# 1AC

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#### We affirm that American liberal hegemony ought to be prioritized - vote aff to embrace the scream of precision guided missiles whistling to strike an overseas target.

#### Sustaining primacy requires political efforts like the plan – our politics spills over

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### Waning US Unipolarity causes *G-Zero* – makes cooperation *impossible* and causes transition wars

Betz ’21 [Hans-Georg, adjunct professor of political science at the University of Zurich, “Uncertain Times in a World Without American Hegemony”, 11-03-2021, https://www.fairobserver.com/region/north\_america/hans-georg-betz-international-order-great-powers-american-hegemony-china-news-12512/]//pranav

Biden’s remark, however, does address a serious issue, namely the role of China in a rapidly changing world. A few weeks ago, Chinese coal production reached new historic highs, amounting to an estimated 4 billion tons for this year. Accelerated coal production is supposed to alleviate energy shortages that have threatened to slow down the country’s growth. Unfortunately, emissions-wise, coal happens to be one of the worst sources of energy.

A new study on the impact of carbon dioxide emissions on coastal areas predicts catastrophic devastation as a result of rising sea levels for some of the world’s megacities, particularly in India, Indonesia, Vietnam and China — all major coal consumers. Given the concentration of China’s population in a string of coastal cities, one might assume that it has a particular interest in combating climate change. In theory, this would entail an active involvement in global governance, a proposition that China has been more than reluctant to embrace, presumably because it would entail directly challenging the United States.

At the same time, however, China has launched major initiatives, such as the foundation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and particularly the One Belt, One Road initiative. Together with China’s massive engagement in Africa, these projects leave the impression that they are part of a comprehensive drive designed to establish China as an alternative to the United States.

This might herald the emergence of a new system, no longer dominated by one power but multipolar, and certainly very different from the one established after World War II. For, as Princeton’s John Ikenberry has noted a few years ago, “there is no liberal internationalism without American and western hegemony — and that age is ending.” With the decline of the United States and the parallel rise of China, countries have the option to “seek alternative patrons rather than remain dependent on Western largess and support.”

The end result might very well be a bifurcated world order, on the heels of a period of instability and turmoil, or what Ian Bremmer and Nouriel Roubini have called a “G-Zero” world, one without clear leadership and global cooperation. Bifurcation means the coexistence of competing systems that follow fundamentally different rules. This can already be observed in the realm of economic governance.

Olga Petricevic and David Teece have recently warned of a “noticeable defiance of the principles of classical economic liberalism and the rule-of-law” by Russia and China. The Chinese “alternative model of governance,” they note, “is deploying coordinated protectionist trade and investment policies and government intervention aimed at accessing and acquiring foreign intellectual property, thereby influencing the global economic and innovation system.” Its success is likely to inspire imitation and attempts to jump on the bandwagon, resulting not only in bifurcation but in polarization reminiscent of the Cold War period.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Rise of revisionist powers like Russia & China means American hegemony is especially key – lack of a response only emboldens aggression**

**Bromund et. al 17** [Ted R. Bromund is a senior research fellow in Anglo-American relations at the Heritage Foundation, Michael Auslin is the Williams-Griffis Fellow in Contemporary Asia at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Colin Dueck is a professor in the Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University and a non-resident fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, “Reclaiming American Realism,” Summer 2017 / Volume I, Number 2, <https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2017/05/reclaiming-american-realism/>] sg

The lessons of World War II and the Cold War were too easily transmuted into the argument that our security policies must always be undergirded by morality. Today, we place more emphasis on the unquestioned evil of both Nazism and Communism than on the existential threat their power posed to Western civilization. It follows that for defenders of the supposed “liberal international order,” U.S. involvement in humanitarian crises or efforts at nation-building in inhospitable climates becomes the true measure of the legitimacy and wisdom of our foreign policy. **When liberal states reveal their hypocrisy by not intervening in such crises, this delegitimizes them, and thereby makes it harder to advance arguments based on real national interests**. The greatest risk of all is that, when do-gooding dominates policy, the American people are more likely to withdraw their support for defending our overseas interests. The path to a sustainable and strong U.S. role in the world does not rest in valorizing the “rules-based international order”: it rests in understanding the value and the limits of our power. Believe what you will about Iraq or Syria. The fact is that there is no public support for such interventions today. It would be an act of folly to press for actions that, for lack of that support, cannot be followed through to victory. It must be an ironclad rule for the United States that we do not start a fight we do not intend to finish. But this does not mean we give up the competitive struggle. Instead, we must find new ways to wage it. While we should not use our national strength to uphold a fictive international community, we should recognize that our interests rest in advancing towards a freer world. Thus, our goal has not changed: it is to help defend, and, where possible, to advance prudently towards a world built on sovereign democracies in which Americans can be safe and free. And the American constitutional order—if we keep faith with it—has great long-run strengths, which we can use in this struggle; it imposes limits on centralized power and the competition it encourages. Principle and prudence alike tell us that we must play the long game. Our method should not be imposed regime change, except in cases of vital national need: it should be the creation of leverage, the use of pressure, and the imposition of costs to constrain our opponents. It is a great mistake to believe that we must always meet our adversaries head on: for example, the U.S. development of hydraulic fracturing, which reduces world oil prices and thus damages the Russian economy, imposes costs on Russia and decreases its strategic influence. Our goal should be to seek out and use such indirect methods to encourage the buildup of opposing forces within other systems, and—as Ronald Reagan did—to build opportunities for negotiations to be conducted on our terms, not theirs. And at times, in part **with the aid of this strategy, change may come in another way, preferably through peaceful transitions** that reflect a change in culture, and not just a struggle for power. Such a failure to change the culture is why there was no revolution after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but rather the more efficient reorganization of power by a repressive clique. Yet autocracies are brittle: eventually they crack, especially when the people living under them seek to emulate more successful democracies. That is the great fear of the Chinese Communist Party and the reason why it is repressing civil society today. We can win this struggle not primarily through force of arms, but through persistence and flexibility, backed by strength and the preservation of our national power. **The greatest strategic challenge we face today is not the strength of our main adversaries: it is the weakness of their neighbors**, be they the smaller and still-developing nations of Southeast Asia vis-à-vis **China**, or the economically challenged and militarily weak nations of Europe facing **Russia**. By various means—hybrid war, political subversion, or fear induced by threats—these nations, some of them our allies, are being suborned in ways that we find hard to combat and are reluctant even to acknowledge**. A world divided up into spheres of influence, largely controlled by our adversaries, would be neither stable nor free.** While we cannot prevent powerful nations from having spheres of particular interest, **it is not in our interest to allow them to exercise neo-imperial control over their neighbors.** We are by instinct and by interest opposed to empires. If illiberal states dominate vital regions, such as East Asia or Central Europe, the result will not be good for the freedom of Americans in the world, or the idea of republican self-government, or for our relative power. It would thus be profoundly antithetical to the true purpose of our foreign policy. So we must also draw the line in two crucial areas. First, no great power has the right to seize disputed territory by force of arms or stealthy annexation: the United States, together with as many allies as it can muster, must deter such seizures if possible, and, if necessary, use all means, including its military, to restore the status quo by imposing costs on an occupying power. Second, the United States must support sovereign nations that are resisting attempted subjugation by outside pressure, if that pressure is exerted by a nation that has the strength to alter the global balance of power. This means that we must oppose actions such as Russia’s assaults in Ukraine and the Caucasus, and China’s expansionism in the South China Sea. We cannot rule out the use of military force in cases such as this: if we do, other powers will simply escalate in any crisis until we quit. But there are many ways to use our military, including to deter, among other things. The **crises in Ukraine and the South China Sea reflect a U.S.** and allied **failure to establish credible deterrence.** Our military can also be a cost-imposing instrument: even if we never fire a shot, we can use it to force the other side to respond in ways that impose disproportionate costs on it. But the most important fact for us to recognize is that crises of this sort never stand alone; they are always part of a larger strategic competition. This means that **we cannot limit ourselves to symmetric responses.** Or, to put it more concretely, just because Russia attacks Ukraine does not mean that our response should be limited to Ukraine. To limit ourselves to a single theater of our opponent’s choosing gives them the initiative, denies the larger competition, and reduces our ability to make full use of all the means—military, economic, and diplomatic—at our disposal. And since the United States has a wider range of possible responses than any other power in the world, we only hurt ourselves if we artificially narrow the field of competition to a single disputed region. In other words, it is an error to believe that our goal is simply, and narrowly, to restore the status quo ante in particular, in disputed areas of the world. Our goal is much broader: it is to win. Or, more subtly, it is to engage in competition in ways that improve our position and damage those of our competitors. It is therefore not right to criticize responses—such as the sanctions that the United States imposed on Russia after its invasion of Ukraine—by arguing that they did not resolve the crisis, for the point of such responses is not to resolve the crisis: it is to open another front in the wider competition, and to do so in ways that impose long-term costs on our opponent. In time, the weakness of their system, and the stresses created by our responses, will create opportunities to resolve particular crises—but it is foolish to expect quick results, or to draw up elaborate plans for how we will win. After all, it took fifty years for the United States to redeem the Baltic nations from the Soviet Union, and no one could have foreseen the outcome of the Cold War in 1939. That is not to argue that all U.S. crisis responses are beyond criticism, or that they will inevitably be successful in the long run. But it is to argue that we are usually at fault, not simply in our response, but in failing to recognize and engage in the wider competition. In other words, the problem with U.S. sanctions on Russia is not that they have not produced immediate results: it is that sanctions are a way of isolating the crisis into a single theatre and, at the same time, disguising the wider competition—above all, from ourselves. The danger of these **crises** is not that they pose a direct threat to the United States. It is that, if **driven by great powers, they are central to the competitive world of geopolitics, and can even come to define an era**. Not all crises are our business, but **we cannot allow powerful nations to believe that they can redivide the world without reference to the values and interests of the United States.** The **danger rests** not so much in any particular crisis, **but in the rise of the belief among the powerful that the world is there for taking**. As Winston Churchill put it in 1935, in response to the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, “It’s not the thing we object to . . . it’s the kind of thing.” Because the powerful and ill-intentioned learn from each other, we are perilously close today to a world in which this “kind of thing” becomes the way things are done.

#### But, Multipolarity empowers global revisionism. That ensures the spread of autocratic regimes that have resulted in mass incarceration and genocide.

Rubin 19 Michael Rubin is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI). [“There’s Nothing Progressive about a Multipolar World,” *the National Interest*, 1-5-2019, URL: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/there%E2%80%99s-nothing-progressive-about-multipolar-world-40587>] DTS

Recent events, however, should give progressives pause about what a multipolar world means. Certainly, belief that the United States would act unilaterally, unwisely, and unfairly was sustenance to multipolarity’s cheerleaders at home and abroad. “Calling for a ‘multipolar world’ [became] a euphemism for opposing the Iraq war,” Foreign Policy’s Elizabeth Dickinson observed. While President George W. Bush’s invasion of Iraq is widely disparaged today both in the United States and international circles today, only the passage of time will—like Harry S. Truman’s intervention in Korea—determine its place in history. However, as China, Russia, Iran, and Turkey challenge the post–World War II international order and seek regional dominance, their behavior reflects the reality of what a multipolar world truly means. What would a multipolar world look like? Consider, for example, China’s abduction of Meng Hongwei, the head of Interpol. Can international and multilateral organizations work if their leaders must subordinate themselves to the increasingly hardline Chinese Communist Party? Russia’s protection of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s use of chemical weapons, meanwhile, signals the end of a post–World War I consensus. Critics can castigate the United States for upwards of two hundred thousand Iraqi deaths, which occurred as the result of the U.S. invasion of Iraq and its aftermath, but they often ignore the fact that America was not to blame for most of these deaths. Instead, they were a result of suicide bombings and other terrorist attacks sponsored by Tehran and others who too often avoid progressive accountability for their choices. Put another way, American training and tactics seek to minimize civilian casualties in all phases of conflict. Russia, however, has no such qualms: ask the Chechens. Nor should America’s history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries provide an excuse to ignore those, like China, who today would incarcerate a million citizens in re-education camps solely because of their ethnicity or religion. Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has been forthright in his desire to reshape the post–World War II international order. “Rather than justice, the existing global order is producing chaos, injustice and despair,” he argued in September 2018. But it is Erdoğan who has waged ethnic cleansing against Syrian Kurds, a campaign he may soon expand, and Erdoğan defended genocide in the Sudan and opened the floodgates for foreign fighters into the Islamic State. It’s one thing to criticize or second-guess U.S. policy; that is the domain of democratic debate in Congress and during presidential campaigns and in dueling op-eds in a free press, but it is nonsensical to suggest that any alternate pole—Moscow, Beijing, Tehran, or Ankara—would make the world a more peaceful place or better respect the evolving international human-rights regime. The one thing revisionist states have in common is that they tolerate neither debate nor dissonance. That is a lesson Uighurs, Ukrainians, and Kurds have discovered, as have Meng Hongwei and Turkey’s imprisoned journalists. It is time American and European progressives recognize it as well, for the stakes are far greater than simply American power.

#### Transition to multipolarity causes war – spheres of influence do not satisfy revisionist powers & make conflict inevitable, producing World War III – only American hard power provides global stability

Kagan 17 [Robert Kagan is senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and the author of The World America Made, “Backing Into World War III,” 2/6/17, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/02/06/backing-into-world-war-iii-russia-china-trump-obama/>] sg

That shift may come too late. It was in the 1920s, not the 1930s, that the democratic powers made the most important and ultimately fatal decisions. Americans’ disillusionment after World War I led them to reject playing a strategic role in preserving the peace in Europe and Asia, even though America was the only nation powerful enough to play that role. The withdrawal of the United States helped undermine the will of Britain and France and encouraged Germany in Europe and Japan in Asia to take increasingly aggressive actions to achieve regional dominance. Most Americans were convinced that nothing that happened in Europe or Asia could affect their security. It took World War II to convince them that was a mistake. The “return to normalcy” of the 1920 election seemed safe and innocent at the time, but the essentially selfish policies pursued by the world’s strongest power in the following decade helped set the stage for the calamities of the 1930s. By the time the crises began to erupt, it was already too late to avoid paying the high price of global conflict. In such times, it has always been tempting to believe that geopolitical competition can be solved through efforts at cooperation and accommodation. The idea, recently proposed by Niall Ferguson, that the world can be ruled jointly by the United States, Russia, and China is not a new one. Such condominiums have been proposed and attempted in every era when the dominant power or powers in the international system sought to fend off challenges from the dissatisfied revisionist powers. It has rarely worked. **Revisionist great powers are not easy to satisfy** **short of complete capitulation**. **Their sphere of influence is never quite large enough to satisfy their pride or their expanding need for security**. In fact, their very expansion creates insecurity, by frightening neighbors and leading them to band together against the rising power. The satiated power that Otto von Bismarck spoke of is rare. The German leaders who succeeded him were not satisfied even with being the strongest power in Europe. In their efforts to grow still stronger, they produced coalitions against them, making their fear of “encirclement” a self-fulfilling prophecy. BEIJING, CHINA - OCTOBER 20: President of the Philippines Rodrigo Duterte and Chinese President Xi Jinping review the honor guard as they attend a welcoming ceremony at the Great Hall of the People on October 20, 2016 in Beijing, China. Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte is on a four-day state visit to China, his first since taking power in late June, with the aim of improving bilateral relations. (Photo by Thomas Peter-Pool/Getty Images) Give ‘em an inch, they’ll take a mile This is a common trait of rising powers — their actions produce the very insecurity they claim to want to redress. They harbor grievances against the existing order (both Germany and Japan considered themselves the “have-not” nations), but their grievances cannot be satisfied so long as the existing order remains in place. Marginal concession is not enough, but the powers upholding the existing order will not make more than marginal concessions unless they are compelled to by superior strength. Japan, the aggrieved “have-not” nation of the 1930s, did not satisfy itself by taking Manchuria in 1931. Germany, the aggrieved victim of Versailles, did not satisfy itself by bringing the Germans of the Sudetenland back into the fold. They demanded much more, and they could not persuade the democratic powers to give them what they wanted without resorting to war. **Granting the revisionist powers spheres of influence is not a recipe for peace and tranquility but rather an invitation to inevitable conflict**. Granting the revisionist powers spheres of influence is not a recipe for peace and tranquility but rather an invitation to inevitable conflict. Russia’s historical sphere of influence does not end in Ukraine. It begins in Ukraine. It extends to the Baltic States, to the Balkans, and to the heart of Central Europe. And within Russia’s traditional sphere of influence, **other nations do not enjoy autonomy or even sovereignty**. There was no independent Poland under the Russian Empire nor under the Soviet Union. For China to gain its desired sphere of influence in East Asia will mean that, when it chooses, it can close the region off to the United States — not only militarily but politically and economically, too. China will, of course, inevitably exercise great sway in its own region, as will Russia. The United States cannot and should not prevent China from being an economic powerhouse. Nor should it wish for the collapse of Russia. **The United States should even welcome competition** of a certain kind. Great powers compete across multiple planes — economic, ideological, and political, as well as military. Competition in most spheres is necessary and even healthy. Within the liberal order, China can compete economically and successfully with the United States; Russia can thrive in the international economic order upheld by the democratic system, even if it is not itself democratic. **But military and strategic competition is different.** The security situation undergirds everything else. It remains true today as it has since World War II that **only the United States has the capacity and the unique geographical advantages to provide global security and relative stability**. There is no stable balance of power in Europe or Asia without the United States. And while we can talk about “soft power” and “smart power,” they have been and always will be of limited value when confronting raw military power. Despite all of the loose talk of American decline, it is in the military realm where U.S. advantages remain clearest. Even in other great powers’ backyards, the United States retains the capacity, along with its powerful allies, to deter challenges to the security order. But **without a U.S. willingness to maintain the balance in far-flung regions of the world**, the system will buckle under the unrestrained military competition of regional powers. Part of that willingness entails defense spending commensurate with America’s continuing global role. **For the United States to accept a return to spheres of influence** would not calm the international waters. It **would merely return the world to** the condition it was in at the end of the 19th century, with **competing great powers clashing over inevitably intersecting and overlapping spheres**. **These unsettled, disordered conditions produced the fertile ground for the two destructive world wars** of the first half of the 20th century. The collapse of the British-dominated world order on the oceans, the disruption of the uneasy balance of power on the European continent as a powerful unified Germany took shape, and the rise of Japanese power in East Asia all contributed to a highly competitive international environment in which dissatisfied great powers took the opportunity to pursue their ambitions in the absence of any power or group of powers to unite in checking them. The result was an **unprecedented global calamity and death on an epic scale**. It has been the great accomplishment of the U.S.-led world order in the 70 years since the end of World War II that this kind of competition has been held in check and great power conflicts have been avoided. It will be more than a shame if Americans were to destroy what they created — and not because it was no longer possible to sustain but simply because they chose to stop trying.

#### Russia, China, and Iran are becoming increasingly revisionist, and only containment policies solve

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[Michael is Christian A. Herter Professor Emeritus of American Foreign Policy at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. “The New Containment: Handling Russia, China, and Iran” *Oxford University Press*. March-April 2019, Accessed 6/24/19. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2019-02-12/new-containment>, HH-SKS]

The quarter century following the Cold War was the most peaceful in modern history. The world's strongest powers did not I fight one another or even think much about doing so. They did not, on the whole, prepare for war, anticipate war, or conduct negotiations and political maneuvers with the prospect of war looming in the background. As U.S. global military hegemony persisted, the possibility of developed nations fighting one another seemed ever more remote. Then history began to change course. In the last several years, three powers have launched active efforts to revise security arrangements in their respective regions. Russia has invaded Crimea and other parts of Ukraine and has tried covertly to destabilize European democracies. China has built artificial island fortresses in international waters, claimed vast swaths of the western Pacific, and moved to organize Eurasia economically in ways favorable to Beijing. And the Islamic Republic of Iran has expanded its influence over much of Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen and is pursuing nuclear weapons. This new world requires a new American foreign policy. Fortunately, the country's own not-so-distant past can offer guidance. During the Cold War, the United States chose to contain the Soviet Union, successfully deterring its military aggression and limiting its political influence for decades. The United States should apply containment once again, now to Russia, China, and Iran. The contemporary world is similar enough to its mid-twentieth-century predecessor to make that old strategy relevant but different enough that it needs to be modified and updated. While success is not guaranteed, a new containment policy offers the best chance to defend American interests in the twenty-first century. MICHAEL MANDELBAUM is Christian A. Herter Professor Emeritus of American Foreign Policy at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and the author of The Rise and Fall of Peace on Earth (Oxford University Press, 2019), from which this essay is adapted. March/April 2019 123 Michael Mandelbaum Now as before, the possibility of armed conflict exerts a major influence on the foreign policies of the United States and countries throughout Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. The Cold War divided the world into rival camps, with regions and even countries split in two. Today, similar cleavages are developing, with each revisionist power seeking its own sphere of influence separate from the larger U.S.-backed global order. Now as before, the revisionist powers are dictatorships that challenge American values as well as American interests. They seek to overturn political, military, and economic arrangements the United States helped establish long ago and has supported ever since. Should Vladimir Putin's Russia succeed in reasserting control over parts of the former Soviet Union, Xi Jinping's China gain control over maritime commerce in the western Pacific, or Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's Iran dominate the oil reserves of the Persian Gulf, the United States, its allies, and the global order they uphold would suffer a major blow. But today's circumstances differ from those of the past in several important ways. During most of the Cold War, Washington con fronted a single powerful opponent, the Soviet Union—the leader of the international communist movement. Now it must cope with three separate adversaries, each largely independent of the other two. Russia and China cooperate, but they also compete with each other. And while both have good relations with Iran, both also have large and potentially restive Muslim populations, giving them reason to worry about the growth of Iranian power and influence. Cold War containment was a single global undertaking, implemented regionally. Contemporary containment will involve three separate regional initiatives, implemented in coordination. The Soviet Union, moreover, presented a strong ideological challenge, devoted as it was to advancing not just Moscow's geopolitical interests but also its communist principles. Neither Russia nor China has such a crusading ideology today. Russia has abandoned communism completely, and China has done so partially, retaining the notion of party supremacy but shedding most of the economics and the messianic zeal. And although the Islamic Republic represents a cause and not just a stretch of territory, the potential appeal of its ideology is largely limited to the Muslim world and, primarily, its Shiite minority. None of today's revisionist powers possesses the Soviet Union's fearsome military capabilities. Russia is a shrunken version of its older FOREIGN AFFAIRS The New Containment BW wwwwwwwwwwwww WOW WES HE www Wees EN Eye in the sky: a U.S. Navy helicopter in the South China Sea, October 2015 self militarily, and Iran lacks formidable modern military forces. China's economic growth may ultimately allow it to match the United States in all strategic dimensions and pose a true peer threat, but to date, Beijing is concentrating on developing forces to exclude the United States from the western Pacific, not to project power globally. Moreover, the initiatives each has launched so far-Russia's seizure of Crimea and Middle East meddling, China's island building, Iran's regional subversion-have been limited probes rather than all-out assaults on the existing order. Lastly, the Soviet Union was largely detached from the U.S.-centered global economy during the Cold War, whereas today's revisionist powers are very much a part of it. Russia and Iran have relatively small economies and export mostly energy, but China has the world's second largest economy, with deep, wide, and growing connections to countries everywhere. Economic interdependence will complicate containment. China, for example, may be a political and military rival, but it is also a crucial economic partner. The United States depends on China to finance U.S. NAVY / REUTERS March April 2019 125 Michael Mandelbaum its deficits. China depends on the United States to buy its exports. Containment in Asia will thus require other policies as well, because although a Chinese military collapse would enhance Asian security, a Chinese economic collapse would bring economic disaster.

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

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

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

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

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

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