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## Case

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#### ISS cooperation is key --- deters further ASAT testing and solves global stability

**Ressler 9** [Aaron R. Ressler, Major, United States Air Force, A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, “Advancing Sino-U.S. Space Cooperation”, April 2009]

On January 11, 2007, China successfully executed a direct-ascent anti-satellite (ASAT) test/demonstration by destroying one of its aging weather satellites. This event captured the attention of the world, especially the U.S. It is believed that China is pursuing a host of counterspace capabilities but the question remains as to why. There are many possible reasons for China’s pursuit of counterspace capabilities, with one of the more likely being a means to gain an advantage when facing a dominant conventional military force. Whatever China’s motivation is, it is important for the U.S. to take action to deter China from further ASAT operations that could possibly harm satellite systems on orbit. It is the intent of this research to propose the idea of U.S.-China space cooperation in order to deter the PRC from potentially harmful ASAT operations. This is especially important given the current lack of dialogue between these two nations with regard to space issues. The respective space policies of the U.S. and China show that each nation is open to space cooperation, and both currently engage in international space cooperative efforts. U.S.-China space cooperation can provide benefits to both nations and ultimately provide greater transparency and trust with regard to each nation’s space activities. **Acquiring** this transparency and trust through **cooperation** could be an **ideal solution** in **deterring China from further harmful ASAT operations**.

The ISS has proven to be the most successful space cooperation program to date for NASA. International cooperation for this venture includes the U.S. (NASA), the Russian Federal Space Agency, the Canadian Space Agency, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency and the ESA which includes the following countries: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK.80 Hosting 19 research facilities, the ISS gives international partners the ability to conduct research and scientific experiments in the low gravity environments of Earth’s orbit. This research, along with men and women living in and adapting to the space environment, will provide the foundation for future missions to the Moon and Mars.81

U.S.-China Space Cooperation

Both China and the U.S. are open to international space cooperation, as noted in their respective policy documents on space and current cooperative programs. History has shown that **both China and U.S. have gained from space cooperation**, which could be an ideal solution in seeking to **deter China from exercising ASAT operations**.

Benefits. **While possibly deterring Chinese ASAT operations**, this **deterrence would be a secondary effect** (or benefit for that matter) of successful U.S.-China space cooperation. In order for this cooperation to take place, the benefits will have to outweigh the challenges (some which will likely be viewed as risks) for both nations.

The first benefit of cooperation would be improved transparency.82 Secrecy of China’s space program has led to a suspicious outlook by many critics of this program. Space cooperation between the two countries could be based on **regular meetings** which “could help the two nations understand each other’s intentions more clearly.”83 With China as a partner, the U.S. would have better visibility and communication with the CNSA concerning China’s space  activities, and the same would hold true for China. Reviewing China’s White Paper on its space policy and trying to make sense of its counterspace capabilities after the fact is the wrong approach. “If NASA signed an agreement with CNSA and began joint space projects, they would more easily and directly understand China’s space activities and directions.”84

Another benefit mentioned earlier is cost savings, which would be attractive for both nations. For most countries, budgets for space are insufficient or limited to the point where they depend on international space cooperation to meet their goals.85 Exceptions to this in some degree are Russia, the U.S. and China, as all have achieved their own manned space programs. President Bush’s “Vision for Space Exploration” announcement in 2004 called for “redirecting NASA’s human exploration program from low Earth orbit to the Moon, Mars, and worlds beyond.”86 The timeframe specified in this announcement for the return to the moon was between 2015-2020, carrying a price tag of $104 billion.87 China too has ambitions for manned missions to moon, so spreading the cost could prove beneficial to both nations.

Increasing U.S. options with regard to manned spacelift could be a benefit in U.S. cooperation with China and is something the U.S. should consider for increased safety and logistics. History has shown that the U.S. was fortunate to have the cooperative programs it had with Russia when the shuttle fleet was grounded following the Columbia accident of 2003. **If China were to become both a U.S. and ISS partner**, the U.S. would eventually (assuming continued Shenzhou success) have another option besides Russia as a backup to deliver astronauts and supplies to the ISS.88

**Global stability** is another possible benefit stemming from U.S.-China space cooperation.89 “Both China and the USA are important countries in global politics, economics,  and space activity.” 90 Maintaining a healthy relationship between these two countries has positive global impacts.

## Tradeoffs

## Tourism

1] smith

2] modules

3] ev bad

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### Plan

#### Plan: Private entities should not appropriate outer space via commercial space stations that replace the International Space Station.

#### Private-Public partnerships owned by NASA replace the ISS better and are coming now

Jones ’18 [Karen, a senior project leader with The Aerospace Corporation’s Center for Space Policy and Strategy. She has experience and expertise in the disciplines of technology strategy, program evaluation, and regulatory and policy analysis spanning the public sector, telecommunications, space, aerospace defense, energy, and environmental industries. She is a former management consultant with IBM Global Services and Arthur D. Little and has an M.B.A. from the Yale School of Management, “PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS: STIMULATING INNOVATION IN THE SPACE SECTOR”, April 2018, Center for Space Policy and Strategy, [https://aerospace.org/sites/default/files/2018-06/Partnerships\_Rev\_5-4-18.pdf]//pranav](https://aerospace.org/sites/default/files/2018-06/Partnerships_Rev_5-4-18.pdf%5d//pranav)

* P3 = public-private partnership

When a public-sector entity considers a P3 arrangement, it should articulate the objectives. Within the space sector this could include:

• Mission Support—to advance science, space exploration, or national security and defense.

• Functional Support—such as communications, Earth observation, space logistics.

• Technology Advancement—such as prototyping or developing new technologies.

• Space Industrial Base—to promote a competitive and robust commercial space sector

Traditional public infrastructure projects are structured across a range of P3 project delivery models to provide functional support—from operation and maintenance to concession agreements (see Figure 1). By contrast, space industry P3 delivery models typically include various arrangements for sharing risk and know how through cooperative research, Space Act Agreements (SAAs), or longer term development agreements. The current emphasis appears to be leveraging commercial sector innovation and agility (see Figure 2). Perhaps over time the space sector will introduce more traditional P3 functional support models such as:

◆ Example: Future Low Earth Orbit (LEO) Modules/

Habitat (“Concession” P3 Model). NASA could potentially apply a concession arrangement to replace the ISS with one or more commercial modules. The space module(s) could be owned by the U.S. government and designed, built and operated by one or more commercial companies for a specific period of time. Several commercial companies, including Axiom Space, Bigelow Aerospace and NanoRacks, have already expressed interest in the provisioning of space modules to replace the existing International Space Station (ISS). Note that if these commercial modules were owned, built, operated and maintained by the commercial sector then this would shift the business model from a P3 model to full privatization.

#### Public control of commercial space stations solves all neg offense – OST proves

Smith ’79 [Delbert D., Legal Advisor for the Space Science and Engineering Center of the University of Wisconsin, “Space Stations International Law and Policy”, October 30, 1979, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Space\_Stations\_International\_Law\_And\_Pol/4U2fDwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0&kptab=overview]//pranav

Three potential limitations on these conclusions should be noted. First, the interpretation set forth above would not permit commercial or international organizations from claiming exclusive rights to a particular area of outer space in the absence of actual use. Thus, if such an organization had maintained a space station in a specific orbital slot for a substantial period of time and the station-keeping system subsequently failed, the organization would not be entitled to prevent any other entity from occupying that slot pending the orbiting to a replacement station by the original occupant. Second, if an entity were established that, although commercial in form, was essentially under the control of the government of the country in which it was organized, permanent use would constitute national, as distinguished from nonnational, appropriation. This is especially true in light of the Article VI provision that makes states responsible for acts of their nationals and for international organizations of which they are members. Third, dispute has arisen regarding the minimum standard of universality that would determine whether an international organization of relatively universal membership satisfies the minimum standard. However, some question remains regarding the exemption of an organization composed of a limited number of governments.

### Advantage

#### ISS sunset gets extended absent commercial replacement – be suspect of “replacement good” offense

Heilwell 12/03 [Rebecca, reporter for Open Sourced, covering emerging technologies, artificial intelligence, and logistics, “NASA gave Jeff Bezos money to build his office park in space”, Updated 12-03-2021 (I couldn’t find the original publishing date – this is the only one that showed up on the website – if you can please lmk), Vox Recode, https://www.vox.com/recode/2021/10/27/22747509/blue-origin-orbital-reef-office-park-bezos]//pranav

After more than two decades in orbit, NASA is preparing to retire the International Space Station. The habitable satellite only has permission to operate until 2024, and while it’s likely that the space station’s funding could be extended until 2028, NASA plans to decommission the ISS and find a replacement by the end of the decade. Cue Jeff Bezos. The billionaire’s spaceflight company, Blue Origin, has proposed a new commercial space station called Orbital Reef, which would provide a “mixed use business park” in space. This concept now has the support of NASA. The agency announced on Thursday that it would award Blue Origin and its partner companies $130 million to develop the space station, which NASA hopes will launch before 2030. With the help of several other companies, including Sierra Space and Boeing, Blue Origin plans to build a satellite that’s slightly smaller than the ISS and houses up to 10 people. The design includes desk space, computers, laboratories, a garden, and 3D printers. The goal, the company says, is to lease out office space to interested parties, including government agencies, researchers, tourism companies, and even movie production crews. Blue Origin’s plan is predicated on the idea that the end is coming for the ISS, which NASA is still figuring out how exactly to remove from orbit. While space stations have been helpful for space exploration, Blue Origin senior vice president Brent Sherwood argued in an October op-ed that private companies now have the capabilities to take over much of the burgeoning economy in low-Earth orbit, or LEO. Blue Origin is even building a space tug, a transport vehicle that moves cargo between different orbits, that could reportedly be used to salvage parts from the ISS and incorporate them into Orbital Reef’s systems. NASA doesn’t mind the corporate takeover of low-Earth orbit. The agency’s first space station, SkyLab, was only in orbit for a few months before NASA let the vehicle descend and decompose into the atmosphere. The space agency has been weighing defunding the ISS, which is full of aging hardware, for several years, and NASA’s investment in Orbital Reef is part of more than $400 million in funding that the agency has set aside to develop new, privately built and operated space stations through its Commercial LEO Destinations program. Eventually, NASA hopes that it can send its astronauts to these stations instead of paying to maintain the ISS. Overall, the plan could save the government more than $1 billion every year. “This is technology that is over 20 years old at this point. When you expose that infrastructure to radiation, solar weather ... things are going to break down,” Wendy Whitman Cobb, a professor at the US Air Force’s School of Air and Space Studies, told Recode. “Having these commercial space stations will be a way of America keeping their foot in low-Earth orbit while focusing more of their resources on moon and Mars exploration.” In the meantime, NASA is currently focusing on the Artemis program, an ambitious plan to establish a long-term human presence on the moon. The agency intends to send people to the moon for the first time in decades as soon as 2025, and hopes the project will eventually serve as a stepping stone to future exploration of Mars. Private companies, including Blue Origin, have desperately fought for a role in this prestigious mission, and especially a lucrative contract to develop pivotal moon landing technology. SpaceX won that contract earlier this year, prompting Bezos’s company to sue NASA and lobby the Senate to reverse the decision. Those efforts have yet to bear fruit, so Bezos now seems to be turning his attention back to the low-Earth orbit economy, where there are more customers and less competition from Elon Musk. “Most, if not all, of the problems or the challenges that need to be worked to have a commercial LEO destination have already been solved by the International Space Station program,” Sherwood, of Blue Origin, said in a Thursday press conference. “That’s the explanation for why we can develop a commercial space station for so much less than it cost NASA the first time.” But there’s reason to believe that the Orbital Reef project may not succeed in the near future — or at all. Blue Origin still hasn’t launched humans into orbit, a feat SpaceX achieved last month during the Inspiration4 mission. Blue Origin also lists its New Glenn reusable launch system and Boeing’s Starliner crew vehicle as pivotal parts of the Orbital Reef plan, but both vehicles have yet to conduct a problem-free spaceflight.

#### Orbital Reef, StarLab, and Northrup Grumman are developing replacements that they will own – first round grants from NASA

Foust 12/03 [Jeff, Ph.D. in planetary sciences from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a bachelor’s degree with honors in geophysics and planetary science from the California Institute of Technology, “NASA awards funding to three commercial space station concepts”, 12-03-2021, https://spacenews.com/nasa-awards-funding-to-three-commercial-space-station-concepts/]//pranav

The largest award, at $160 million, went to a team led by Nanoracks and includes Voyager Space and Lockheed Martin. Those companies announced a space station concept called Starlab Oct. 21 that could be ready as soon as 2027.

A second award, valued at $130 million, went to a team led by Blue Origin for the Orbital Reef space station announced Oct. 25. That project includes Boeing, Redwire and Sierra Space, among others, with a goal of entering initial operations in the latter half of the 2020s.

The third award, worth $125.6 million, went to a previously undisclosed concept from Northrop Grumman. That proposed station would leverage the company’s work on the Cygnus cargo spacecraft, Mission Extension Vehicle satellite servicing program and the Habitation and Logistics Outpost module it is building for NASA’s lunar Gateway.

Rick Mastracchio, director of business development for human exploration at Northrop Grumman, said in a call with reporters that a single launch could place in orbit a facility able to support four people, with the ability to expand. “This allows for low risk and rapid deployment,” he said. The station, which he said doesn’t yet have a name, is being developed with Dynetics, with others to be announced in the near future.

NASA selected the three concepts from 11 proposals the agency received in August. “Almost all of the proposals represented viable concepts for commercial LEO destinations,” said Phil McAlister, director of commercial spaceflight at NASA Headquarters, in the call.

All the bidders and others will be eligible to compete for the second phase of the program in the middle of the decade, where NASA will issue contracts to certify commercial space stations for use by NASA astronauts and purchase initial services from those stations.

#### Public projects like the ISS strengthen diplomatic relationships and create a template for future multilateral space co-op.

Cobb ’20 [Wendy Whitman, received a BA in political science (summa cum laude and university honors) and an MA in political science from the University of Central Florida. I received a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Florida where my research focused on the intersection of political institutions and public policy. I have authored several books including Unbroken Government: Success and Failure in Policymaking (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), The Politics of Cancer: Malignant Indifference (Praeger, 2017), and The CQ Press Career Guide for Political Science Students (CQ Press, 2017). My research has also appeared in journals including Congress and the Presidency, Space Policy, and the Journal of Political Science Education. I am currently professor of strategy and security studies at the US Air Force's School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, a selective graduate program for Air Force officers. Prior to my current position, I was associate professor of political science at Cameron University in Lawton, Oklahoma, “The International Space Station at 20 offers hope and a template for future cooperation”, 11-04-2020, The Conversation, https://theconversation.com/the-international-space-station-at-20-offers-hope-and-a-template-for-future-cooperation-149363]//pranav

On Nov. 2, 2020, the International Space Station celebrated its 20th anniversary of continuous human occupation. With astronauts and cosmonauts from around the world working together, the ISS has demonstrated humankind’s ability to not only live and work in space but cooperate with one another. This remarkable achievement is significant as countries and companies around the world look to expand space exploration beyond Earth orbit. The path to this anniversary was not easy; like most things done in space, the cost and the difficulty were high. Supported by the Reagan administration as part of the Cold War competition with the Soviet Union, the ISS began its life in the 1980s. Following the Challenger disaster in 1986, planning fell by the wayside as costs increased. Facing delays and cost overruns, the space station – then known as Freedom – was nearly canceled by the House of Representatives in the early 1990s. While already bringing international partners aboard to lower costs, the Clinton administration invited Russia to participate, leveraging the station as a tool of foreign policy between former adversaries. What began as competition has turned into fruitful cooperation not just between Russia and the United States but Canada, Japan, Italy, the European Space Agency and over 100 other countries. As a space policy expert, I argue that the achievements of the ISS to date are indeed significant, but they also point the way ahead for cooperation and commercialization in space. By the numbers, the International Space Station is indeed impressive. At 357 feet in length, it is just one yard shy of an American football field. More than 241 individuals from 19 countries have visited, and at least 3,000 research projects have taken place on the ISS. The ISS is the third brightest object in the night sky and can often be spotted worldwide. Even Lego has immortalized the station with its own building set. The ISS has proven that humans can live and work in space. These experiences are key as countries look to longer term exploration. The ISS has led to advances in understanding how the human body reacts to sustained microgravity and increased exposure to radiation. Other experiments have allowed researchers to study materials and chemicals in a microgravity environment. Astronauts have also learned how to grow food on the station, leading to insights on how plants grow on Earth. These accomplishments have not come without criticism. It cost more than US$100 billion to construct; some have questioned the amount and value of the science that has been conducted. More recently, limits on the the number of crew residing on the station have reduced the amount of time available for scientific experiments. However, perhaps one of the most significant legacies of the ISS is the long-term cooperation that has enabled it. While the U.S. and Russia are the countries most closely identified with the program, Canada, Japan and the European Space Agency also take part. While not always easy, sustained cooperation in a place where operations are difficult and costly is impressive. For the U.S. and Russia in particular, this achievement is unique. While there was some cooperation between the two during the Cold War, the ISS is the first major space program in which the two have worked together. Even as relations between Russia and the U.S. have deteriorated over the past several years, the partnership on the ISS has continued. While scientific and space cooperation does not solve all terrestrial issues, it can strengthen other diplomatic relationships. Though turning 20 may not seem like a milestone, for a complicated piece of machinery operating in the dangerous environment of space, the ISS is approaching old age. In recent years, it has suffered several problems, most recently an air leak in the Russian module, Zvezda. However, recent assessments support continued operation of the ISS for at least another 10 years. In that time, the ISS will likely see an increase in commercial activity. Recently, cosmetics company Estee Lauder launched one of its products to the station to be featured in a commercial filmed there. SpaceX is looking to make the ISS a tourist destination following NASA’s 2019 decision making it easier for space tourists to visit. Another space company, Axiom, recently received a contract to build a commercial module to be added to the ISS in 2024. The module would give additional living and working space to astronauts aboard the station as well as serve as the starting point for a future commercial space station. Thinking beyond Earth orbit, international cooperation in the ISS provides a solid example for future cooperation in space. As NASA seeks to return to the Moon, international cooperation will be a way of reducing costs, normalizing behavior in space and increasing national prestige. NASA has made efforts in these areas through the Artemis Accords, an agreement outlining norms and behaviors for lunar exploration. Additionally, NASA is partnering with the European Space Agency and others on its plans for the Gateway, a mini-space station in lunar orbit. The ISS experience has been fundamental to all of these developments as it continues to launch the next generation of space endeavors.

#### No private space stations good offense – they’re unproven, decades away, and underestimate ISS resiliency

Davenport ’20 [Christian, covers NASA and the space industry for The Washington Post's Financial desk. He joined The Post in 2000 and has served as an editor on the Metro desk and as a reporter covering military affairs. He is the author of "The Space Barons: Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos and the Quest to Colonize the Cosmos", “The International Space Station can’t stay up there forever. Will privately run, commercial replacements be ready in time?”, 12-23-2020, The Washington Post, https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2020/12/23/space-station-replace-biden/?outputType=amp]//pranav

But while those options show promise, they are still unproven and years from hitting the market.

As a result, NASA has been increasingly concerned it could have a gap in low Earth orbit that would be even more consequential than the ignominious period after the space shuttle fleet was retired that left the space agency with no way to launch its astronauts to space from U.S. soil. Instead, NASA was forced to rely on the Russians for rides to space, at a price that grew to as much as $90 million a seat, before Elon Musk’s SpaceX restored human spaceflight for NASA earlier this year.

Even if the station is extended, NASA needs to be working now on its replacement, officials said. It took years to get the ISS up and running. The concept was born in 1984, when President Ronald Reagan announced the United States would put a station, eventually dubbed Freedom, in orbit. But after different administrations and design changes, the first segments weren’t launched until 1998. Since then, NASA has invested more than $100 billion in the facility, which receives more than $3 billion annually from NASA.

Privately run stations would also need time to build their business cases, signing foreign governments as tenants, working with companies and universities that want to do research in space, and wealthy tourists who would pay millions of dollars to visit.

While NASA and the private sector work toward developing commercial habitats, China is building its own space station that it hopes to launch within a couple of years and is recruiting countries around the world as partners. The United States would not be one of them, however, since NASA is effectively barred by law from partnering with China in space.

“I think it would be a tragedy if, after all of this time and all of this effort, we were to abandon low Earth orbit and cede that territory,” NASA administrator Jim Bridenstine told a Senate panel earlier this year.

The ISS still does have some good years left, officials said. “We’re good from an engineering standpoint,” Joel Montalbano, NASA’s space station program manager, said in an interview. “We’re cleared through 2028.”

Boeing, which is paid $225 million per year as the prime contractor supporting space station operations, said it could stay in orbit for even longer.

“The ISS is incredibly healthy, with life capability well beyond 2030,” said John Mulholland, Boeing’s ISS program manager. He said the U.S. and Russia recently completed a life extension study “and all the hardware has been cleared to a minimum of 2030. That’s a real testament to the design and the maintenance that’s been done on it.”

Recently, the station got new lithium-ion batteries that “are less than half the size of the original batteries and produce twice the power,” Mulholland said. The power upgrade also doubled the speed at which the station’s crew can send data from science experiments back to Earth.

Over the years, the station’s water recovery system has improved to the point where today, 95 percent of the water used for drinking and cooking is recycled, Montalbano said. The communications systems have also been upgraded, as have life support systems like carbon dioxide removal.

#### Space multilateralism solves space conflict – brings revisionist powers to the table and increases transparency which solves future militarization

Mason ’21 [Paul, author of several books, and a visiting professor at the University of Wolverhampton, “How to halt the space arms race”, 11-17-2021, New Statesman, https://www.newstatesman.com/comment/2021/11/how-to-halt-the-space-arms-race]//pranav

Could space be demilitarised? Not a chance, say the experts, who point out that – in contrast to the space exploration of the popular imagination, where it is still seen as a benign, trans-national endeavour – the entire history of space technology, from the Nazi V2 rocket to the recent Russian anti-satellite strike, has been driven by the military. Yet military activity in space could be made more orderly and transparent. The two most authoritative annual reports on military space capabilities are both reliant on open-source information and acknowledge that there are huge gaps in what even the experts know. We know how many satellites are up there: we do not know much about what weapons they might carry. This stands in contrast to the way the rival superpowers have managed both nuclear and conventional deterrence since the onset of the Cold War, with a series of treaties signed by Russia and the West to minimise or regulate aggression – for example, limiting the possession of nuclear weapons or the deployment of armoured vehicles. But there is almost no such framework for regulating the space arms race, or for achieving basic transparency about who’s doing what, still less for avoiding conflict. US and Russian space commanders convened in Vienna last July, agreeing to “enhance communications between the two countries about space-related operational issues in order to reduce the risks of misunderstanding, help prevent or manage space-related incidents, and prevent inadvertent escalation”. This did not stop Russia’s surprise launch of an anti-satellite missile on 15 November, nor did it avert the war of words that followed it. In truth the US-Russia space dialogue, a hangover from the Cold War, is a long way from the multilateral and comprehensive framework needed to bring China, India, Israel and Iran around the table. Lacking any formal international treaty beyond the anti-nuclear one, space has, in effect, become a demonstration zone for geopolitical realism. Those who have real power on Earth have untrammelled power in space. They will zap their own satellites at will, buzz the satellites of others, launch “projectiles” from existing satellites – as Russia allegedly did last year – and unleash spoofing attacks to disorient civilian shipping, all without acknowledgement or explanation. The emerging field of space war looks, in other words, exactly like terrestrial conflict would if there were no treaties and deployment patterns, or journalists and NGOs to observe them. This year the UK launched its own space command, with military chiefs acknowledging space as a domain of conflict co-equal with air, land, sea and cyber. Britain is late to the space war game and, after years of offshoring and outsourcing, lacks the expertise and resources to compete with the big four space powers: it doesn’t figure in either of the monitoring reports on space militarisation documenting significant offensive capabilities. As a medium-sized power, self-excluded from large parts of the EU’s space programmes, it is in Britain’s interest to promote order, multilateralism and transparency in space, and to resist its further militarisation. And, to an extent, haltingly, it has done so, promoting the first real debate at the UN over a new space treaty.

#### Weaponization of space and dual-use tech results in unsustainable arms races and causes a laundry list of impacts – alternative measures to check weaponization are NOT mutually exclusive with the aff

Ortega et al. ’21 [ALMUDENA AZCÁRATE ORTEGA - associate researcher, John Borrie - senior research fellow, James Revill - program lead of the Weapons of Mass Destruction and Other Strategic Weapons Programme of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, “Star Wars: the not-so-phantom menace”, 05-12-2021, [https://english.elpais.com/opinion/2021-05-12/star-wars-the-not-so-phantom-menace.html]//pranav](https://english.elpais.com/opinion/2021-05-12/star-wars-the-not-so-phantom-menace.html%5d//pranav) \*modified for ableist language\*

The picture isn’t all rosy, however. Due to the critical importance of space, several countries have, in recent years, formed “space forces” and are developing national doctrines for fighting in space. A handful of nations have even tested offensive capabilities of various kinds. These countries have some legitimate security concerns. The problem is this pattern of responses to the actions and activities of space competitors is fuelling an arms race. If the international community doesn’t act to turn down the dial on space’s quickening weaponization, humankind risks suffering the devastating consequences of a space-based conflict, such as mass disruption of services like GPS and denial of internet access. Debris from the destruction of space objects could also prevent space users from using orbits, possibly for years. States have long sought to ensure that outer space is used only for peaceful purposes. Even at the height of the Cold War, they reached international agreements such as the 1967 Outer Space Treaty that, among other things, indicates that states shall not “place nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction in orbit or on celestial bodies or station them in outer space.” These treaties have contributed to safety and security in space and on Earth, but as technology advances so does the risk of conflict in space. Counterspace capabilities have the capacity to interfere, incapacitate or destroy adversaries’ space assets, and some of them are commonly used nowadays, such as cyberattacks and electronic interference with satellites. Others, such as interceptor missiles launched from Earth to attack space objects, could be used during a conflict on Earth, and would have a [devastating]~~crippling~~ effect on militaries and civilians alike. Even if specific space technologies were not invented with a counterspace purpose in mind, their characteristics nevertheless could make them a threat in the eyes of others. An example of this is the so-called space harpoon, a barbed projectile fired from a satellite to collect space junk, which could be exploited for hostile purposes. In the face of such strategic unpredictability, trust deficit grows and tensions escalate more easily. For decades governments have argued about “preventing an arms race in outer space” in multilateral forums like the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament. Now the space arms race is here – and given what is at stake – governments need to focus afresh on practical steps to provide each other meaningful reassurance about their capabilities and intentions in space. There are already several proposals. China and Russia have proposed a treaty to prevent weapons from being placed in space and threats against space objects. Other, predominantly Western governments, have proposed “reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviors.” These approaches are not mutually exclusive. Arms control history suggests legal and normative measures can be combined and sequenced in ways that are mutually reinforcing. Even then, it’s unlikely these measures will be sufficient to ensure the safe and secure use of space in the future. Measures to increase transparency and confidence in space-related activities to minimize misunderstandings are also required. This could be augmented by the publication of national policies on counterspace capabilities and by encouraging dialogue between space users – including commercial stakeholders – about the impacts of and risks introduced by new strategic technologies. Greater mutual understanding of these issues among space users could help to avoid escalatory situations. Space is critical for sustaining and enhancing life on Earth. It actively contributes to sustainable development in a myriad of ways. To ensure space’s continued contribution to humankind’s wellbeing, spacefaring nations must work to arrest their weaponization of outer space and develop safeguards to prevent current tensions blowing out into full-blown conflict, thus keeping Star Wars firmly in the realm of science fiction.

#### Goes nuclear – great powers are developing nukes for new territorial conflicts in space

Tisdall ’20 [Simon, foreign affairs commentator. He has been a foreign leader writer, foreign editor and US editor for the Guardian, “A nuclear arms race in space? It seems we've learned nothing from Hiroshima”, 08-02-2020, The Guardian, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/aug/02/a-nuclear-arms-race-in-space-it-seems-weve-learned-nothing-from-hiroshima]//pranav

The battle for outer space is only getting going – yet deserves immediate attention. Russia’s alleged development of anti-satellite weapons is almost certainly matched by the US and China, and undermines past undertakings about the peaceful use of space. Christopher Ford, US assistant secretary of state for international security and non-proliferation, warned last week that Russia and China had already turned space into a “war-fighting domain”. “What [the Russians] are doing is signalling to the world that they’re able to destroy satellites in orbit with other satellites,” Ford said. “This is the sort of thing that could get out of hand and go very badly rather quickly.” The UK called the alleged test “a threat to space systems on which the world depends” – meaning use of such weapons could, in theory, produce an instant global security and communications blackout. Yet in relaunching US space command last year, Donald Trump also pointed to space as the next great-power battlefield. Nato secretary-general Jens Stoltenberg says the alliance will not deploy weapons in space but is obliged to defend its interests, which include 2,000 orbiting satellites. For Nato, too, space is now an “operational domain”. New and “improved” nuclear weapons are proliferating in parallel with the race for space. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Sipri), nine states – the US, Russia, China, Israel, the UK, France, India, Pakistan and North Korea – together possess about 13,400 weapons. While the overall total is falling, “retired” warheads and bombs are being replaced by more powerful, versatile devices, such as smaller, “use-able” US battlefield nukes. “All these states are either developing or deploying new weapon systems or have announced their intention to do so,” Sipri’s annual report said. The US and Russia each possessed about 1,550 deployed, long-range weapons, while China had about 300. Both the US and Russia were spending more and placing greater reliance on nuclear weapons in future military planning, it said, while China was rushing to catch up. “China is in the middle of a significant modernisation of its nuclear arsenal. It is developing a so-called nuclear triad for the first time, made up of new land- and sea-based missiles and nuclear-capable aircraft. India and Pakistan are slowly increasing the size and diversity of their nuclear forces,” Sipri reported. Meanwhile, North Korea continued to prioritise its military nuclear programme, while conducting “multiple” ballistic missile tests. “Instead of planning for nuclear disarmament, the nuclear-armed states appear to plan to retain large arsenals for the indefinite future, are adding new nuclear weapons, and are increasing the role such weapons play in their national strategies,” a Federation of American Scientists survey said. It estimated about 1,800 warheads were kept on high alert, ready for use at short notice. Russia claims to lead the world in developing hi-tech weaponry. Speaking in July, Putin boasted that Russia’s navy was being equipped with nuclear-powered hypersonic cruise missiles, which supposedly have unlimited range, and submarine-launched underwater nuclear drones. Despite celebrated speeches supporting a nuclear-free world, Barack Obama authorised a $1.2tn plan to upgrade America’s nuclear triad while pursuing strategic arms reductions via the 2010 New Start treaty with Russia. Trump has doubled down, at the same time abandoning arms control pacts. His 2018 nuclear posture review proposed an extra $500bn in spending, including $17bn for low-yield, battlefield weapons. Trump looks set to scupper New Start, which expires in February, on the spurious ground that it does not reduce China’s much smaller arsenal (which it was never intended to do). He has previously reneged on the 2015 Iran nuclear treaty, the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces treaty, and is said to favour resumed nuclear testing in Nevada in defiance of the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban treaty. Like Britain and other signatories, the US continues to fail to fulfil its obligation under the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation treaty “to pursue nuclear disarmament aimed at the ultimate elimination of nuclear arsenals”. Despite its acute financial situation, Britain remains committed to replacing its Trident missile system at an estimated cost of £205bn over 30 years. While nuclear weapons have not been used since 1945, great-power military flashpoints are increasing the risk that they might be. These potential triggers include the South China Sea, Taiwan, the India-Pakistan and India-China borders, the US-Israel-Iran conflict, North Korea and Ukraine. Heightened international tensions and collapsing arms-control regimes only partly explain the accelerating pace of nuclear rearmament. Resurgent nationalism, authoritarian rightwing populism, revived or new territorial rivalries (as in space), the bypassing of the UN and multilateral institutions, and a shifting economic and geopolitical power balance are all aggravating factors.

**Causes extinction** through winter, firestorms, EMP blasts, ozone damage, and meltdowns

-Immediate death -Climate destruction spurring an ice age (Nuclear winter) via nuclear firestorms and smoke -Ozone collapses -2 Billion insta-die in famine -kills biodiversity -Meltdowns and grid collapse via EMPs -Remaining fallout

**Starr 14** {Steven, Senior Scientist for Physicians for Social Responsibility, Director of the Clinical Laboratory Science Program (Missouri), commentator in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists and the Strategic Arms Reduction, Associate member of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, “The Lethality of Nuclear Weapons: Nuclear War has No Winner,” Global Research: Centre for Research on Globalization, 6/5, http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-lethality-of-nuclear-weapons-nuclear-war-has-no-winner/5385611}

Nuclear war **has no winner**. Beginning in 2006, several of the world’s **leading climatologists** (at Rutgers, UCLA, John Hopkins University, and the University of Colorado-Boulder) published a series of studies that evaluated the long-term environmental consequences of a nuclear war, including baseline scenarios fought with **merely 1%** of the explosive power in the US and/or Russian launch-ready nuclear arsenals. They concluded that the consequences of even a “small” nuclear war would include **catastrophic disruptions** of global climate[i] and **massive destruction** of Earth’s protective ozone layer[ii]. These **and more recent studies** predict that global agriculture would be so negatively affected by such a war, a global famine would result, which would cause up to **2 billion people to starve to death**. [iii]¶ These **peer-reviewed** studies – which were analyzed by the **best scientists in the world** and found to be without error – also predict that a war fought with less than half of US or Russian strategic nuclear weapons would **destroy the human race**.[iv] In other words, a US-Russian nuclear war would create such extreme long-term damage to the global environment that it would leave the Earth **uninhabitable** for humans and most animal forms of life.¶ A recent article in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, “Self-assured destruction: The climate impacts of nuclear war”,[v] begins by stating:¶ “A nuclear war between Russia and the United States, **even after the arsenal reductions** planned under New START, could produce a nuclear winter. Hence, an attack by either side could be **suicidal**, resulting in self-assured **destruction**.”¶ In 2009, I wrote an article[vi] for the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament that summarizes the findings of these studies. It explains that nuclear firestorms would produce millions of tons of smoke, which would rise above cloud level and form a global stratospheric smoke layer that would **rapidly encircle the Earth**. The smoke layer would remain for at least a **decade**, and it would act to destroy the protective ozone layer (vastly increasing the UV-B reaching Earth[vii]) as well as block warming sunlight, thus creating Ice Age weather conditions that would last **10 years** or longer.¶ Following a US-Russian nuclear war, temperatures in the central US and Eurasia would fall below freezing every day for one to three years; the intense cold would **completely eliminate growing seasons for a decade** or longer. No crops could be grown, leading to a famine that would **kill most humans and large animal populations**.¶ Electromagnetic pulse from high-altitude nuclear detonations would destroy the integrated circuits in all modern electronic devices[viii], including those in commercial nuclear power plants. Every nuclear reactor would almost **instantly** meltdown; every nuclear spent fuel pool (which contain many times more radioactivity than found in the reactors) would boil-off, releasing vast amounts of **long-lived** radioactivity. The fallout would make most of the US and Europe **uninhabitable**. Of course, the survivors of the nuclear war would be **starving to death anyway.** Once nuclear weapons were introduced into a US-Russian conflict, there would be little chance that a **nuclear holocaust** could be avoided. Theories of “limited nuclear war” and “nuclear de-escalation” are **unrealistic**.[ix] In 2002 the Bush administration modified US strategic doctrine from a retaliatory role to permit preemptive nuclear attack; in 2010, the Obama administration made only incremental and miniscule changes to this doctrine, leaving it essentially unchanged. Furthermore, Counterforce doctrine – used by both the US and Russian military – emphasizes the need for preemptive strikes once nuclear war begins. Both sides would be under immense pressure to launch a preemptive nuclear first-strike once military hostilities had commenced, especially if nuclear weapons had already been used on the battlefield.

#### Counterspace capabilities collapse American military superiority in space

Cronk ’21 [Terri Moon, Writer & Editor for the Department of Defense News, “Space-Based Capabilities Critical to U.S. National Security, DOD Officials Say”, 05-24-2021, https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2629675/space-based-capabilities-critical-to-us-national-security-dod-officials-say/]//pranav

John D. Hill told the HASC subcommittee on strategic forces that Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III has also testified that the growth of Chinese and Russian counter space capabilities presents the most immediate and serious threats to U.S. allied and partner space activities. Additionally, ''Russia and China view space as critical to modern warfare and consider the use of counterspace capabilities as both a means of reducing U.S. military effectiveness and winning future wars,'' Hill said. As these developments portend, the United States must be prepared for conflict to extend to, or even originate, in space, he said. But to be clear, such a conflict would not be a space war distinct from terrestrial war, but would represent ''an extension of traditional armed conflict into the space domain of human endeavor,'' Hill clarified. The 2020 defense-based strategy addresses such challenges of deterrence and the challenges of crisis de-escalation and warfare, extending to space along four lines of effort, Hill said. The DOD is building comprehensive military advantages in space; integrating space into national joint and combined operations; shaping the strategic environment to enhance domain stability and reduce the potential for miscalculation; and enhancing space cooperation with its international partners, commercial entities and agency partners. Supporting national security strategic guidelines, Hill noted his office also leads DOD's participation in the U.S. government space diplomatic initiative, which centers on establishing voluntary non-binding standards of responsible behavior and on exposing the disingenuous space arms control initiatives of Russia and China.

#### Only U.S. space heg solves war – it’s sustainable and Chinese counter-hegemonic pushes on Earth mean it’s try or die for American hegemony

Elvevold ’19 [Eirik Billingsø, master’s in international Relations from Universidade Nova, ““War in Space: Why Not?” A Neorealist Analysis of International Space Politics (1957-2018)”, May 2019, https://run.unl.pt/bitstream/10362/82269/1/Thesis\_InternationalRelations\_EirikBElvevold\_47082.pdf]//pranav

* ON = Offensive Neorealism - anarchy forces states to maximize space power instead of security and aim for space hegemony

The risk of space war seems to have decreased substantially in the beginning of the Second Space Age because no other state could threaten the US in space – the ideal position for any state seeking security according to Mearsheimer.973 The US had, by force of all its satellites, the most to lose from a space war, but also the most space weapons to strike back. The US had already developed conventional and nuclear ASATs together with a slowly maturing ABM systems, both domestically and regionally. All of these space capabilities came on top of conventional military capabilities, which was in turn was enhanced further by US capabilities. Meanwhile, the USSR lost physical control over its primary spaceport, Baikonur, and important ground facilities as the union broke up in the transition between the First and Second Space Age.974 By joining both the ISS975 and the MTCR976, and commercialising and selling its space launchers977978979980, Russia appear to have admitted to US space hegemony – at least temporarily. Chinese space capabilities were growing, but placed under strict export controls by the US.981 In sum, a space attack from any state could undoubtedly have been met with even harsher US attacks in retribution. The US was a threat to other states in space in the second Space Age.982 Several unilateralist moves in space proved that the distribution of space power was in fact unipolar. The US pulled out of the ABMT, a corner-stone treaty of space stability, on the back of an explicitly unilateralist space doctrine.983 After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the US conducted what has been called “informationalised warfare” in Afghanistan and Iraq.984 All along, new space weapons ideas – like the “Rods for Gods” concept – were being explored.985 Space institutions under the UN provided some goods to China and Russia, but ultimately served the US better, as made clear by the latter states´ attempts at replacing central international space treaties.986 As the US invested in advanced defensive space power systems, the two other states faced a dilemma. Enter into an arms race with the US in space and potentially lose? Or give away sovereignty by being dominated by superior US space weapons circling above? Regardless, US dominance in space during the Second Space age was a source of insecurity to less powerful states. China and Russia dealt with growing space insecurity by balancing against the US in space. China has built and tested a broad range of military space capabilities987, developed its own counterspace strategy based on the observed US “informationalised warfare”988, and lobbied for new international space weapons laws through the UN system.989 The EU and China has become less dependent on GPS by investing in the Galileo and Baidu navigation systems, which Bolton argues to be a form of techno-nationalist balancing.990 The two challengers have united to change the international space regime in their advantage by suggesting a ban on space-based weapons instead of Earth-based ASATs like the ones they possess themselves.991 In order to stop the return of an idea like “Brilliant Pebbles”, China emulated the US and Soviet two-track approach. To develop ASATs while negotiating to ban them. Russian re-took control over some of the commercialised space sector, invested in and reorganised military space, and restarted GLONASS launches. The risk of space war in the Second Space Age has so far peaked in 2007 and 2008. Ever since the mid 1980s, before the USSR collapsed and the Second Space Age ended, the two reigning superpowers had abstained from further ASAT testing.992 Suddenly, the old bipolar balance of space power was gone. At first, the balance of space power became unipolar, allowing the US to pull out from a core space treaty like the ABMT.993 China, however, had a larger population and growing wealth from industry and advanced technology. Ever sine the new millennium, China had been developing new space weapons. To prove that it was one the countries with such a capability and realise its potential threat, China decided to begin conducting ASAT tests.994 By studying and emulation US “informationalised warfare”, China developed and demonstrated capabilities which can take advantage of US vulnerabilities in space. This has played into the historical fear of a new “Pearl Harbor” in the US. If a “tit for tat” pattern of ASAT testing had manifested, tensions between China and the US could have escalated into direct confrontation. The gradual shift to multipolarity seems to haves increased the risk of space war during the Second Space Age. For the last decades, new actors – primarily China – have been able to level the playing field, while space capabilities have become cheaper and more easily available.995 As Petroni and Bianchi found, economic leadership has become the foundation of military space supremacy in the multipolar world.996 China benefited greatly from what Mearsheimer's might call latent military space power997 from its rapidly growing commercial satellites industry, but Russia also focused its attention to its commercial sector in the Second Space Age.99899910001001 Multipolarity in space comes with increased complexity and likelihood of miscalculation. In that light, China's balancing act with an ASAT test in 2007 appear even more dangerous. The US answered in turn with their own ASAT test, destroying their own satellite to match the Chinese one circling Earth as scattered debris.1002 Russia's attempt in the last decade to counterbalance against the US has also been reflected in international space politics, in the shape of more state control, military spending and reorganisation, and new alliances. Sino-Russian space cooperation, however, is not running on full throttle, as China is now developing more capabilities at home, while Russia is spending more at home. Wohlforth argues that the current US unipolarity is stable because of the superpower´s preponderance1003 , but judging by the behaviour of China and Russia, the perceived threat seems large enough to trigger balancing behaviour in space. The quest for regional hegemony on Earth has increased the risk of space war. As China grows stronger, US military hegemony, especially in Asia, is being challenged. Satellites have long played an important part in wars far off the US mainland. From Vietnam to the two wars in Iraq, the Balkan Wars, Afghanistan: military space capabilities have been involved involved in all of them. Similarly, the US military presence in the western Pacific also relies on space power to a high degree. The US still enjoys an overwhelming space superiority compared to China and Russia (See Figure 6), but experts believe that China aims to use its rapidly growing arsenal of asymmetric counterspace capabilities to deny US space dominance in case of a conflict in Asia over critical national interests, such as the status of Taiwan.10041005 In a potential war over the Taiwan or Spratlay Islands, China could be tempted to try to delay US aircraft carriers by destroying, blinding or jamming the satellites such carriers rely on for navigation, coordination and precision strikes.1006 The strategy involves denying opponents access to information by interfering with their space capabilities and thereby retarding their command and control. In short, by denying an opponent the ability to use space freely, the PLA would be denying them the ability to achieve information dominance and therefore make them less able to fight an “informationalised war”. O´Hanlon predicts that if “China could find major U.S. naval assets with satellites, it would only need to sneak a single airplane, ship, or submarine into the region east of Taiwan to have a good chance of sinking a ship”1007, thus deterring the US from entering a war to protects its allies. Similarly, Russia has demonstrated operational counterspace capabilities in regional conflicts in Chechnya1008 as well as Ukraine and Syria1009. The risk of space war decreased during the Second Space Age because states still maximised space security to a high degree, and because technological maturity and high costs are still important factors. China's ASAT test in 2007 can not be labelled space security maximisation, but after the US response in 2008, the US approach in space actually shifted to become less confrontational and slight more accepting to a multipolar balance of space power in the international system.10101011 Even at the peak of the unipolar moment in space, with space weapons like “Rod from Gods” on the drawing board, the US never placed weapons permanently in orbit. Instead of using its ASAT weapons when it suddenly became an underdog, Russia cooperated with the US, though much out of necessity. The Columbia accident in 2003, showed that even the state with the most space power – in this case the US – was struggling to develop safe and functioning space capabilities. However, a number of factor predicts a dangerous future in international space politics. The true nature of new space capabilities continued to be blurred due to its dual-use. According to the Pentagon, roughly 95 percent of space technologies can be considered dual use.1012 As Mutschler has argued, space security cooperation must produce balanced gains to stand a chance for success1013, but as Hansel has pointed out, the US, China and Russia have opposing interests on space arms control. 1014 The incentives for striking first in space, which according to Glaser and Kaufmann1015 is an important factor in explaining the likelihood of war in the international system, is made worse by limitations in space situational awareness (SSA)1016. Perhaps more importantly, the US and China – the two most powerful states on Earth – have little to no cooperation in space, leaving slim chances for successful, substantial space cooperation based on balanced, relative gains.1017 Ultimately, as Bahney and Pearl have recently concluded in Foreign Affairs, “[e]ven if it were possible to convince Moscow and Beijing of the benefits of comprehensive space arms control, existing technology makes it extremely difficult to verify compliance with the necessary treaty provisions—and without comprehensive and reliable verification, treaties are toothless”1018.

#### American unipolarity is not mutually exclusive from multilateral cooperation – it creates a new form of institutionally bound multilateralism via benign hegemony

**Stokes ’18** [Doug, Professor in International Security and Strategy in the Department of Politics at the University of Exeter, “Trump, American Hegemony, and the Future of the Liberal International Order”, International Affairs 94: I, 2018 issue, https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/images/ia/INTA94\_1\_8\_238\_Stokes.pdf]//pranav

At the end of the Second World War, the United States possessed almost half the world’s manufacturing capacity, the majority of its food supplies, nearly all of its capital reserves and a military power unparalleled in human history. In this context, the US national interest became globalized as America set about using its hegemonic leadership to fashion a new world order. Whereas closed economic blocs had exacerbated the rise of nationalist extremism after the First World War, after 1945 American foreign policy elites sought to use the new US hegemony to create an international order based on economic interdependence, a conditional and institutionally bound multilateralism and strategic alliance networks under US leadership. These networks existed in part to contain Soviet expansionism militarily, but also to dampen geopolitical competition from other centres of world power such as Japan or western Europe.14 The promotion of the LIO thus represented the institutional instantiation of the kind of world order that would allow the United States to thrive while also remaining first among equals in a Pax Americana.15 This order, while allowing the United States to flourish, also carried substantial costs, with the emergence of economic challenges from other states. Both Germany and Japan, formerly locked into an existential struggle for world mastery, emerged as economic challengers to the United States a little over three decades after the cessation of hostilities. This was, then, a remarkably benign form of hegemony, giving rise to the question: why would the United States choose this form of hegemonic leadership, and the often steep concomitant costs in blood and treasure, to maintain a system that, in economic terms at least, allowed other centres of power to emerge? At this point we can usefully turn to IR theory, and in particular hegemonic stability theory (HST), which can help us to understand the structural logic underpinning hegemonic leadership. Broadly speaking, HST argues that the international system is more likely to be stable when a single state is the dominant power within that system. The existence of a hegemon helps eliminate collec- tive action problems associated with the generation of often costly global public goods necessary to world commerce and to the underwriting of the political and strategic contexts of global economic interdependence—problems that have long bedevilled international politics. Aside from the alleged efficacy of world hegemonic leadership, what does HST tell us about why a preponderant power would seek this often costly role of global leadership? The first explanation is most closely associated with Kindleberger, and argues that a hegemon provides leadership as a form of benevolent service to the international community.16 In this sense, the hegemon seeks to promote not only its own interests but also the collective interests of the states that it leads: a form of noblesse oblige. In so far as hegemonic leadership is ‘thought of as the provision of the public good of responsibility, rather than exploitation of followers or the private good of prestige, it remains a positive idea’. Importantly, hegemonic leadership can help to pacify forms of economic rivalry inherent within the global economy. That is, leadership can help ‘pool sovereignties to limit the capacity of separate countries to work against the general interest; such pooling is virtually attained today in some of the functions needed to stabilize the world economic system’ and is ‘necessary in the absence of delegated authority’.17 The hegemon is benign as its net resource transfers to the rest of the international community through the costs of the public goods it supplies, including security public goods in the form of alliance networks such as NATO, are extremely costly. This implies that the United States is not predominantly seeking either its own immediate advantage or its own one-sided long-term strength *vis-à-vis* other economic centres. Instead, it is promoting change in the collective interests of world prosperity through the exercise of a benign hegemony.

#### China *peaked* - decline inevitable which causes lash out conflict, but strong American *hegemony deters* – history proves our thesis

Brands & Beckley ’21 [Hal Brands - Henry Kissinger distinguished professor of global affairs at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies, Michael Beckley - associate professor of political science at Tufts University, a Jeane Kirkpatrick visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, “China Is a Declining Power—and That’s the Problem”, 09-24-2021, Foreign Policy, https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/09/24/china-great-power-united-states/]//pranav

This is the real trap the United States should worry about regarding China today—the trap in which an aspiring superpower peaks and then refuses to bear the painful consequences of descent.

China’s rise is no mirage: Decades of growth have given Beijing the economic sinews of global power. Major investments in key technologies and communications infrastructure have yielded a strong position in the struggle for geoeconomic influence; China is using a multi-continent Belt and Road Initiative to bring other states into its orbit. Most alarming, think tank assessments and U.S. Defense Department reports show China’s increasingly formidable military now stands a real chance of winning a war against the United States in the Western Pacific.

It is unsurprising, therefore, that China has also developed the ambitions of a superpower: Xi has more or less announced that Beijing desires to assert its sovereignty over Taiwan, the South China Sea, and other disputed areas, becoming Asia’s preeminent power and challenging the United States for global leadership. Yet if China’s geopolitical window of opportunity is real, its future is already starting to look quite grim because it is quickly losing the advantages that propelled its rapid growth.

From the 1970s to the 2000s, China was nearly self-sufficient in food, water, and energy resources. It enjoyed the greatest demographic dividend in history, with 10 working-age adults for every senior citizen aged 65 or older. (For most major economies, the average is closer to 5 working-age adults for every senior citizen.) China had a secure geopolitical environment and easy access to foreign markets and technology, all underpinned by friendly relations with the United States. And China’s government skillfully harnessed these advantages by carrying out a process of economic reform and opening while also moving the regime from stifling totalitarianism under former Chinese leader Mao Zedong to a smarter—if still deeply repressive—form of authoritarianism under his successors. China had it all from the 1970s to the early 2010s—just the mix of endowments, environment, people, and policies needed to thrive.

Since the late 2000s, however, the drivers of China’s rise have either stalled or turned around entirely. For example, China is running out of resources: Water has become scarce, and the country is importing more energy and food than any other nation, having ravaged its own natural resources. Economic growth is therefore becoming costlier: According to data from DBS Bank, it takes three times as many inputs to produce a unit of growth today as it did in the early 2000s.

China is also approaching a demographic precipice: From 2020 to 2050, it will lose an astounding 200 million working-age adults—a population the size of Nigeria—and gain 200 million senior citizens. The fiscal and economic consequences will be devastating: Current projections suggest China’s medical and social security spending will have to triple as a share of GDP, from 10 percent to 30 percent, by 2050 just to prevent millions of seniors from dying of impoverishment and neglect.

To make matters worse, China is turning away from the package of policies that promoted rapid growth. Under Xi, Beijing has slid back toward totalitarianism. Xi has appointed himself “chairman of everything,” destroyed any semblance of collective rule, and made adherence to “Xi Jinping thought” the ideological core of an increasingly rigid regime. And he has relentlessly pursued the centralization of power at the expense of economic prosperity.

State zombie firms are being propped up while private firms are starved of capital. Objective economic analysis is being replaced by government propaganda. Innovation is becoming more difficult in a climate of stultifying ideological conformity. Meanwhile, Xi’s brutal anti-corruption campaign has deterred entrepreneurship, and a wave of politically driven regulations has erased more than $1 trillion from the market capitalization of China’s leading tech firms. Xi hasn’t simply stopped the process of economic liberalization that powered China’s development: He has thrown it hard into reverse.

The economic damage these trends are causing is starting to accumulate—and it is compounding the slowdown that would have occurred anyway as a fast-growing economy matures. The Chinese economy has been losing steam for more than a decade: The country’s official growth rate declined from 14 percent in 2007 to 6 percent in 2019, and rigorous studies suggest the true growth rate is now closer to 2 percent. Worse, most of that growth stems from government stimulus spending. According to data from the Conference Board, total factor productivity declined 1.3 percent every year on average between 2008 and 2019, meaning China is spending more to produce less each year. This has led, in turn, to massive debt: China’s total debt surged eight-fold between 2008 and 2019 and exceeded 300 percent of GDP prior to COVID-19. Any country that has accumulated debt or lost productivity at anything close to China’s current pace has subsequently suffered at least one “lost decade” of near-zero economic growth.

All of this is happening, moreover, as China confronts an increasingly hostile external environment. The combination of COVID-19, persistent human rights abuses, and aggressive policies have caused negative views of China to reach levels not seen since the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989. Countries worried about Chinese competition have slapped thousands of new trade barriers on its goods since 2008. More than a dozen countries have dropped out of Xi’s Belt and Road Initiative while the United States wages a global campaign against key Chinese tech companies—notably, Huawei—and rich democracies across multiple continents throw up barriers to Beijing’s digital influence. The world is becoming less conducive to easy Chinese growth, and Xi’s regime increasingly faces the sort of strategic encirclement that once drove German and Japanese leaders to desperation.

Case in point is U.S. policy. Over the past five years, two U.S. presidential administrations have committed the United States to a policy of “competition”—really, neo-containment—vis-à-vis China. U.S. defense strategy is now focused squarely on defeating Chinese aggression in the Western Pacific; Washington is using an array of trade and technological sanctions to check Beijing’s influence and limit its prospects for economic primacy. “Once imperial America considers you as their ‘enemy,’ you’re in big trouble,” one senior People’s Liberation Army officer warned. Indeed, the United States has also committed to orchestrating greater global resistance to Chinese power, a campaign that is starting to show results as more and more countries respond to the threat from Beijing.

In maritime Asia, resistance to Chinese power is stiffening. Taiwan is boosting military spending and laying plans to turn itself into a strategic porcupine in the Western Pacific. Japan is carrying out its biggest military buildup since the end of the Cold War and has agreed to back the United States if China attacks Taiwan. The countries around the South China Sea, particularly Vietnam and Indonesia, are beefing up their air, naval, and coast guard forces to contest China’s expansive claims.

Other countries are pushing back against Beijing’s assertiveness as well. Australia is expanding northern bases to accommodate U.S. ships and aircraft and building long-range conventional missiles and nuclear-powered attack submarines. India is massing forces on its border with China while sending warships through the South China Sea. The European Union has labeled Beijing a “systemic rival,” and Europe’s three greatest powers—France, Germany, and the United Kingdom—have dispatched naval task forces to the South China Sea and Indian Ocean. A variety of multilateral anti-China initiatives—the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue; supply chain alliances; the new so-called AUKUS alliance with Washington, London, and Canberra; and others—are in the works. The United States’ “multilateral club strategy,” hawkish and well-connected scholar Yan Xuetong acknowledged in July, is “isolating China” and hurting its development.

No doubt, counter-China cooperation has remained imperfect. But the overall trend is clear: An array of actors is gradually joining forces to check Beijing’s power and put it in a strategic box. China, in other words, is not a forever-ascendant country. It is an already-strong, enormously ambitious, and deeply troubled power whose window of opportunity won’t stay open for long.

In some ways, all of this is welcome news for Washington: A China that is slowing economically and facing growing global resistance will find it exceedingly difficult to displace the United States as the world’s leading power—so long as the United States doesn’t tear itself apart or otherwise give the game away. In other ways, however, the news is more troubling. History warns the world should expect a peaking China to act more boldly, even erratically, over the coming decade—to lunge for long-sought strategic prizes before its fortunes fade.

What might this look like? We can make educated guesses based on what China is presently doing.

Beijing is already redoubling its efforts to establish a 21st century sphere of economic influence by dominating critical technologies—such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and 5G telecommunications—and using the resulting leverage to bend states to its will. It will also race to perfect a “digital authoritarianism” that can protect an insecure Chinese Communist Party’s rule at home while bolstering Beijing’s diplomatic position by exporting that model to autocratic allies around the world.

In military terms, the Chinese Communist Party may well become increasingly heavy-handed in securing long, vulnerable supply lines and protecting infrastructure projects in Central and Southwest Asia, Africa, and other regions, a role some hawks in the People’s Liberation Army are already eager to assume. Beijing could also become more assertive vis-à-vis Japan, the Philippines, and other countries that stand in the way of its claims to the South and East China Seas.

Most troubling of all, China will be sorely tempted to use force to resolve the Taiwan question on its terms in the next decade before Washington and Taipei can finish retooling their militaries to offer a stronger defense. The People’s Liberation Army is already stepping up its military exercises’ intensity in the Taiwan Strait. Xi has repeatedly declared Beijing cannot wait forever for its “renegade province” to return to the fold. When the military balance temporarily shifts further toward China’s favor in the late 2020s and as the Pentagon is forced to retire aging ships and aircraft, China may never have a better chance of seizing Taiwan and dealing Washington a humiliating defeat.

To be clear, China probably won’t undertake an all-out military rampage across Asia, as Japan did in the 1930s and early 1940s. But it will run greater risks and accept greater tensions as it tries to lock in key gains. Welcome to geopolitics in the age of a peaking China: a country that already has the ability to violently challenge the existing order and one that will probably run faster and push harder as it loses confidence that time is on its side.

The United States, then, will face not one but two tasks in dealing with China in the 2020s. It will have to continue mobilizing for long-term competition while also moving quickly to deter aggression and blunt some of the more aggressive, near-term moves Beijing may make. In other words, buckle up. The United States has been rousing itself to deal with a rising China. It’s about to discover that a declining China may be even more dangerous.

### Framing

#### The standard is minimizing existential risk.

#### Even the most conservative estimates prove reducing existential risk outweighs all other impacts, regardless of probability – actively prioritize our calculus since you are cognitively biased against it

Whittlestone 17 – (Jess Whittlestone, PhD in Behavioural Science and has worked as a policy consultant for government, specialising in security and foreign policy. She also has experience as a freelance journalist for a number of online magazines, including Quartz, Vox, and Aeon. Before her PhD, she studied Maths and Philosophy at Oxford, and played a key role in developing 80,000 Hours' coaching process and research. Currently, Jess is a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence at Cambridge, “The Long-Term Future”, Effective Altruism, 11-16-17, Available Online at <https://www.effectivealtruism.org/articles/cause-profile-long-run-future/>, accessed 12-4-18, HKR-AM)

The number of people alive today pales in comparison to the number who could exist in the future. It may therefore be extremely important to ensure that human civilization flourishes far into the future, enjoying fulfilling lives free of suffering.

There are a number of ways we might work to ensure a positive future for humanity. We could work to better understand and prevent extinction risks - catastrophic events that have the potential to destroy all life on this planet.[1] We may want to focus on the broader category of existential risks- events that could dramatically and irreversibly curtail humanity’s potential.[2] Or we might focus on increasing the chance that the lives of our descendants are positive in other ways: for example, improving democracy or the ability of institutions to make good decisions.

Attempts to shape the long-term future seem highly neglected relative to the problems we face today. There are fewer incentives to address longer-term problems, and they can also be harder for us to take seriously.

It is, of course, hard to be certain about the impact of our actions on the very long-term future. However, it does seem that there are things we can do - and given the vast scale we are talking about, these actions could therefore have an enormous impact in expectation.

This profile sets out why you might want to focus your altruistic efforts on the long-term future - and why you might not. You may be particularly inclined to focus on this if you think we face serious existential threats in the next century, and if you’re comfortable accepting a reasonable amount of uncertainty about the impact you are having, especially in the short-term.

The case for the long-term future as a target of altruism

The case for focusing on the long-term future can be summarised as follows:

The long-term future has enormous potential for good or evil: our descendants could live for billions or trillions of years, and have very high-quality lives;

It seems likely there are things we can do today that will affect the long-term future in non-negligible ways;

Possible ways of shaping the long-term future are currently highly neglected by individuals and society;

Given points 1 to 3 above, actions aimed at shaping the long-term future seem to have extremely high expected value, higher than any actions aiming for more near-term benefits.

Below we discuss each part of this argument in more detail.

The long-term future has enormous potential

Civilisation could continue for a billion years, until the Earth becomes uninhabitable.[3] It’s hard to say how likely this is, but it certainly seems plausible - and putting less than, say, a 1% chance on this possibility seems overconfident.[4] You may disagree that 1% is a reasonable lower bound here, but changing the figure by an order of magnitude or two would still yield an extremely impressive result. And even if civilisation only survives for another million years, that still amounts to another ~50,000 generations of people, i.e. trillions of future lives.[5]

If our descendants survive for long enough, then they are likely to advance in ways we cannot currently imagine - even someone living a few hundred years ago could not possibly have imagined the technological advances we’ve made today. It is possible they might even develop technology enabling them to reach and colonise planets outside our solar system, and survive well beyond a billion years.[6]

Let’s say that if we survive until the end of the Earth’s lifespan, there is a 1% chance of space colonisation. This would make the overall probability of survival beyond Earth 1 in 10,000 (1% chance of surviving to a billion years, multiplied by a 1% chance of surviving further given that). This sounds incredibly low, but suppose that space colonisation could allow our descendants to survive up to 100 trillion years[7]. This suggests we could have up to 1/10,000 x 100 trillion years = 10 billion expected years of civilisation ahead of us.

If we expect life in the future to be, on average, about as good as the present, then this would make the whole of the future about 100 million times more important than everything that has happened in the last 100 years. In fact, it seems like there could be more people in the future with better lives than those living today: economic, social, and technological progress could enable us to cure diseases, lift people out of poverty, and better solve other problems. It also seems possible that people in the future will be more altruistic than people alive today[8] - which also makes it more likely that they will be motivated to create a happy and valuable world.

However, it’s precisely because of this enormous potential that it’s so important to ensure that things go as well as possible. The loss of potential would be enormous if we end up on a negative trajectory. It could result in a great deal of suffering or the end of life.[9] And just as the potential to solve many of the world’s problems is growing, threats seem to be growing too. In particular, advanced technologies and increasing interconnectedness pose great risks.[10]

There are things we can do today that could affect the long-term future

There are a number of things we could work on today that seem likely to influence the long-term future:

Reducing extinction risks: We could reduce the risk of catastrophic climate change by putting in place laws and regulations to cut carbon emissions. We could reduce the risks from new technologies by investing in research to ensure their safety. Alternatively, we could work to improve global cooperation so that we are better able to deal with unforeseen risks that might arise.

Changing the values of a civilisation: Values tend to be stable in societies,[11] so attempts to shift values, whilst difficult, could have long-lasting effects. Some forms of value change, like increasing altruism, seem robustly good, and may be a way of realizing the very best possible futures. However, spreading poorly considered values could be harmful.

Reducing suffering risks: Historically, technological advances have enabled great welfare improvements (e.g. through modern agriculture and medicine), but also some of the greatest sources of present-day suffering (e.g. factory farming). To prevent the worst risks from new technologies, we could improve global cooperation and work on specific problems like preventing worst-case outcomes from artificial intelligence.

“Speeding up” development: Boosting technological innovation or scientific progress could have a lasting “speed up” effect on the entire future, making all future benefits happen slightly earlier than they otherwise would have. Curing a disease just a few years earlier could save millions of lives, for example. (That said, it’s not clear whether speeding up development is good or bad for existential risk - developing new technologies faster might help us to mitigate certain threats, but pose new risks of their own.)

Ripple effects of our ordinary actions: Improvements in health not only benefit individuals directly but allow them to be more economically successful, meaning that society and other individuals have to invest less in supporting them. In aggregate, this could easily have substantial knock-on effects on the productivity of society, which could affect the future.

Other ways we might create positive trajectory changes: These include improving education, science, and political systems.

Paul Christiano also points out that even if opportunities to shape the long-term future with any degree of certainty do not exist today, they may well exist in the future. Investing in our own current capacity could have an indirect but large impact by improving our ability to take such opportunities when they do arise. Similarly, we can do research today to learn more about how we might be able to impact the long-term future.

The long-term future is neglected, especially relative to its importance

Attempts to shape the long-term future are neglected by individuals, organisations and governments.

One reason is that there is little incentive to focus on far-off, uncertain issues compared to more certain, immediate ones. As 80,000 Hours put it, “Future generations matter, but they can’t vote, they can’t buy things, they can’t stand up for their interests.”

Problems faced by future generations are also more uncertain and more abstract, making it harder for us to care about them. There is a well-established phenomenon called temporal discounting, which means that we tend to give less weight to outcomes that are far in the future. This may explain our tendency to neglect long-term risks and problems. For example, it’s a large part of why we seem to have such difficulty tackling climate change.

Generally, there are diminishing returns to additional work in an area. This means that the neglectedness of the long-term future makes it more likely to be high impact.

Efforts to shape the long-term future could be extremely high in expected value

Even if the chance of our actions influencing the long-term trajectory of humanity is relatively low, there are extremely large potential benefits, which mean that these actions could still have a very high expected value. For example, decreasing the probability of human extinction by just one in a million could result in an additional 1,000 to 10,000 expected years of civilisation (using earlier assumptions).[12]

Compare this to actions we could take to improve the lives of people alive today, without looking at longer-run effects. A dramatic victory such as curing the most common and deadly diseases, or ending all war, might only make the current time period (~100 years) about twice as good as otherwise.[13] Though this seems like an enormous success, given the calculations above, decreasing the probability of human extinction would be 10 or 100 times better in expectation.

We might want to adjust this naive estimate downwards slightly, however, given uncertainty about some of the assumptions that go into it - we could be wrong about the probability of humanity surviving far into the future, or about the value of the future (if we think that future flourishing might have diminishing value, for example.) However, even if we think these estimates should be adjusted downwards substantially, we might very conservatively imagine that reducing the likelihood of existential risk by one in a million only equates to 100 expected years of civilization. This still suggests that the value of working to reduce existential risk is comparable to the value of the biggest victories we could imagine in the current time period - and so well worth taking seriously.

#### Evolution means realism is the only plausible IR theory

**Johnson and Thayer 16** – Dominic D. P. Johnson, D.Phil., Ph.D.\* and Bradley A. Thayer, Ph.D., “The evolution of offensive realism Survival under anarchy from the Pleistocene to the present,” https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/56B778004187F70B8E59609BE7FEE7A4/S073093841600006Xa.pdf/div-class-title-the-evolution-of-offensive-realism-div.pdf

Few principles unite the discipline of international relations, but one exception is anarchy—the absence of government in international politics. Anarchy is, ironically, the ‘‘ordering’’ principle of the global state system and the starting point for most major theories of international politics, such as neoliberalism and neorealism.42,43,44,45 Other theoretical approaches, such as constructivism, also acknowledge the impact of anarchy, even if only to consider why anarchy occurs and how it can be circumvented.46,47 Indeed, the anarchy concept is so profound that it defines and divides the discipline of political science into international politics (politics under conditions of anarchy) and domestic politics (politics under conditions of hierarchy, or government). Given the prominence of the concept in present-day international relations theory, it is striking that anarchy only took hold as a central feature of scholarship in recent decades, since the publication of Kenneth Waltz’s Theory of International Politics in 1979. In fact, however, **anarchy has been a constant feature of the entire multimillion year history of the human lineage (and indeed the 3.5 billion–year history of the evolution of all life on Earth before that). It is not just that we lack a global Leviathan today; humans never had such a luxury. The fact that human evolution occurred under conditions of anarchy, that we evolved as hunter-gatherers in an ecological setting of predation, resource competition, and intergroup conflict, and that humans have been subject to natural selection** for millions of years **has profound consequences for understanding human behavior**, not least how humans perceive and act toward others. Scholars often argue over whether historically humans experienced a Hobbesian ‘‘state of nature,’’ but—whatever the outcome of that debate—it is certainly a much closer approximation to the prehistoric environment in which human brains and behavior evolved. **This legacy heavily influences our decision-making and behavior today, even—perhaps especially—in the anarchy of international politics**. We argue that **evolution under conditions of anarchy has predisposed human nature toward the behaviors predicted by offensive realism: Humans**, particularly men, **are strongly self-interested, often fear other groups, and seek more resources, more power, and more influence** (as we explain in full later). **These strategies** are not unique to humans and, in fact, **characterize a much broader trend in behavior among mammals as a whole—especially primates**—as well as many other major vertebrate groups, including birds, fish, and reptiles. **This recurrence of behavioral patterns** across different taxonomic groups **suggests that the behaviors characterized by offensive realism have broad and deep evolutionary roots**

This perspective does not deny the importance of institutions, norms, and governance in international politics. On the contrary, it provides or adds to the reasons why we demand and need them, and indeed why they are so hard to establish and maintain. Until recently, **international relations theorists rarely used insights from the life sciences to inform their understanding of human behavior**. However, **rapid advances in the life sciences offer increasing theoretical and empirical challenges to scholars in** the social sciences in general and **international relations** in particular, who are therefore under increasing pressure to address and integrate this knowledge rather than to suppress or ignore it. Whatever one’s personal views on evolution, **the time has come to explore the implications of evolutionary theory for mainstream theories of international relations**. **The most obvious challenge that evolutionary theory presents to international relations concerns our understanding of human nature**. Theories purporting to explain human behavior make explicit or implicit assumptions about preferences and motivations, and mainstream theories in international politics are no exception. Many **criticisms of international relations theories focus on these unsubstantiated or contested assumptions about underlying human nature. The parsimony of general theories depends on how well they explain phenomena across space and time**; in other words, the more closely they coincide with empirical observations across cultures and throughout history. The most enduring theories of international relations, therefore, will be ones that are able to incorporate (or at least do not run against the grain of) evolutionary theory. Although Thomas Hobbes claimed to have deduced Leviathan scientifically from ‘‘motion’’ and the physical senses, he was writing two hundred years before Darwin and so had no understanding of evolution. International relations scholars have tended to claim to deduce their own theories from Hobbes, or subsequent philosophers who followed him, and we suggest it is time to revisit the idea of foundational scientific principles. **Starting with biology, or with human evolutionary history, has never been typical in international relations scholarship**, but this approach is now less exotic than it once seemed as innovators in a range of social sciences, including economics, psychology, sociology, and political science, pursue this line of inquiry. **International relations stands to gain from** similar **interdisciplinary insights**. At the dawn of the 21st century, an era that will be dominated by science at least as much as philosophy, **we have the opportunity to move away from untested assumptions about human nature. Instead, we can make more concrete predictions about how humans tend to think and act in different conditions, based on new scientific knowledge about human cognition** and behavior, **and in particular a greater understanding of the social and ecological context in which human brains and behaviors evolved**. But what was that context?

#### A failure to acknowledge realism as the guiding philosophy causes Russia, China war – crimea proves

Stephen M. Walt 18(an American professor of international affairs at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. He belongs to the realist school of international relations. He made important contributions to the theory of defensive neorealism and has authored the balance of threat theory), “The World Wants You to Think Like a Realist. From Europe to Iran to North Korea, the world doesn't make sense anymore — unless you put all your illusions aside,” Foreign Policy, May 30 2018, https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/05/30/the-world-wants-you-to-think-like-a-realist/

One of the ironies of contemporary U.S. thinking about foreign policy is the odd status of realism. On the one hand, realist theory remains a staple of college teaching on international relations (along with many other approaches), and government officials [often claim](https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/hr-mcmaster-trump-national-security-strategy-to-be-based-on-principled-realism) that their actions are based on some sort of “realist” approach. But Washington remains for the most part a realism-free zone, with few genuine realists in positions of influence. Moreover, the realist perspective is almost entirely absent from the commanding heights of U.S. punditry. This column, and the consistently insightful writings of people such as Paul Pillar or Jacob Heilbrunn, does not make up for realism’s exclusion from the New York Times, Washington Post, or Wall Street Journal. Instead of relying on realism, both Republicans and Democrats tend to view foreign policy through the lens of liberal idealism. Rather than see world politics as an arena where security is scarce and major powers are forced to contend whether they wish to or not, America’s foreign-policy mavens are quick to divide the world into virtuous allies (usually democracies) and evil adversaries (always some sort of dictatorship) and to assume that when things go badly, it is because a wicked foreign leader (Saddam Hussein, Ali Khamenei, Vladimir Putin, Muammar al-Qaddafi, etc.) is greedy, aggressive, or irrational. When friendly states object to something the (virtuous) United States is doing, U.S. leaders tend to assume that critics just don’t understand their noble aims or are jealous of America’s success. I’ll concede that the Trump presidency presents a particular challenge for realists. It’s not easy to reconcile Donald Trump’s incoherent and bumbling approach to foreign affairs with the idea that states pursue national interests in a more or less rational or strategic fashion. Trump has shown himself to be many things thus far — willful, vain, dishonest, impulsive, narcissistic, ignorant, etc. — but “rational” and “strategic” aren’t words that leap to mind when contemplating his foreign policy. Realism also emphasizes external factors, such as balances of power and geography, and downplays the role of individual leaders. But the Trump presidency is an eloquent and worrisome reminder of the damage that individual leaders can do and especially when they are convinced that they are “[the only one that matters](https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/11/03/561797675/im-the-only-one-that-matters-trump-says-of-state-dept-job-vacancies).” Nonetheless, Trump’s singular incompetence isn’t sufficient reason to toss realism aside completely. For one thing, realism still helps us understand how Trump can get away with all this meshugas: The United States is still so powerful and secure that it can do a lot of dumb things and suffer only modest losses. More importantly, realism remains an extremely useful guide to a lot of things that have happened in the recent past or that are happening today. And as Trump is proving weekly, leaders who ignore these insights inevitably make lots of dumb mistakes. In short, it is still highly useful to think like a realist. Let me explain why. Realism has a long history and many variants, but its core rests on a straightforward set of ideas. As the name implies, realism tries to explain world politics as they really are, rather than describe how they ought to be. For realists, power is the centerpiece of political life: Although other factors sometimes play a role, the key to understanding politics lies in focusing on who has power and what they are doing with it. The Athenians’ infamous warning to the Melians captures this perfectly: “The strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must.” [Quentin Tarantino](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R8u8ahInQY8) couldn’t have put it any better. For realists, states are the key actors in the international system. There is no central authority that can protect states from one another, so each state must rely upon its own resources and strategies to survive. Security is a perennial concern — even for powerful states — and states tend to worry a lot about who is weaker or stronger and what power trends appear to be. Cooperation is far from impossible in such a world — indeed, at times cooperating with others is essential to survival — but it is always somewhat fragile. Realists maintain that states will react to threats first by trying to “[pass the buck](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Offensive_realism#Balancing_v._buck-passing)” (i.e., getting someone else to deal with the emerging danger), and if that fails, they will try to [balance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balance_of_threat) against the threat, either by seeking allies or by building up their own capabilities. Realism isn’t the only way to think about international affairs, of course, and there are a number of [alternative perspectives and theories](https://www.jstor.org/stable/1149275) that can help us understand different aspects of the modern world. But if you do **think like a realist** — at least part of the time — many confusing aspects of world politics become easier to understand. If you think like a realist, for example, you’ll understand why China’s rise is a critical event and likely to be a source of conflict with the United States (and others). In a world where states have to protect themselves, the two most powerful states will eye each other warily and compete to make sure that they don’t fall behind or become dangerously vulnerable to the other. Even when war is avoided, intense security competition is likely to result. And by the way, thinking like a realist helps you understand why China is no longer committed to Deng Xiaoping’s policy of “peaceful rise.” That approach made sense when China was weaker, and it fooled plenty of Westerners into thinking China could be inveigled into being a responsible stakeholder that would meekly embrace various institutions and arrangements created by others back when China was weak. But realists understand that a more powerful China would eventually want to modify any features that were not in China’s interest, as Beijing has begun to do in recent years. Bottom line: Thinking like a realist is essential if you want to understand Sino-American relations. If you think like a realist, you wouldn’t be surprised that the United States has repeatedly used military force in distant lands over the past 25 years and especially after 9/11. Why? For one simple reason: Nobody could prevent it. Americans were also convinced their global role was indispensable and that they had the right, the responsibility, and the wisdom to interfere all over the world. But America’s dominant position was the permissive condition that made this overweening ambition seem feasible, at least for a while. As Kenneth Waltz [warned](https://www.jstor.org/stable/2539097?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents) way back in 1993: “One may hope that America’s internal preoccupations will produce not an isolationist policy, which has become impossible, but a forbearance that will give other countries at long last the chance to deal with their own problems and make their own mistakes. But I would not bet on it.” Good realist that he was, Waltz [understood](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/sipa/U6800/readings-sm/Waltz_Structural%20Realism.pdf) that the “vice to which great powers easily succumb in a multipolar world is inattention; in a bipolar world, overreaction; in a unipolar world, overextension.” And that’s precisely what happened. If you think like a realist, the crisis in Ukraine looks rather different than the typical Western version of events. Western accounts typically blame Putin for most of the trouble, but realists understand that major powers are always sensitive about their borders and are likely to react defensively if other great powers start encroaching on these regions. Ever heard of the Monroe Doctrine? In the case of Ukraine, the United States and its European allies had been expanding NATO steadily eastward ([violating pledges](https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/russia-programs/2017-12-12/nato-expansion-what-gorbachev-heard-western-leaders-early) made to Soviet leaders when Germany reunified) and ignoring repeated warnings from Moscow. By 2013, the United States and European Union were making a concerted effort to pull Ukraine into closer alignment with the West and openly interfering in Ukraine’s domestic political processes. Because the Obama administration did not think like realists, however, it was blindsided when Putin seized Crimea and derailed the EU/U.S. effort. Putin’s response was neither legal nor legitimate nor admirable, but it wasn’t surprising either. It is equally unsurprising that these events alarmed the Europeans and prompted NATO to shore up its defenses in Eastern Europe, precisely as a realist would expect. Thinking like a realist can also help you understand why the EU is in trouble. The entire EU project was designed to transcend nationalism and subordinate state interests within broader supranational institutions. Its architects hoped the separate national identities and interests that had torn Europe apart repeatedly would fade over time and a broad pan-European identity would supplant them. European unity was facilitated by the Cold War because the Soviet threat gave Western Europe ample incentive to cooperate, gave the Soviets’ Eastern European satellites an ideal to aspire to, and kept the “[American pacifier](https://www.jstor.org/stable/1148355)” on the continent. But once the Cold War was over, nationalism returned with a vengeance and especially after the euro crisis hit. Suddenly, populations wanted their elected officials not to save Europe but to save them. Despite herculean efforts by a number of European leaders and EU officials, these centrifugal tendencies seem to be getting worse, as the Brexit decision, the recent elections in Italy, and the resurgent nationalism in Poland and Hungary all attest. Those who hoped that European integration would prove irreversible have trouble understanding how their noble experiment went awry, but realists don’t. If you think like a realist, you might not be quite so outraged by the support that Iran and Syria gave the anti-American insurgency in Iraq after 2003. You might not like it, but you wouldn’t find their conduct surprising. Their response was classic balance of power behavior because the United States had just overthrown Saddam Hussein and the Bush administration had made it clear that Syria and Iran were next on its hit list. It made good strategic sense for Damascus and Tehran to do whatever they could to keep the United States bogged down in Iraq so that Washington couldn’t reload the shotgun and come after them. Americans have every reason to be upset by what these states did, but if more U.S. officials thought like realists, they would have expected it from the get-go. And if you think like a realist, it is obvious why North Korea has gone to enormous lengths to acquire a nuclear deterrent and obvious why a country such as Iran was interested in becoming a latent nuclear weapons state as well. These states were deeply at odds with the world’s most powerful country, and prominent U.S. officials kept saying that the only solution was to topple these regimes and replace them with leaders more to their liking. Never mind that regime change [rarely works](https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/05/14/regime-change-for-dummies/) as intended; the more important point is that any government facing a threat like that is going to try to protect itself. Nuclear weapons [aren’t good for blackmail](https://www.amazon.com/Nuclear-Weapons-Coercive-Diplomacy-Sechser/dp/1107514517) or conquest, but they are a very effective way to deter more powerful states from trying to overthrow you with military force. And you’d think Americans would understand this, given that the U.S. government thinks it needs thousands of nuclear weapons in order to be secure, despite its favorable geographic position and overwhelming conventional superiority. If U.S. leaders think like that, is it any wonder that some weaker and more vulnerable powers conclude that having a few nukes might make them more secure? And is it so surprising that they might be reluctant to give them up in exchange for assurances or promises that might easily be reversed or withdrawn? Someone really should explain this logic to John Bolton. Thinking like a realist also helps you understand why states with radically different political systems often act in surprisingly similar ways. To take an obvious example, the United States and Soviet Union could not have been more different in terms of their domestic orders, but their international behavior was much the same. Each led vast alliance networks, toppled governments they didn’t like, assassinated a number of foreign leaders, built tens of thousand of nuclear weapons (deployed on missiles, bombers, and submarines), intervened in far-flung lands, tried to convert other societies to their preferred ideology, and did what they could to bring the other down without blowing up the world. Why did they behave in such similar fashion? Because in an anarchic world, each had little choice but to compete with the other, lest it fall behind and become vulnerable to the other’s predations. Last but not least, if you think like a realist, you’re likely to be skeptical about the ambitious schemes that idealists keep dreaming up to bring an end to conflict, injustice, inequality, and other bad things. Striving to build a safer and more peaceful world is admirable, but realism reminds us that the ambitious efforts to remake world politics always create unintended consequences and rarely deliver the promised results. It also reminds that even allies fear unchecked power and will have misgivings whenever the United States tries to run the world. If you think like a realist, in short, you are more likely to act with a degree of prudence, and you’ll be less likely to see opponents as purely evil (or see one’s own country as wholly virtuous) and less likely to embark on open-ended moral crusades. Ironically, if more people thought like realists, the prospects for peace would go up.