According to a recent Nature editorial, these technologies remain currently “magical thinking” (52). Clean energy investments can stimulate the economy in the short run, but in the long run growth may be limited by their low EROIs. Studies suggest that economic growth requires a minimum EROI of close to 11:1 (53). Less EROI means less labor productivity, and hence less growth. Indeed, “Limits to Growth” scenarios do not predict growth ending when resources are exhausted but, rather, when the quality of resources declines to such an extent that further extraction diverts more and more investment away from productive industry (44).

Degrowth is defined by ecological economists as an equitable downscaling of throughput, with a concomitant securing of wellbeing. If there is a fundamental coupling of economic activity and resource use, as ecological economics suggests there is, then serious environmental or climate policies will slow down the economy. Vice versa, a slower economy will use less resources and emit less carbon (40). This is not the same as saying that the degrowth goal is to reduce GDP (54); slowing down the economy is not an end but a likely outcome in a transition toward equitable wellbeing and environmental sustainability.

#### Warming guarantees extinction – multiple scenarios

Specktor 6/4 [Brandon Specktor] “Human Civilization Will Crumble by 2050 If We Don't Stop Climate Change Now, New Paper Claims.” Live Science. June 4, 2019. <https://www.livescience.com/65633-climate-change-dooms-humans-by-2050.html> TG

It seems every week there's a scary new report about how man-made climate change is going to cause the collapse of the world's ice sheets, result in the extinction of up to 1 million animal species and — if that wasn't bad enough — make our [beer very, very expensive](https://www.livescience.com/63832-climate-change-will-ruin-beer.html). This week, a new policy paper from an Australian think tank claims that those other reports are slightly off; the risks of climate change are actually much, much worse than anyone can imagine.

[According to the paper](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/148cb0_b2c0c79dc4344b279bcf2365336ff23b.pdf), climate change poses a "near- to mid-term existential threat to human civilization," and there's a good chance society could collapse as soon as 2050 if serious mitigation actions aren't taken in the next decade.

Published by the Breakthrough National Centre for Climate Restoration in Melbourne (an independent think tank focused on climate policy) and authored by a climate researcher and a former fossil fuel executive, the paper's central thesis is that climate scientists are too restrained in their predictions of how climate change will affect the planet in the near future. [[Top 9 Ways the World Could End](https://www.livescience.com/36999-top-scientists-world-enders.html)]

The current climate crisis, they say, is larger and more complex than any humans have ever dealt with before. General climate models — like the one that the [United Nations' Panel on Climate Change](https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/) (IPCC) used in 2018 to predict that a global temperature increase of 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit (2 degrees Celsius) could put hundreds of millions of people at risk — fail to account for the sheer complexity of Earth's many interlinked geological processes; as such, they fail to adequately predict the scale of the potential consequences. The truth, the authors wrote, is probably far worse than any models can fathom.

How the world ends

What might an accurate worst-case picture of the planet's climate-addled future actually look like, then? The authors provide one particularly grim scenario that begins with world governments "politely ignoring" the advice of scientists and the will of the public to decarbonize the economy (finding alternative energy sources), resulting in a global temperature increase 5.4 F (3 C) by the year 2050. At this point, the world's ice sheets vanish; brutal droughts kill many of the trees in the [Amazon rainforest](https://www.livescience.com/57266-amazon-river.html) (removing one of the world's largest carbon offsets); and the planet plunges into a feedback loop of ever-hotter, ever-deadlier conditions.

"Thirty-five percent of the global land area, and 55 percent of the global population, are subject to more than 20 days a year of lethal heat conditions, beyond the threshold of human survivability," the authors hypothesized.

Meanwhile, droughts, floods and wildfires regularly ravage the land. Nearly one-third of the world's land surface turns to desert. Entire ecosystems collapse, beginning with the planet's coral reefs, the rainforest and the Arctic ice sheets. The world's tropics are hit hardest by these new climate extremes, destroying the region's agriculture and turning more than 1 billion people into refugees.

This mass movement of refugees — coupled with [shrinking coastlines](https://www.livescience.com/51990-sea-level-rise-unknowns.html) and severe drops in food and water availability — begin to stress the fabric of the world's largest nations, including the United States. Armed conflicts over resources, perhaps culminating in nuclear war, are likely.

The result, according to the new paper, is "outright chaos" and perhaps "the end of human global civilization as we know it."

#### Collapse doesn’t cause war

Clary 15 – Christopher Clary, former International Affairs Fellow in India at the Council on Foreign Relations, Postdoctoral Fellow at the Watson Institute at Brown University, Adjunct Staff Member @ RAND Corporation, Security Studies Program @ MIT, country director for South Asian affairs in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, former Research Fellow @ the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, former research associate in the Department of National Security Affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School, BA from Wichita State University and an MA from the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, 2015 (“Economic Stress and International Cooperation: Evidence from International Rivalries,” Massachusetts Institute of Technology Political Science Department Research Paper No. 2015-­‐8, “Economic Stress and International Cooperation: Evidence from International Rivalries,” <http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2597712>)

Do economic downturns generate pressure for diversionary conflict? Or might downturns encourage austerity and economizing behavior in foreign policy? This paper provides new evidence that economic stress is associated with conciliatory policies between strategic rivals. For states that view each other as military threats, the biggest step possible toward bilateral cooperation is to terminate the rivalry by taking political steps to manage the competition. Drawing on data from 109 distinct rival dyads since 1950, 67 of which terminated, the evidence suggests rivalries were approximately twice as likely to terminate during economic downturns than they were during periods of economic normalcy. This is true controlling for all of the main alternative explanations for peaceful relations between foes (democratic status, nuclear weapons possession, capability imbalance, common enemies, and international systemic changes), as well as many other possible confounding variables. This research questions existing theories claiming that economic downturns are associated with diversionary war, and instead argues that in certain circumstances peace may result from economic troubles. Defining and Measuring Rivalry and Rivalry Termination I define a rivalry as the perception by national elites of two states that the other state possesses conflicting interests and presents a military threat of sufficient severity that future military conflict is likely. Rivalry termination is the transition from a state of rivalry to one where conflicts of interest are not viewed as being so severe as to provoke interstate conflict and/or where a mutual recognition of the imbalance in military capabilities makes conflict-causing bargaining failures unlikely. In other words, rivalries terminate when the elites assess that the risks of military conflict between rivals has been reduced dramatically. This definition draws on a growing quantitative literature most closely associated with the research programs of William Thompson, J. Joseph Hewitt, and James P. Klein, Gary Goertz, and Paul F. Diehl.1 My definition conforms to that of William Thompson. In work with Karen Rasler, they define rivalries as situations in which “[b]oth actors view each other as a significant politicalmilitary threat and, therefore, an enemy.”2 In other work, Thompson writing with Michael Colaresi, explains further: The presumption is that decisionmakers explicitly identify who they think are their foreign enemies. They orient their military preparations and foreign policies toward meeting their threats. They assure their constituents that they will not let their adversaries take advantage. Usually, these activities are done in public. Hence, we should be able to follow the explicit cues in decisionmaker utterances and writings, as well as in the descriptive political histories written about the foreign policies of specific countries.3 Drawing from available records and histories, Thompson and David Dreyer have generated a universe of strategic rivalries from 1494 to 2010 that serves as the basis for this project’s empirical analysis.4 This project measures rivalry termination as occurring on the last year that Thompson and Dreyer record the existence of a rivalry.5 Why Might Economic Crisis Cause Rivalry Termination? Economic crises lead to conciliatory behavior through five primary channels. (1) Economic crises lead to austerity pressures, which in turn incent leaders to search for ways to cut defense expenditures. (2) Economic crises also encourage strategic reassessment, so that leaders can argue to their peers and their publics that defense spending can be arrested without endangering the state. This can lead to threat deflation, where elites attempt to downplay the seriousness of the threat posed by a former rival. (3) If a state faces multiple threats, economic crises provoke elites to consider threat prioritization, a process that is postponed during periods of economic normalcy. (4) Economic crises increase the political and economic benefit from international economic cooperation. Leaders seek foreign aid, enhanced trade, and increased investment from abroad during periods of economic trouble. This search is made easier if tensions are reduced with historic rivals. (5) Finally, during crises, elites are more prone to select leaders who are perceived as capable of resolving economic difficulties, permitting the emergence of leaders who hold heterodox foreign policy views. Collectively, these mechanisms make it much more likely that a leader will prefer conciliatory policies compared to during periods of economic normalcy. This section reviews this causal logic in greater detail, while also providing historical examples that these mechanisms recur in practice.