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People's Liberation Army soldiers participate in a welcome ceremony during a meeting between then–Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., and his Chinese counterpart, General Fang Fenghui, at the Ba Yi, August 15, 2017 (DOD/Dominique A. Pineiro)

The 21st Century's Great Military Rivalry

By Graham Allison and Jonah Glick-Unterman

A quarter-century ago, China conducted what it called "missile tests" bracketing the island of Taiwan to deter it from a move toward independence by demonstrating that China could cut Taiwan's ocean lifelines. In response, in a show of superiority that forced China to back down, the United States deployed two aircraft carriers to Taiwan's adjacent waters. If China were to repeat the same missile tests today, it is highly unlikely that the United States would respond as it did in 1996. If U.S. carriers moved that close to the Chinese mainland now, they could be sunk by the DF-21 and DF-26 missiles that China has since developed and deployed.

This article presents three major theses concerning the military rivalry between China and the United States in this century. First, the era of U.S. military primacy is over: dead, buried, and gone—except in the minds of some political leaders and policy analysts who have not examined the hard facts.[1] As former Secretary of Defense James Mattis put it starkly in his 2018 National Defense Strategy, "For decades the United States has enjoyed uncontested or dominant superiority in every operating domain. We could generally deploy our forces when we wanted, assemble them where we wanted, and operate how we wanted."[2] But that was then. "Today," Mattis warned, "every domain is contested—air, land, sea, space, and cyberspace."[3] As a result, in the past two decades, the United States has been forced to retreat from a strategy based on primacy and dominance to one of deterrence. As President Joe Biden's National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and his National Security Council colleague Kurt Campbell acknowledged in 2019, "The United States must accept that military primacy will be difficult to restore, given the reach of China's weapons, and instead focus on deterring China from interfering with its freedom of maneuver and from physically coercing U.S. allies and partners."[4] One of the architects of the Trump administration's 2018 National Defense Strategy put it less diplomatically and more succinctly: "The era of untrammeled U.S. military superiority is over."[5]

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Second, while America's position as a global military superpower remains unique—with power projection capabilities no one can match, more than 50 allies bound by collective defense arrangements, and a network of bases on almost every continent—both China and Russia are now serious military rivals and even peers in particular domains. Russia's nuclear arsenal has long been recognized as essentially equivalent to America's, and while China's nuclear arsenal is much smaller, Beijing has nonetheless deployed a fleet of survivable nuclear forces sufficient to ensure mutually assured destruction. The Department of Defense (DOD) designation of China and Russia as Great Power competitors recognizes that they now have the power to deny U.S. dominance along their borders and in adjacent seas.

Third, if soon there is a "limited war" over Taiwan or along China's periphery, the United States would likely lose—or have to choose between losing and stepping up the escalation ladder to a wider war. Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks and her fellow members of the National Defense Strategy Commission provided a vivid scenario of a war over Taiwan that the United States could lose.[6] In response to a provocative move by Taiwan, or in a moment of hubris, if China were to launch a military attack to take control of Taiwan, it would likely succeed before the U.S. military could move enough assets into the region to matter. If the United States attempted to come to the defense of Taiwan with the forces currently in the area or that could arrive during the Chinese assault, it would not be able to materially affect the outcome.[7] As former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral James Winnefeld and former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Acting Director Michael Morell wrote last year, China has the capability to deliver a fait accompli to Taiwan before Washington would be able to decide how to respond.[8] The National Defense Strategy Commission reached a similar conclusion: the United States "might struggle to win, or perhaps lose, a war against China."[9]

Beyond these findings, we begin with three further bottom lines up front:

- In 2000, anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) systems—by which China could prevent U.S. military forces from operating at will—was just a People's Liberation Army (PLA) acronym on a briefing chart. Today, China's A2/AD operational reach encompasses the First Island Chain, which includes Taiwan (100 miles from mainland China) and U.S. military bases in Okinawa and South Korea (500 miles from mainland China). As a result, as President Barack Obama's Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Michèle Flournoy put it, in this area, "the United States can no longer expect to quickly achieve air, space, or maritime superiority."[10] As former Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Admiral Philip Davidson testified to Congress in March 2021, on its current trajectory, in the next 4 years China's A2/AD envelope will extend to the Second Island Chain, which includes America's principal military installations on the U.S. territory of Guam (2,500 miles from mainland China).[11]
- No U.S. official has analyzed this issue more assiduously than Robert Work, who served as Deputy Secretary of Defense under three secretaries before stepping down in 2017. While the acid test of military forces is their performance in combat, the next best indicator is wargames. As Work has stated publicly, in the most realistic wargames the Pentagon has been able to design simulating war over Taiwan, the score is 18 to 0. And the 18 is not Team USA. Reporting on an Air Force wargame conducted last fall documented a different outcome: the U.S. military successfully repelled a Chinese invasion of Taiwan, but doing so required fielding systems that it does not yet have, that are not in

production, and that are not even planned for development, in addition to undertaking major structural reforms and convincing Taiwan to multiply its defense spending.[12] These findings are—and should be—cause for alarm since Taiwan is the most likely source of military conflict between China and the United States.[13] As Admiral Davidson warned in March 2021, the risk of conflict over Taiwan is "manifest during this decade."[14]

- In the words of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley, when "all the cards are put on the table," the United States no longer dwarfs China in defense spending.[15] In 1996, China's reported defense budget was 1/30 the size of America's. By 2020, China's declared defense spending was one-quarter ours. Adjusted to include spending on military research and development and other under-reported items, it approached one-third of U.S. spending. And when measured by the yardstick that both the CIA and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) judge the best single metric for comparing national economies, it is over one-half U.S. spending and on a path to parity.[16] Moreover, while the U.S. defense budget buys weapons and builds forces to sustain America's unique global presence, which includes commitments on almost every continent, China's defense budget is focused locally on preparing for contingencies in Northeast Asia.

Given the secrecy that surrounds some aspects of this topic, the clamor of advocates seeking to persuade Congress to fund their budgets, and a press that tends to hype the China threat, it is often difficult to assess the realities. Because so many of the public claims are misleading, this article does not address the U.S.-China cyber rivalry. Nonetheless, by focusing on the hard facts that are publicly available about most of the races and listening carefully to the best expert judgments about them, in the military rivalry with China, the United States has entered a grave new world.[17]

Should recognition of ugly military realities in this new world be cause for alarm? Yes. But the path between realistic recognition of the facts, on the one hand, and alarmist hype, on the other, is narrow. Moreover, in the current climate, with American political dynamics fueling increasing hostility toward China, some have argued that talking publicly about such inconvenient truths could reveal secrets or even encourage an adversary. But as former U.S. military and civilian Defense Department leaders have observed, China's leaders are more aware of these brute facts than are most members of the American political class and policy community. Members of Congress, political leaders, and thought leaders have not kept up with the pace of change and continue repeating claims that may have made sense in a period of American primacy but that are dangerously unrealistic today. As a few retired senior military officers have stated pointedly, ignorance of military realities has been a source of many civilians' enthusiasm for sending U.S. troops into recent winless wars.

The Rise of a Peer

America's demonstration of overwhelming military superiority in 1996 left China no option but to back down in its own backyard. But this vivid reminder of China's "century of humiliation" also steeled Chinese leaders' determination to build up Beijing's military strength to ensure this could never happen again.

In the years since, as the 2020 DOD annual report on China described, the People's Republic of China has "marshalled the resources, technology, and political will…to strengthen and modernize the PLA in nearly every respect."[18] Indeed, the overall balance of conventional military power along

China's borders has shifted dramatically in China's favor. In Admiral Davidson's careful understatement, there is "no guarantee" of victory in a conflict against China.[19]

This shift in the balance of power follows PLA reforms that are unprecedented in depth and scale. In November 2015, Xi Jinping directed the most extensive restructuring of the PLA in a generation for China to have a military that is, in his words, "able to fight and win wars."[20] Under a Central Military Commission chaired by Xi, the PLA created five joint theater commands and established the Joint Logistics Support Force and the Strategic Support Force, which is responsible for high-technology missions. In addressing the 19th Party Congress in 2017, Xi proclaimed the PLA's objectives to become a fully "mechanized" force by 2020, a fully "modernized" force by 2035, and a "world-class" force by 2049.[21]

These reforms have been tailored to reinforce PLA loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party and specifically to Xi as its chairman and to align China's military power with its national ambitions. In Xi's words, achieving the "great revival of the Chinese nation" requires "unison between a prosperous country and strong military." The "Strong Army Dream" and its mandate to be able to "fight and win" are foundational to the "China Dream."[22]

A modernized PLA will enable Beijing to deter third-party interventions, conduct regional missions, and protect China's extra-regional interests. Deterring and defeating threats to China's sovereignty are its armed forces' highest priorities. As Xi declared at the 19th Party Congress, "We will never allow anyone, any organization, or any political party, at any time or in any form, to separate any part of Chinese territory from China!"[23] Indeed, China has done everything it can to communicate unambiguously that, to prevent the loss of Taiwan, it is prepared to go to war—even though it recognizes that war with the United States risks escalation to nuclear war.

As a reminder of China's willingness to go to war for what it sees as its core interests, Americans should never forget what happened in Korea. As American troops approached China's border, even though it had only a peasant army, many of whom did not even have shoes, Beijing nonetheless attacked the world's sole superpower. After the United States came to the rescue of South Korea when it was attacked by North Korea, as U.S. troops moved up the peninsula rapidly toward the Yalu River, which marks the border between North Korea and China, they discounted warnings that China might intervene on behalf of the North. The possibility that a poor country still consolidating control of its own territory after a long civil war would attack the world's most powerful military, which had just 5 years earlier dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to end World War II, seemed inconceivable. But Mao Zedong did just that. In late October 1950, Douglas MacArthur woke to find a vanguard of 300,000 Chinese troops slamming U.S. and allied forces. In the weeks that followed, Mao's forces not only halted the allied advance but also beat United Nations (UN) forces back to the 38th Parallel.[24]

The Tyranny of Distance

Geography matters. Military planners talk about the "tyranny of distance." As illustrated in figure 1, to support conflict along China's borders and in its adjacent seas, U.S. ships must travel for multiple days or weeks. This unalterable asymmetry is a key driver behind China's A2/AD strategy, whereby China has built capabilities on its own mainland and shifted the military balance in potential conflicts over Taiwan or in the South and East China seas.

A critical component of these capabilities is the PLA's arsenal of intermediate-range missiles. Having elevated the PLA Rocket Force to an independent service in 2015, Beijing has amassed what the U.S. Air Force judges "the most active and

diverse ballistic missile development program in the world."[25] China has more than 1,250 ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometers, while the United States fields only one type of conventional ground-launched ballistic missile with a range of 70 to 300 kilometers and no ground-launched cruise missiles.[26] In 2020, the PLA launched more ballistic missiles for testing and training than the rest of the world combined.[27] Most prominent, the PLA Rocket Force developed and tested the DF-21 and DF-26 medium-range ballistic missiles, which have been dubbed "carrier-killers," to credibly threaten America's most prized power projection platform.[28]

The PLA Rocket Force's vast stocks of conventional guided munitions underwrite what U.S. strategists have called a "projectile-centric strategy."[29] Projectiles are cheaper than air forces, easier to mass in a salvo exchange than airborne-based strikes, and harder to hunt than fixed airbases. In a conflict, they can penetrate U.S. forward defenses and cripple key nodes in U.S. battle networks while outranging reinforcements surging to the theater.[30] As leading RAND analyst James Dobbins and other RAND researchers have explained, "the range and capabilities of Chinese air and sea defenses have continued to grow, making U.S. forward-basing more vulnerable and the direct defense of U.S. interests in the region potentially more costly."[31]

No longer can the United States rely on nuclear escalation dominance, either. In 2000, China had a "minimum deterrent" strategy underwritten by only a few hundred nuclear warheads and a handful of intercontinental ballistic missiles that could reliably reach the American homeland to destroy American cities.[32] Moreover, these missiles were vulnerable to a preemptive U.S. nuclear first strike. Today, according to Pentagon estimates, China still has a modest arsenal, with warhead numbers in the low 200s—less than 5 percent of America's 5,500 warheads.[33] Nonetheless, Beijing has concluded that this force is sufficient to ensure that it would survive an American first strike and be able to retaliate with a counterstrike that could destroy enough of the United States to create a nuclear stalemate. Both sides' entrenchment in a state of mutually assured destruction will only deepen if China expands its nuclear arsenal to 700 deliverable warheads by 2027, as the Pentagon anticipates.[34]

Figure 1.

The United States has recognized this reality in sizing its own missile defense systems. As the Obama administration's 2010 *Ballistic Missile Defense Review Report* determined:

> *Russia and China have the capabilities to conduct a large-scale ballistic missile attack on the territory of the United States. . . . While the* [ground-based midcourse defense] *system would be employed to defend the United States against limited missile launches from any source, it does not have the capacity to cope with large scale Russian or Chinese missile attacks.*[35]

Thus, if Ronald Reagan was right when he declared that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought," then between these nuclear superpowers (that is, nations with robust, reliable second-strike capabilities), the menu of viable military options cannot include nuclear attack.[36]

Wargames: A Perfect Record

The acid test of military forces is how they perform in combat. Short of that, wargames provide the next best indicator. U.S.-China wargames in plausible conflict scenarios offer a discouraging operational picture of the local balance of power. Most of these games are classified, and the most significant the most highly so. Particularly when the results are not favorable for Blue (Team USA), they are rarely publicized. Yet one of the features of the American system is that former officials sometimes speak candidly after they leave government. As Senator John McCain's former Senate Armed Services Committee Staff Director Christian Brose has stated bluntly, "Over the past decade, in U.S. wargames against China, the United States has a nearly perfect record: We have lost almost every single time."[37]

American strategists have been stunned by this scorecard and its operational implications. Summarizing a recent series of wargames, former defense planner David Ochmanek observed that, when we fight China, "Blue gets its ass handed to it."[38] Ochmanek noted that "For years the Blue Team has been in shock because they didn't realize how badly off they were in a confrontation with China."[39] Former Deputy Secretary Work similarly found that "whenever we have an exercise, and when the Red Force really kind of destroys our command and control, we stop the exercise and say, 'Okay, let's restart. And, Red, don't be so bad.'"[40]

In the wargames, U.S. forces struggle to achieve superiority in key operating domains early in a conflict. According to Ochmanek, "all five domains of warfare are contested from the outset of hostilities."[41] Likewise, as Work observed, "In the first five days of the campaign, we are looking good. After the second five days, it's not looking so hot. That is what the war games show over and over and over."[42] Moreover, U.S. forces incur substantial losses of platforms and personnel. "We lose a lot of people," Ochmanek acknowledged. "We lose a lot of equipment," he continued.[43] U.S. forward-deployed forces, including airbases in Okinawa and Guam, surface ships, non-stealthy aircraft, and other exposed U.S. assets proximate to the battlespace, suffer early and persistent salvos of conventional precision munitions.[44] In Brose's summary, "The command and control networks that manage the flow of critical information to U.S. forces in combat would be broken apart and shattered by electronic attacks, cyber attacks, and missiles. Many U.S. forces in combat would be rendered deaf, dumb, and blind."[45]

The U.S. military has had extensive recent combat experience, but much of it is not that helpful for preparing to meet a peer competitor. As Deputy SecretaryWork has explained, in those campaigns the local balance of power at the outset of conflict "didn't really matter. . . . We would've crushed them like cockroaches once we assembled the might of America."[46] But a conflict with China today would be different. As Brose concluded, a war over Taiwan "could be lost in a matter of hours or days even as the United States planned to spend weeks and months moving into position to fight."[47]

These uncomfortable findings are supported by the most authoritative public assessment of the operational balance, RAND's "U.S.-China Military Scorecard." It determined that, in a conflict over Taiwan, China would enjoy the advantage in U.S. airbase attack and anti-surface warfare. It would have approximate parity in establishing air superiority, penetrating U.S. airspace, and conducting and defending against counterspace operations. As the report concluded, with the United States no longer enjoying major advantages in nine key operational

dimensions, "Asia will witness a progressively receding frontier of U.S. dominance."[48]

Of course, there are choices the United States could make that would lead to changes on this scorecard in the years ahead. One that has been highlighted by Admiral Winnefeld would be to develop new high-power microwave weapons for disrupting electronics using electromagnetic energy.[49] But these choices have not yet been made.

Future Technologies

China is laser-focused on military applications of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), quantum computing, hypersonic missiles, and space assets. As former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Paul Selva warned in 2018, on the current path, the United States will lose its technological superiority around 2020, and China will surpass the United States by the 2030s.[50]

In the decades since the shock and awe demonstrated by U.S. guided munitions warfare in Operation *Desert Storm*, China has pursued what former Deputy Secretary Work has aptly called an "offset strategy with Chinese characteristics." As he describes it, Beijing has undertaken a "patient, exquisitely targeted, and robustly resourced technologically driven offset strategy" to achieve technological parity and, ultimately, superiority.[51]

Chinese strategists believe AI may be decisive in Beijing's campaign to surpass the United States as the world's premier military power.[52] Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Dunford concurred, "Whoever has the competitive advantage in artificial intelligence and can field systems informed by artificial intelligence, could very well have an overall competitive advantage."[53] AI functions as a force multiplier by improving vision and targeting, mitigating manpower issues, hardening cyber defenses, and accelerating decisionmaking. Its advantages were plain to see in the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency's August 2020 AlphaDogfight Trials, when an AI algorithm swept a human F-16 pilot 5 to 0. In the past decade, DOD stood up new organizations such as the Defense Innovation Unit and Strategic Capabilities Office and announced its Third Offset Strategy, an initiative to preserve the U.S. military's technological edge against rising peer competitors.[54] Similarly, reflecting an acute appreciation of AI's disruptive potential, Beijing launched a strategy to achieve AI dominance by 2030 and introduced the concept of "intelligentization" of warfare to operationalize AI and its enabling technologies, including cloud computing and unmanned systems.[55]

China is ahead in some sectors of quantum technology, a game-changing asset that could guarantee secure communications, expose stealth aircraft, complicate submarine navigation, and disrupt battlefield communications.[56] In 2016, China introduced a quantum technology strategy to achieve major breakthroughs by 2030 and launched the world's first quantum satellite. Also that year, Chinese company China Electronics Technology Group Corporation reportedly developed the first quantum radar that could detect stealth aircraft and resist jamming and spoofing, leaving Lockheed Martin, which had been experimenting with this technology for nearly a decade, in its rearview mirror.[57] And in June 2016, the Shanghai Institute of Microsystem and Information Technology announced that it had built what could be the world's longest-range submarine detector using a cryogenic liquid nitrogen–cooled superconducting quantum interference device magnetometer.[58] As National Security Council Senior Director for Technology and National Security Tarun Chhabra has written, although the United States has an overall edge in quantum computing, Beijing is on pace to overtake this advantage if the United States idles.[59]

China also leads the United States in developing hypersonic weapons, which exceed Mach 5 and

maneuver to their target.[60] According to the Defense Intelligence Agency, hypersonic weapons will "revolutionize warfare by providing the ability to strike targets more quickly, at greater distances, and with greater firepower."[61] While Beijing has successfully tested its DF-17 hypersonic missile on multiple occasions as well as a nuclear-capable Fractional Orbital Bombardment System equipped with a hypersonic glide vehicle, it will be years until the United States has a similar platform.[62]

Meanwhile, Xi Jinping has extended his "China Dream" into a "space dream." Beijing operates over 120 intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance and remote sensing satellites—second only to the United States—while expanding its BeiDou precision, navigation, and timing system as an alternative to GPS.[63] In 2019, the BeiDou constellation surpassed GPS in size and visibility.[64] In April 2021, China launched the core module of its first long-term space station, achieving in 20 years what took the United States 40.[65] As the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission concluded, "China's single-minded focus and national-level commitment to establishing itself as a global space leader . . . threatens to undermine many of the advantages the United States has worked so long to establish."[66]

Beijing's acquisition of frontier technologies has been guided by key organizing concepts, including what it calls "civil-military fusion" and "leapfrog development."[67] As part of China's extensive military reforms inaugurated in 2016, civil-military fusion facilitates technological transfers between the defense and civilian sectors, builds cohesion among researchers in support of military objectives, and drives innovation.[68] Simultaneously, the PLA has sought to achieve advantages in what it calls "strategic frontline" technologies that the United States has not mastered or may not be capable of mastering.[69]

China may also be ahead in aligning frontier technologies with warfighting concepts that exploit them. Beijing's warfighting concept of "system destruction warfare" envisions future warfare as a contest of operational systems. PLA planners prioritize achieving information superiority by crippling an opponent's battle networks at the outset of conflict using a suite of capabilities, including antisatellite and electromagnetic pulse weapons. In 2015, China took a crucial step toward preparing for system destruction warfare by establishing its Strategic Support Force, which centrally coordinates the PLA's space, cyber, and electronic warfare capabilities. China's doctrinal innovations may give it an edge in a potential conflict with the United States. As former Deputy Secretary Work cautioned, "The side that finds the better 'fit' between technology and operational concepts likely will come out on top."[70]

While the PLA has focused on the future fight, the United States military has optimized for low-intensity operations, doubled down on legacy platforms, and left innovating startups struggling to survive the Pentagon's acquisitions process.[71] For 20 years, the Pentagon prioritized counterinsurgency and counterterrorism—in Admiral Winnefeld's words, "sticking its head in the sand."[72] Meanwhile, as General Milley put it, China "went to school" on the U.S. military's strategy and capabilities: the PLA "watched us very closely in the First Gulf War, Second Gulf War, watched our capabilities and in many, many ways they have mimicked those and they have adopted many of the doctrines and the organizations."[73] Likewise, the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee Jack Reed has noted, "For the past several decades, China has studied the [U.S.] way of war and focused its efforts on offsetting our advantages. This strategy has been successful, largely because China began without any significant legacy systems."[74] As a result, as defense analyst Andrew Krepinevich warned, the United States today is at risk of "having the wrong kind of military, conducting the wrong kinds of operations, with the wrong equipment."[75]

Rendering of Tiangong Space Station between October 2021 and March 2022, with Tianhe core module in the middle, two Tianzhou cargo spacecrafts on left and right, and Shenzhou-13/14 crewed spacecraft at nadir (Courtesy Shujianyang)

The Curious Question of Defense Spending

Skeptics who find it hard to believe claims about a dramatic shift in the military balance under way often ask, "But doesn't U.S. defense spending dwarf that of China?" The answer is yes, but the reality is more complicated. Measured by the traditional yardstick, market exchange rate, in 1996, China's reported defense budget was 1/30 the size of America's. By 2020, it was one-quarter.[76] When spending that appears in other budgets—for example, on military research and development—is included, its actual defense budget is one-third America's.[77] And if measured by the best yardstick of economic and military potential (purchasing power parity [PPP]), Beijing's defense budget is over two times its *stated* budget—which brings it to over half of America's and on a path to parity.

In 2020, the U.S. defense budget was $738 billion, while China's reported budget was $178 billion at the prevailing market exchange rate.[78] But when items that China excludes from its official reports that appear in the U.S. defense budget, including research and development (on which the United States spends over $100 billion), veterans' retirement payments, and construction expenses, are included, as the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute found, since 1996 the gap in spending narrowed from 19:1 to 3:1.[79]

Moreover, in comparing defense budgets, it is essential to consider not only how much each pays for items but also what each gets at the prices paid. Both the CIA and the IMF have concluded that the best single metric for comparing national expenditures is PPP. As the *Economist* has illustrated vividly in its "Big Mac index," for the $5.81 a consumer pays for one Big Mac in the United States, one gets one and a half Big Macs in Beijing. Similarly, when the PLA buys bases or ships or DF-21 missiles, it pays in renminbi and at prices substantially below the cost of equivalent products in the United States.[80]

Figure 2.

Defense Spending: SIPRI Calculations
(billions constant 2019 USD)

	1996	2006	2020
China (SIPRI)	26.8	84.5	245
U.S. (SIPRI)	496	708	767

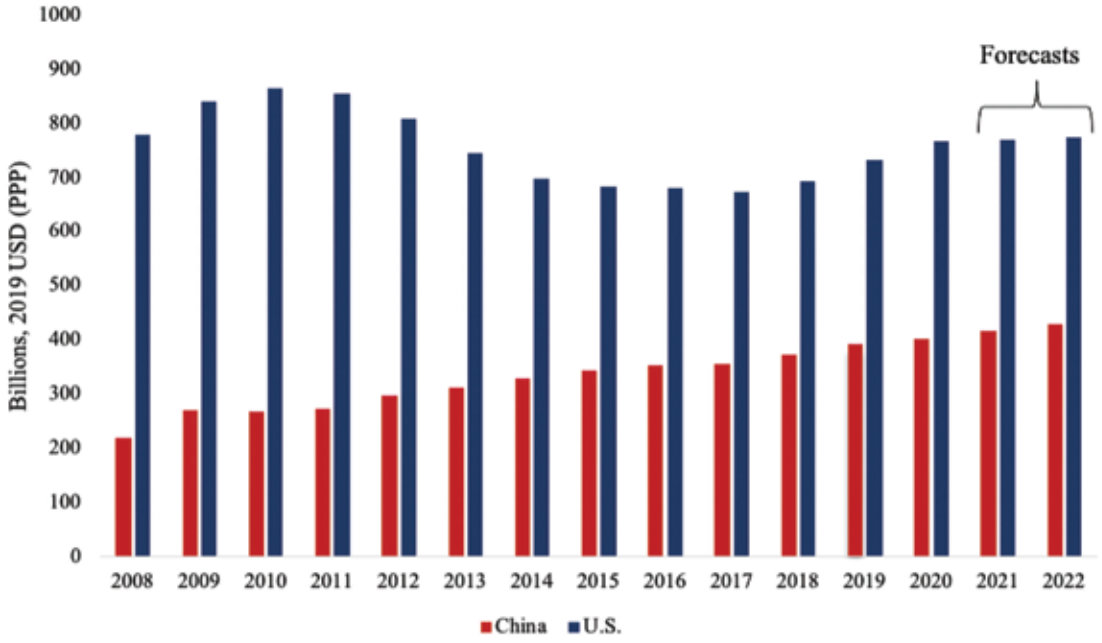
Source: SIPRI

The most vexing issue in comparing defense spending is personnel costs. Because of the complexity, differences are often relegated to a footnote. But as General Milley noted pointedly in his testimony to Congress in 2018, when he was Chief of Staff of the Army, "What is not often [accounted for] is the cost of labor, and anyone who takes Econ 101 knows cost of labor is the biggest factor of production . . . we're the best paid military in the world by a long shot. . . . Chinese soldiers [cost] a tiny fraction."[81] Milley is certainly correct. The average PLA active-duty soldier costs China one-quarter what the United States pays. DOD currently spends on average over $100,000 per Active-duty Servicemember annually, including salary, benefits, and contributions to retirement programs.[82] In contrast, the PLA's budget for each of its 2.035 million active-duty personnel is on average $28,000.[83]

Three further differences are worthy of note. First, the U.S. defense budget pays for bases and forces to meet global commitments in Europe, the Middle East, South America, and Asia. The United States currently maintains 750 overseas bases around the world.[84] Thus, while the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's area of responsibility includes half the world's population and two of its three largest economies, its commander must compete for funding with other commanders responsible for the many other U.S. commitments.[85] China's defense budget, by contrast, is focused on Northeast Asia.

Second, much of the U.S. acquisition budget is consumed by exquisite and expensive legacy systems dear to each of the military Services but not well designed for a potential conflict with China. The escalation in costs of these systems was captured by one of the wisest leaders of America's defense world, Norman Augustine, in the early 1980s, when he coined what has become known as *Augustine's Law*. According to this law, the cost of American weapons doubles every 5 years. To be even more provocative, he quipped that on the trajectory at the time, by 2054 "the entire defense budget will purchase just

Figure 3.



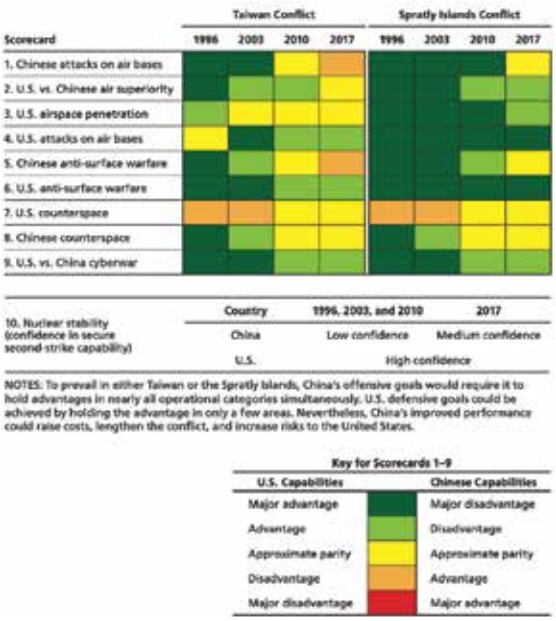
one aircraft. This aircraft will have to be shared by the Air Force and Navy three and a half days each per week except for leap year, when it will be made available to the Marines for the extra day."[86] In 2010, the *Economist* reviewed what had happened in previous decades, compared it to the trajectory forecast by Augustine's Law, and concluded that "we are right on target."[87]

As a result, as Christian Brose has argued, in the competition with China, the United States is "playing a losing game." While the United States has built "small numbers of large, expensive, exquisite, heavily manned, and hard-to-replace platforms," China has developed "large numbers of multi-million-dollar weapons to find and attack America's small numbers of exponentially more expensive military platforms."[88] As National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan put it, "for every $10,000 we spend on an aircraft carrier, [China spends] $1 on a missile that can destroy that aircraft carrier."[89]

Third, for the past two decades, much of U.S. spending has gone to wars in the Middle East and been handicapped by paralysis in Congress. As General Dunford told Congress in 2019, "seventeen years of continuous combat and fiscal instability have affected our readiness and eroded our competitive advantage."[90]

The cost of the war on terror now exceeds $6.4 trillion, including $2 trillion in Afghanistan.[91] At the height of the U.S. troop presence in Afghanistan and Iraq in 2010, defense spending reached almost $820 billion and 4.7 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).[92] After the 2011 Budget Control Act introduced cuts, partisan jockeying led to delayed budgets and a government shutdown in 2013, followed by declining defense outlays for 2 years. Although spending has risen slightly since 2016, by 2020, defense expenditures constituted the lowest percentage of GDP and Federal discretionary spending since 1962.[93] These figures are markedly below the bottom line of 3 percent annual growth above inflation that General Dunford told Congress is the

Figure 4.



floor necessary to preserve America's "competitive advantage."[94]

In sum, emerging from what former Secretary of Defense Mattis has called a period of "strategic atrophy," serious American strategists have increasingly recognized the demise of U.S. military dominance and are now struggling to understand what that means for our national security and defense.[95] All agree that to restore strategic solvency in a deteriorating security landscape, the United States must find more imaginative ways to adapt.

Where Do We Go from Here?

Our objective in this article is to report the facts about where the United States and China currently stand in key races. We hope this summary of what has happened can inform the Biden administration's strategic reviews—not anticipate their conclusions. Choices the administration and Congress will make in 2022 and beyond can significantly impact the current trajectories. But the decisions likely to have the greatest positive impact are the hardest to make and execute. For example, as Admiral Winnefeld, former CIA Acting Director Michael Morell, and Graham Allison explained in their *Foreign Affairs* article "Why American Strategy Fails," the legacy platforms we have, to which core groups within the military Services are committed and which are supported by congressional subcommittees and industry lobbyists, are mostly not what the Nation needs if China is the defining military challenge for the decades ahead.[96] As Admiral Winnefeld put it, the U.S. military is on a "non-virtuous flywheel . . . maintained by powerful incentives for Congress (money in Members' districts), identity metrics for the services (ship numbers), and a lack of imagination on the part of the combatant commands." As a result, the military is too often "merely trying harder to do the same things and demanding more resources to chase the same increasingly moribund concept (decisive mano-a-mano power projection)."[97]

While we have views about the strategic choices the United States is now facing, we have made our best effort to what the old television show *Dragnet* called "just the facts." PRISM

Notes

[1] Readers tempted to dismiss this as a straw man should read the Trump administration's "U.S. Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific," which identified maintaining U.S. primacy as a "top interest"; Michael O'Hanlon's urging to "don't write off American dominance"; Max Boot's insistence that "primacy may be a drag, but it beats the alternatives"; and Ashley Tellis's assertion that maintaining primacy is "the first and perhaps most important task facing the United States today." "U.S. Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific," White House, declassified January 5, 2021, available at <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/IPS-Final-Declass.pdf>; Michael O'Hanlon, "China Is Definitely on the Rise. But Don't Write Off American Dominance Just Yet," *USA Today*, October 26, 2021, available at <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2021/10/26/china-military-struggle-america-still-strong/6174577001/?gnt-cfr=1>; Max Boot, "Abandoning American Primacy Will Just Cost Us More in the Long Run," *Washington Post*, December 17, 2018, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2018/12/17/abandoning-american-primacy-will-just-cost-us-more-long-run/>; and Ashley Tellis, *Protecting American Primacy in the Indo-Pacific*, Testimony Before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 115th Cong., 1st sess., April 25, 2017, available at <https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Ashley_J._Tellis_SASC_Testimony_April_25_2017.pdf>.

[2] *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense [DOD], 2018), 3, available at <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Kurt M. Campbell and Jake Sullivan, "Competition Without Catastrophe," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2019, available at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/competition-with-china-without-catastrophe>.

[5] Elbridge Colby, "How to Win America's Next War," *Foreign Policy*, May 5, 2019, available at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/05/05/how-to-win-americas-next-war-china-russia-military-infrastructure/>.

[6] As the commission anticipated:

> In 2024, China undertakes a surprise attack to prevent Taiwan from declaring independence. As Chinese forces launch air and missile attacks, cripple the Taiwanese Navy, and conduct amphibious landings, it becomes clear that decisive U.S. intervention will be required. Unfortunately, America can no longer mount such an intervention at an acceptable cost. China's missile, air, surface, and undersea capabilities have continued to grow as U.S. defense spending has stagnated. Large parts of the Western Pacific have become "no-go" zones for U.S. forces. The Pentagon informs the President that America could probably defeat China in a long war, if the full might of the nation was mobilized. Yet it would lose huge numbers of ships and aircraft, as well as thousands of lives, in the effort, in addition to suffering severe economic disruptions—all with no guarantee of having decisive impact before Taiwan was overrun.

See Eric Edelman et al., *Providing for the Common Defense: The Assessment and Recommendations of the National Defense Strategy Commission* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2018), available at <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2018-11/providing-for-the-common-defense.pdf>.

[7] Robert Blackwill and Philip Zelikow, who led a high-profile study group on the topic, concluded, "We know of no credible expert who assesses that, in those last three years [since the release of the 2018 National Defense Strategy], as Chinese capabilities have advanced, U.S. defense strategy is now, on balance, more capable of performing [a conventional defense of Taiwan]." See Robert D. Blackwill and Philip Zelikow, *The United States, China, and Taiwan: A Strategy to Prevent War* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2021), 43, available at <https://cdn.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/the-united-states-china-and-taiwan-a-strategy-to-prevent-war.pdf>.

[8] James A. Winnefeld and Michael J. Morell, "The War That Never Was?" U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* 146, no. 8 (August 2020), available at <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2020/august/war-never-was>. There has been a reluctance to state this clearly for fear of giving China a "green light," no doubt informed by Secretary of State Dean Acheson's statement in January 1950 that South Korea was outside the U.S. "defensive perimeter." But as former Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Work has noted, China's security community has analyzed U.S. capabilities, including our wargames, more carefully than have many Americans who still want to cling to facts from a world that was.

[9] Edelman et al., *Providing for the Common Defense*.

[10] Michèle Flournoy, "How to Prevent a War in Asia," *Foreign Affairs*, June 18, 2020, available at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-06-18/how-prevent-war-asia>.

[11] Demetri Sevastopulo, "Admiral Warns U.S. Military Losing Its Edge in Indo-Pacific," *Financial Times*, March 9, 2021.

[12] Valerie Insinna, "A U.S. Air Force War Game Shows What the Service Needs to Hold Off—or Win Against—China in 2030," *Defense News*, April 12, 2021, available at <https://www.defensenews.com/training-sim/2021/04/12/a-us-air-force-war-game-shows-what-the-service-needs-to-hold-off-or-win-against-china-in-2030/>.

[13] See Lara Seligman, "U.S. Warns of China's Growing Threat to Taiwan," *Politico*, March 16, 2021, available at <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/03/15/china-growing-threat-taiwan-476170>.

[14] Quoted in Brad Lendon, "China Building Offensive, Aggressive Military, Top U.S. Pacific Commander Says," CNN, March 10, 2021, available at <https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/10/asia/us-pacific-commander-china-threat-intl-hnk-ml/index.html>. In June 2020, James Stavridis estimated the chances, optimistically, to be "less than 1 in 4" that China would attack Taiwan by November 2020. In 2021, as former U.S. Ambassador to India Robert Blackwill and former State Department Counselor Philip Zelikow judge, that likelihood has only increased. Blackwill and Zelikow, *The United States, China, and Taiwan*, 2.

[15] Mark Milley, *Hearing to Receive Testimony on the Department of Defense Budget Posture in Review of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2022*, Testimony Before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 117th Cong., 1st sess., June 10, 2021, available at <https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/21-49_06-09-21021.pdf>.

[16] When China's defense spending is calculated using purchasing power parity rates, China would reach America's current level of defense spending by 2047. It would surpass the United States by 2058. Eric Miles, commons.wikimedia.org, 06/19/2012, available at <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:China_Military_Budget_2012.png China Military Budget>.

[17] Graham Allison, "Grave New World," *Foreign Policy*, January 15, 2021, available at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/01/15/biden-10-challenges-foreign-policy-economy-united-states-china/>.

[18] *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2020* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, September 2020), i, available at <https://media.defense.gov/2020/sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/1/2020-dod-china-military-power-report-final.pdf>.

[19] Philip Davidson, *Advance Policy Questions for Admiral Philip Davidson, USN, Expected Nominee for Commander, U.S. Pacific Command*, Senate Armed Services Committee, 115th Cong., 2nd sess., April 17, 2018, 11, available at <https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Davidson_APQs_04-17-18.pdf>.

[20] Andrei A. Kokoshin, *2015 Military Reform in the People's Republic of China: Defense, Foreign and Domestic Policy Issues* (Cambridge, MA: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, 2016), available at <https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/Military%20Reform%20China%20-%20web2.pdf>; Joel Wuthnow and Phillip C. Saunders, "Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA," in *Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA: Assessing Chinese Military Reforms*, ed. Phillip C. Saunders et al. (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 2019), 3, available at <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/Books/Chairman-Xi/Chairman-Xi.pdf>; Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017), 129.

[21] M. Taylor Fravel, *A 'World-Class' Military: Assessing China's Global Military Ambitions*," Testimony Before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, June 20, 2019, 2, available at <https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Fravel_USCC%20Testimony_FINAL.pdf>; and Wuthnow and Saunders, "Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA," in Saunders et al., *Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA*.

[22] Allison, *Destined for War*, 129; Cortez A. Cooper III, "PLA Military Modernization: Drivers, Force Restructuring, and Implications," Testimony Before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, February 15, 2018, available at <https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/CT400/CT488/RAND_CT488.pdf>.

[23] Xi Jinping, "Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era," speech, 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Beijing, October 18, 2017, available at <http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/Xi_Jinping%27s_report_at_19th_CPC_National_Congress.pdf>.

[24] Allison, *Destined for War*, 156–157.

[25] Defense Intelligence Ballistic Missile Analysis Committee, *Ballistic and Cruise Missile Threat*, NASIC-1031-0985-17 (Wright-Patterson AFB, OH: Air Force National Air and Space Intelligence Center, 2017), 3, available at <https://www.nasic.af.mil/Portals/19/images/Fact%20Sheet%20Images/2017%20Ballistic%20and%20Cruise%20Missile%20Threat_Final_small.pdf?ver=2017-07-21-083234-343>.

[26] *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2020*, ii.

[27] *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2021* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, November 2021), 60, available at <https://media.defense.gov/2021/nov/03/2002885874/-1/-1/0/2021-cmpr-final.pdf>.

[28] Center for Strategic and International Studies Missile Defense Project, "DF-21 (CSS-5)," July 31, 2021, available at <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/df-21>.

[29] Robert O. Work and Greg Grant, *Beating Americans at Their Own Game: An Offset Strategy with Chinese Characteristics* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, June 2019), available at <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/beating-the-americans-at-their-own-game>.

[30] Moreover, in peacetime, this strategy imposes disproportionate costs on U.S. forces relying on exquisite missile defenses and compels U.S. strategists to plan reactions to an opponent's first move, rather than seize the initiative. See Work and Grant, *Beating Americans at Their Own Game*, 9–10.

[31] James Dobbins et al., *Conflict with China Revisited: Prospects, Consequences, and Strategies for Deterrence* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2017), 1.

[32] Robert S. Norris and William M. Arkin, "Chinese Nuclear Forces, 2000," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 56, no. 6 (2000), 78–79.

[33] *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2020*, ix. For an estimate of U.S. nuclear warheads, see "Nuclear Weapons: Who Has What at a Glance," Arms Control Association, October 2021, available at <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Nuclearweaponswhohaswhat>.

[34] *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2021*, viii.

[35] *Ballistic Missile Defense Review Report* (Washington, DC: DOD, February 2010), 4, 13, available at <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/features/defenseReviews/BMDR/BMDR_as_of_26JAJ10_0630_for_web.pdf>; Presidential Press and Information Office, "The President of Russia Arrived in China on a State Visit," Wikimedia, 06/08/2018.

[36] "Joint Statement by Reagan, Gorbachev," *Washington Post*, December 11, 1987, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1987/12/11/joint-statement-by-reagan-gorbachev/cd990a8d-87a1-4d74-88f8-704f93c80cd3/>.

[37] Christian Brose, *The Kill Chain: Defending America in the Future of High-Tech Warfare* (New York: Hachette Books, 2020), xii.

[38] "How the U.S. Military Fights Wars Today and in the Future," transcript, Center for a New American Security Defense Program, March 7, 2019, available at <https://s3.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/documents/ANAWOW-Transcript-07MAR19.pdf?mtime=20190408162617>.

[39] David Ochmanek, quoted in Richard Bernstein, "The Scary War Game Over Taiwan That the U.S. Loses Again and Again," *Real Clear Investigations*, August 17, 2020, available at <https://www.realclearinvestigations.com/articles/2020/08/17/the_scary_war_game_over_taiwan_that_the_us_loses_again_and_again_124836.html>.

[40] "How the U.S. Military Fights Wars Today and in the Future."

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

[44] See Michael Peck, "Slaughter in the East China Sea," *Foreign Policy*, August 7, 2020, available at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/08/07/slaughter-in-the-east-china-sea/>.

[45] Brose, *The Kill Chain*, xiii.

[46] "How the U.S. Military Fights Wars Today and in the Future."

[47] Brose, *The Kill Chain*, xv–xvi.

[48] Eric Heginbotham et al., *The U.S.-China Military Scorecard: Forces, Geography, and the Evolving Balance of Power 1996-2017* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2015), available at <https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR300/RR392/RAND_RR392.pdf>.

[49] James A. Winnefeld, "Don't Miss the Boat on High-Power Microwave Defense," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* 147, no. 5 (May 2021), available at <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2021/may/dont-miss-boat-high-power-microwave-defense>.

[50] Paul Selva, quoted in Jim Garamone, "U.S. Must Act Now to Maintain Military Technological Advantage, Vice Chairman Says," *Defense.gov*, June 21, 2018, available at <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/1557052/us-must-act-now-to-maintain-military-technological-advantage-vice-chairman-says/>.

[51] Robert O. Work, "So, This Is What It Feels Like to Be Offset," video, 27:00, Center for a New American Security, June 27, 2018, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U9iZyDE2dZI>.

[52] Work and Grant, *Beating Americans at Their Own Game*, 14. See also Elsa B. Kania, *"AI Weapons" in China's Military Innovation* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, April 2020), available at <https://www.brookings.edu/research/ai-weapons-in-chinas-military-innovation/>.

[53] Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., quoted in David Ignatius, "Gen. Joseph Dunford on Artificial Intelligence and the Future of the U.S. Military," video, 2:28, *Washington Post*, December 6, 2018, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/postlive/ gen-joseph-dunford-on-artificial-intelligence-and-the-future-of-the-us-military/2018/12/06/fbc507d0-ddb1-4f45-b8b6-54d501265846_video.html>.

[54] Chuck Hagel, "Reagan National Defense Forum Keynote," Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, CA, November 15, 2014, available at <https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Speeches/Speech/Article/606635/>.

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[56] Graham Allison et al., *The Great Tech Rivalry: China vs. the U.S.* (Cambridge, MA: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, 2021), available at <https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/GreatTechRivalry_ChinavsUS_211207.pdf>; Martin Giles, "The U.S. and China Are in a Quantum Arms Race That Will Transform Warfare," *MIT Technology Review*, January 3, 2019, available at <https://www.technologyreview.com/2019/01/03/137969/us-china-quantum-arms-race/>; "Quantum Computing and Defence," in *The Military Balance 2019* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, February 2019), available at <https://www.iiss.org/publications/the-military-balance/the-military-balance-2019/quantum-computing-and-defence>.

[57] The announcement sent shockwaves throughout the U.S. defense community. Chinese researchers not associated with the project expressed concerns, and the author of the paper that laid the theoretical foundation for such a radar stated the company did not supply any details that would support its claim. See Nick Stockton, "Quantum Radar: Can Quantum Entangled Photons Reveal the Shape and Location of Cloaked Military Fighter Jets? Maybe, But Probably Not Yet," *SPIE*, November 18, 2019, available at <https://spie.org/news/quantum-radar?SSO=1>.

[58] It is estimated that such a magnetometer could detect a submarine from 6 kilometers. No Western navies are known to have these detectors. Interestingly, the announcement vanished after the *South China Morning Post* reported that such a device could help China secure the South China Sea. See David Hambling, "China's Quantum Submarine Detector Could Seal South China Sea," *New Scientist*, August 22, 2017, available at <https://www.newscientist.com/article/2144721-chinas-quantum-submarine-detector-could-seal-south-china-sea/#ixzz6WunQ99BC>.

[59] Tarun Chhabra, Scott Moore, and Dominic Tierney, "The Left Should Play the China Card," *Foreign Affairs*, February 13, 2020, available at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2020-02-13/left-should-play-china-card>.

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[61] Robert P. Ashley, *Statement for the Record: Worldwide Threat Assessment*, Senate Armed Services Committee, 115th Cong., 2nd sess., March 6, 2018, available at <https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Ashley_03-06-18.pdf>.

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[65] *2019 Report to Congress* (Washington, DC: U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, November 2019), 16, available at <https://www.uscc.gov/annual-report/2019-annual-report-congress>.

[66] Ibid., 15; Steve Jurvetson, "The Red Planet (China Mission to Mars)," flickr, 07/23/20..

[67] Elsa B. Kania, *Battlefield Singularity: Artificial Intelligence, Military Revolution, and China's Future Military Power* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, November 2017), available at <https://s3.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/documents/Battlefield-Singularity-November-2017.pdf?mtime=20171129235805>.

[68] U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2019 Report to Congress*, 136.

[69] See Kania, *Battlefield Singularity*.

[70] Work and Grant, *Beating Americans at Their Own Game*.

[71] Certainly, America's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan incurred severe political and financial opportunity costs. But as retired Lieutenant General Douglas Lute, USA, who served as President Barack Obama's Deputy National Security Advisor with responsibility for Afghanistan and Iraq, reminds us, there is no denying that the past 20 years also have been for the United States a "laboratory" for improving large-scale operations, joint force employment, and coordination with allies and partners—experiences the Chinese do not have. Indeed, while People's Liberation Army forces have extensive programs and plans, they have not had actual experience in combat in a long time. Douglas Lute, correspondence with Graham Allison, July 8, 2021.

[72] James A. Winnefeld, correspondence with Graham Allison, July 13, 2021.

[73] Mark Milley, quoted in Tom Porter, "Milley Says China Will Be the Biggest Military Threat for 100 Years and Warns It Is Improving 'Very, Very Rapidly,'" *Task and Purpose*, July 14, 2019, available at <https://taskandpurpose.com/news/milley-china-rise/>.

[74] Jack Reed, *Defense Priorities* (Washington, DC: Ronald Reagan Institute, May 11, 2021), available at <https://www.reed.senate.gov/news/releases/defense-priorities-with-senator-jack-reed>.

[75] Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., "Finding Strength in Decline," *Foreign Affairs*, December 10, 2020, available at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-12-10/finding-strength-decline>.

[76] This calculation uses official defense outlays as reported in Chinese government white papers and by Chinese state media and, for the United States, as reported by the Office of Management and Budget or allocated by the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The $178 billion figure is China's declared defense budget for 2020 when converted from yuan to dollars using the prevailing market exchange rate. The term *U.S. defense budget* refers to the budget allocated by the NDAA for fiscal year (FY) 2020. See Mike Yeo, "China Announces $178.2 Billion Military Budget," *Defense News*, May 22, 2020, available at <https://www.defensenews.com/global/asia-pacific/2020/05/22/china-announces-1782-billion-military-budget/>; Amanda Macias, "Trump Signs $738 Billion Defense Bill. Here's What the Pentagon Is Poised to Get," CNBC, December 20, 2019, available at <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/12/21/trump-signs-738-billion-defense-bill.html>.

[77] The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) estimates that when items like military construction and retirement payments are included in China's defense spending, China's actual outlays are 1.4 times Beijing's official defense budget. See "Sources and Methods," SIPRI, available at <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex/sources-and-methods#sipri-estimates-for-china>. Frederico Bartels provides another estimate of Beijing's actual spending, which he calculates is 45 percent higher than reported. See Frederico Bartels, *China's Defense Budget in Context: How Under-Reporting and Differing Standards and Economies Distort the Picture* (Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation, March 2020), available at <https://www.heritage.org/asia/report/chinas-defense-budget-context-how-under-reporting-and-differing-standards-and-economies>.

[78] The $738 billion figure is the topline of NDAA FY2020 that President Trump signed in December 2019. Macias, "Trump Signs $738 Billion Defense Bill."

[79] This calculation draws on SIPRI's calculations of U.S. and Chinese military spending. See "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database," SIPRI, available at <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>. See also *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2020*, xi; John F. Sargent, Jr., *Defense Primer: RDT&E*, IF10553 (Washington, DC: CRS, October 21, 2021), available at <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10553>.

[80] "The Big Mac Index," *The Economist*, December 2021, available at <https://www.economist.com/big-mac-index>.

[81] Mark Milley, *Review of the FY2019 Budget Request for the U.S. Army*, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. Senate, 2018, available at <https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/hearings/review-of-the-fy2019-budget-request-for-the-us-army>. Consider that as the number of Active-duty military personnel fell by 64 percent from a post–World War II peak in FY1952 to its lowest point in FY2016, total personnel costs grew 110 percent in real terms. See Seamus P. Daniels, *Assessing Trends in Military Personnel Costs* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, September 9, 2021), available at <https://www.csis.org/analysis/assessing-trends-military-personnel-costs>.

[82] Lawrence Kapp and Barbara Salazar Torreon, *Military Pay: Key Questions and Answers*, RL33446 (Washington, DC: CRS, July 17, 2020), available at <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL33446.pdf>.

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Like the Great Wall of China, seen here at Jinshanling, the Belt and Road Initiative is an epochal achievement, but it is not the only Asian effort to build global networks.
Courtesy Severin Stalder

The BRI and Its Rivals

The Building and Rebuilding of Eurasia in the 21st Century

By Anoushiravan Ehteshami

China's re-emergence as a global power after 400 years raises profound questions about not only China's place in the truly new world order in which no superpower can reign supreme but also the international system itself, as well as the ways in which China's policies may be reorientating Eurasia's regions in the direction of China. For much of the post–World War II period, China was a minor actor on the world stage, and from the 1960s onward it was Japan's meteoric rise as a major emerging economic power that posed a geopolitical challenge to the Euro-American domination of the world economy.

With an unprecedented economic growth rate of around 10 percent from 1953 to when the oil crisis hit in 1973, Japan created an industrial miracle. Racist terminology invoking the rise of the "yellow peril" notwithstanding, Japan's position as Asia's leading economy was recognized by its addition to the G-4 club of the most advanced economies of the world in 1973 and its firm place in the successor G-7 group of such economies in 1976. Japan's industrial might, technological prowess, and innovative management techniques took the world by storm, virtually rewriting the rules of capitalist development. Its success was such that even at the height of an oil price shock, which took oil prices to over $100 per barrel in the early 1980s, the country's trade balance grew from $2.1 billion in 1980 to nearly $90 billion in 1986.[1]

In addition, Japan's corporate brands were directly competing with their Western counterparts, and as concerns about its domination of manufacturing and its trade surplus grew in the West, Japanese corporations responded by opening manufacturing branches in the West and investing directly in those increasingly stagnant economies. Japan also transferred technology to the West, invested its trade surpluses in Western companies, and bought assets and securities in the United States and Europe. This was, as Herman Kahn would have it, the story of the "emerging Japanese superstate," a country that "almost inevitably will achieve

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giant economic, technological, and financial stature; that very likely it will become financially and politically powerful in international affairs; and that eventually it is likely to strive to become a military superpower as well."[2] It is soon going to be increasingly clear, declared Kahn boldly, "that Japan, not China, is the big power of Asia."[3]

The tale of Japan's rise and the West's projections of Japan as rival, as well as anxieties about its economic power, should be a cautionary one for the same about China. Japan, as the record shows, suffered a long period of stagnation following its meteoric rise in the second half of the 20th century, has seen its place as Asia's largest economy taken by China, and still eschews becoming a serious military superpower. Unquestionably, China is the big power of Asia today, but exclusive focus on China misses the wider geopolitical drivers of change in Asia and Eurasia and, as a result, can overlook inter-Asian forces at play.

Conceptually, this article draws on regionalism debates that contend states drive cross-border cooperation and facilitate economic and other exchanges with proximate countries. Furthermore, Asia's complex geopolitical landscape—overlapping theaters and the role of interconnected regions in shaping inter-Asian exchanges—provides the basic rubric of analysis for this article and sets the starting point for an assessment of the wider responses to China's re-emergence on the Eurasian stage. Efforts in the supercontinent to establish a collaborative modus operandi disguise what some consider "a prolonged period of strategic contestation" in Eurasia and the wider Indo-Pacific region.[4]

Asia on the Move

The origins of modern inter-Asian encounters lie in Japan's great post–World War II economic leap that subsequently resulted in a rapid rise in its energy (crude oil) consumption. Within a decade, Japan's dynamism extended to the Persian Gulf. Japan was Asia's trailblazer and set the model of export-substitution industrialization for others in Asia and elsewhere (e.g., Latin America) to follow. Asia's emerging economies in the 1970s followed the Japanese industrialization model and quickly integrated into the dynamism of the larger neighboring economies, marking the first phase of Asia's "Asianization," which began in the 1960s.[5] A key path of the growth of Asian economic and political ties was with West Asia, and to understand the roots of this growth, one must consider the first oil boom of the 1970s when the foundations of cross-continental Asianization were built.

The newly industrializing countries (NICs) of East and Southeast Asia (the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and Thailand, in particular) were the first-generation of so-called Asian Tigers and from the mid-1960s began to open up to foreign direct investment, build on Japan's economic success, and emulate Japan's export drive in their own right.[6] The critically important role that this emerging layer of the international capitalist order came to play in the rise of developing economies as manufacturers must be emphasized.[7] Their rapid rise directly relied on oil as the primary source of energy.

But the rise of the NICs pole was soon followed by another pole from the Global South—namely the Persian Gulf oil states—that formed because of rapidly rising oil prices. Unprecedented rises in oil prices from the early 1970s gave birth to a new and unique category, what the World Bank labeled a unique group of "capital-surplus" countries. For the first time in the history of modern capitalism, the exporters of a natural resource became cash rich very quickly on the back of their exploration and export of a strategic commodity, which was found in abundance in the Persian Gulf and wider Middle East and North Africa region. This made the expansion of capitalist industrialization in the 20th century possible and fueled the rise of emerging capitalist economies from the Global South, particularly in

East/Southeast Asia.

India and China were absent from the Asian economic landscape, and it was Japan and the Tigers that formed the industrial edge of Asia, and the Persian Gulf states provided its energy hub.[8] The industrial growth and prosperity of the former became increasingly dependent on the supply of hydrocarbons as a major source of power from the other. Oil trade led to wider trade, investment, and a growing role in the development of West Asian NIC economies and their corporations. Major construction projects were soon won by Asian NICs over a decade before China and India made any inroads into West and Southeast Asian markets. China was nowhere to be seen during this historic period of Asian transformation as measured against the export performance of the other Asian economies.[9]

China Emergent

However, Japan's economic stagnation in the 1990s, the end of the Cold War that had accelerated the pace of globalization, and the intensity of and growth in the rate of foreign direct investment flows into Asia (including China) created the perfect conditions for China to reimagine itself as an emerging economic power on the world stage.

To be precise, we can in fact locate the spark for China's economic revival to 1990. Analysis of cumulative World Bank data underlines the jump in China's annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate from a respectable 4 percent in 1990 to a heady 15 percent just 2 years later.[10] An annual growth rate of over 10 percent became the norm, and China's joining the World Trade Organization in 2001 arguably accelerated China's economic growth rate and development. The world became accustomed to double-digit annual growth rates in China's economy and came to accept China's central place as the new manufacturing hub of the planet and the consumer of much of the world's raw materials. At the turn of the 21st century, China was already consuming 40 percent of the world's cement, 31 percent of its coal, 30 percent of its iron, 27 percent of its steel, 20 percent of its copper, 19 percent of its aluminum, and 10 percent of its electricity.[11] China's economic success had come at a great cost and had at the same time created many vulnerabilities in China's political economy.

Unquestionably, the massive expansion of its economy from 1980 to 2010 gave China a historic lead over all others, and China soon became the sun around which orbited Asia's other successful industrializers. Thus, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and much of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) all count China as their top, or at least among their top three, trading partners. China's meteoric rise as a major global economy is an unprecedented historical event in which the rest of the world deliberately or inadvertently invested and from which China lifted the curtain on its economy and chose to embrace capitalism as the driver of its rapid modernization efforts in its Four Modernizations strategy. Direction of Trade Statistics shows that between 1978 and 1988 China's total foreign trade more than tripled, reaching $167 billion in 1993, up from an already impressive figure of $70 billion in 1985. By the early 1990s, China became the second largest source of U.S. imports. As its economy ballooned, China sucked in resources from across the planet, creating extensive extractive, processing, and manufacturing supply chains that crisscrossed the continents. By the mid-2000s China became the largest importer of minerals and energy on the planet. Mirroring this, before the end of the first decade of the 21st century, China also became the world's largest exporter and its largest manufacturer. By the second decade of the 21st century, China overtook Japan to become Asia's largest economy and is now second only to the United States as the world's largest economy.

China's economic success also generated the largest foreign exchange reserves on the planet,

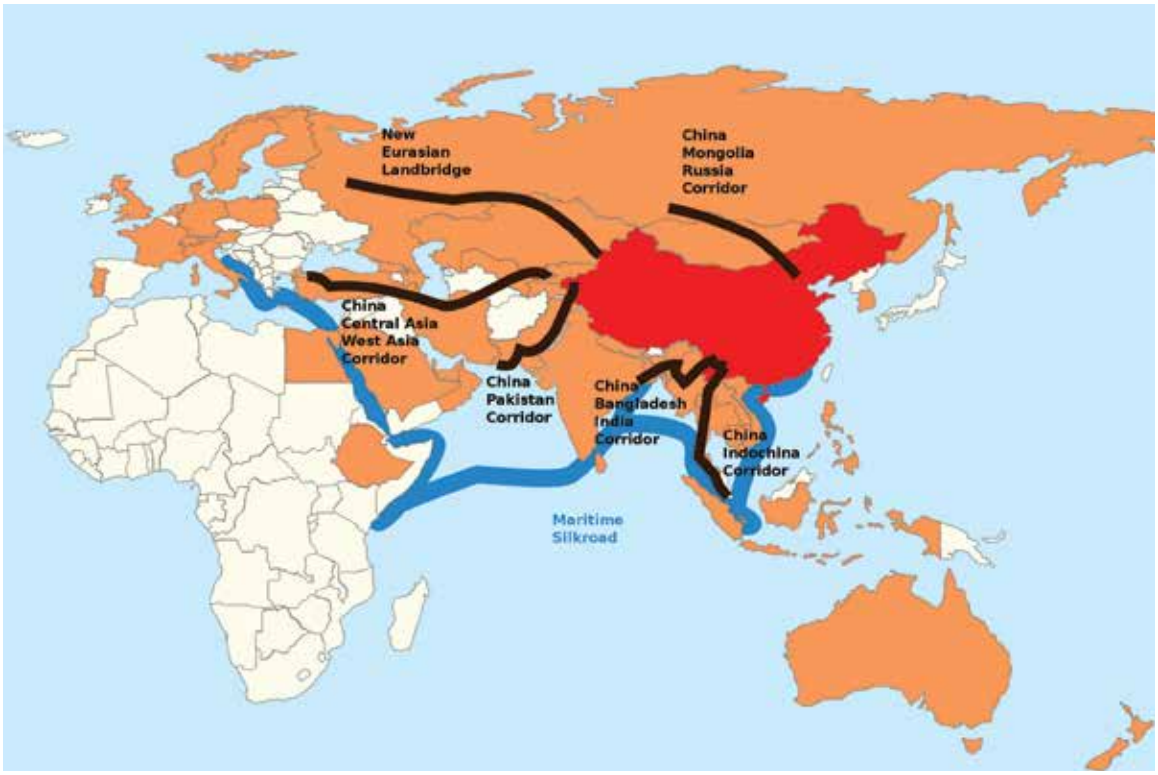
which by the beginning of the 2010s had reached a staggering $3 trillion—a level sustained ever since. At the end of 2019, China was taking the largest share of global merchandise trade of any single country in the world, some 12 percent. By the end of the decade China was the primary trading partner of nearly 40 countries and was the main economic partner of the bulk of Asian economies. Thus, within 30 years of the end of the Cold War, China's economy had grown into the second largest in the world and had come to dominate Asia's political economy. COVID-19 pandemic conditions notwithstanding, China remained poised to overtake the United States as the world's largest economy by the end of the 2030s. China's economic presence and its massive footprint is today a global reality, marking the definitive shift in the weight of the world economy away from the North Atlantic space and toward a vibrant and dynamic Asian space. Systemic shift, thus, has manifested itself in a China-led Asian economic expansion.

China's (re)emergence, however, is different in significant ways when compared with its Japanese predecessor. First, unlike Japan, the Republic of Korea, or Taiwan, China has never depended on the United States for its security and therefore foreign policy choices. China stands alone as a powerful and nonaligned Asian country. It is a bruised giant that is nevertheless keen to build pragmatic and often "strategic" partnerships, particularly with countries of the Global South. Second, while China's economic prosperity depends on exporting its goods to the United States and major Western markets, it has at the same time created substantial and profitable economic networks with countries from across the Eurasian supercontinent. All major economies there increasingly rely on China and its economic prosperity and on its markets for their own prosperity. Strains on global supply chains, arguably, will reinforce the broader Asianization trends that China and its regional projects have championed, tightening the networks that China has built around itself. Third, unlike other Asian economies, China is cash-rich and awash with hard currency. Fourth, China deliberately stands aside from the West, presenting itself as an alternative to the Western model of development and interstate relations, not shying away from being portrayed as a strategic rival.

While China has significant financial and structural problems to address, if not crises to manage at home (in terms of massive deficits carried by its local authorities), an over-reliance on construction to drive its economy, mismanagement and waste, an ageing population, and the huge bad debts that its banks carry, Beijing still deploys its cash reserves in support of its corporate entities' investments everywhere. China's cash pile is also playing a central role in the delivery of its strategic Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which is rolling across Asian and African landmasses as well the waterways of the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean to extend Beijing's soft power diplomacy and its domination of Eurasian economic relations.

Finally, China has created a strong war machine of its own. Its armed forces have flexed their muscles in the South and East China seas, acquired a permanent presence in the Indian Ocean, regularly exercised and cooperated with the militaries of the West's allies and foes, and increasingly seen their mission as the defense of China's interests in Asia and Africa in particular. While China is a power to be reckoned with in Asia, however, it is not by any means dominant; there are other Asianizers in the frame, with their own distinctive policies, tools, and agendas.

By 2013, when the BRI was formalized into a comprehensive plan of action by President Xi Jinping, China was emerging as the world's top trading country. On the eve of the 2020s, China was the top destination of exports for 25 countries, including many leading economies, and the main source of imports for 35. In neighboring Asian regions



Proposed Belt and Road Initiative, with China in red, members of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank in orange, and proposed corridors in black (Land Silk Road), and blue (Maritime Silk Road) (Courtesy Lommes)

of concern to the BRI, in 2019, 22 percent of the 5 Central Asian countries' exports went east to China, and they brought in 37 percent of their total imports from China. This occurred while these countries made up less than 1 percent of China's total trade, and in 2021, China emerged for the first time as the top trading partner to the European Union (EU). China's actions and its economic choices are now shaping the world, and we begin to see this trend emerge as China starts to turn west and push through its ambitious BRI across Asian regions and into Europe and Africa.

China's policies and approach have taken (Eur) Asian regionalism to a new level, flattening Asian differences and accelerating inter-Asian integration. China has not only encouraged formal regionalism through the BRI but also enabled informal regionalism by encouraging countries without formal links to the BRI to contribute to Asia's China-driven regionalism, consciously and deliberately investing in pluralism.

BRI Leads . . .

The BRI, therefore, is arguably the most dynamic economic force now shaping continental Asia's economies. While countries such as Japan, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan, and the larger ASEAN countries depend less on China's BRI as an engine of growth and economic development, the smaller ASEAN countries, Central Asia, and huge parts of South Asia and West Asia are not only increasingly dependent on trade with and investment from China but are also banking on BRI success to help build national infrastructure and create profitable

and sustainable connectivities across their borders. The ambition of the BRI is to be seen in the broadness of the six integrated economic corridors that crisscross Asia:

- China-Mongolia-Russia
- China–Indochina Peninsula
- China-Pakistan
- Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar
- China–Central Asia–West Asia
- New Eurasian Land Bridge.[12]

These networks will collectively expose much of Asia to China as well as to its commercial, industrial, manufacturing, technical, digital, and financial power. By the same token, the delivery of BRI projects will propel China's growth and development. It needs to be underlined that "from the perspective of Chinese interests, BRI is not only about power relations in terms of geostrategic interests, but also about concrete economic benefits [and…how to make use of the accumulated reserves."[13] The scale of the BRI is massive. It is worth billions of dollars in Chinese investments that are supported by a centralized bureaucracy and a dedicated financial arm in the shape of the well-endowed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank with over $100 billion in reserves. This demonstrates the viability as well as the audacity of China's plan, which has led many countries to trust in the feasibility of BRI pathways out of China and into Eurasia, the Indian Ocean, and beyond. These countries hope that these pathways will lift their economies and improve their prospects.

But the BRI has become much bigger than what this Eurasian geography might suggest, and mapping its growth since the late-2010s shows that the project has become truly global, with 139 countries now involved in the initiative, from the shores of the EU to the Latin American subcontinent.[14] Moreover, while China has scaled back its BRI investments since the pandemic and has changed its strategy to focus on smaller, greener, and more manageable projects, its commitments remain above the $40 billion per year mark ($59.5 billion and $60.5 billion, respectively, in 2020 and 2021), even though clearly well below the peak of $130 billion in 2015 and even $110 billion in 2019.[15]

From China's perspective, BRI success is contingent on the successful integration of partners in the critical regions of Central, West, and South Asia. In each regional theater, however, China faces structural and geopolitical challenges, as well as economic hurdles, to succeed and for the country to establish itself as a—if not *the*—dominant Eurasian force. In Central Asia, South Asia, and West Asia, China faces formidable structural, geopolitical, institutional, and of course geographical challenges. In each of these regions, China also must balance its behavior against such other powerful actors as Russia, India, and the United States. Furthermore, Russia has its own economic zone that encompasses large parts of Central Asia. India has formed a partnership of "Asian democracies" with Japan. The Republic of Korea, which also has the United States and Australia as interested parties, is pushing ahead with its own Eurasian corridor to compete with China's. The United States remains the dominant external power in West Asia and the energy-rich Persian Gulf subregion. China does not have its own way in Eurasia.

. . . but BRI is Not the Only Game in Town

China is now facing pushback from several quarters, the most talked about of which are the United States, EU, and other European countries, such as the United Kingdom. But in Asia, too, China is meeting resistance to its strategy. Japan's efforts to create "East-West" networks that would align ASEAN more closely with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is one example. Another is India's International

North-South Transportation Corridor, which aims to connect the Indian Ocean economic zone with Europe through the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea, making China's economic allies Iran and Russia strategic linchpins. This project has been enhanced by New Delhi's new Arabian-Mediterranean (Arab-Med) Corridor between the subcontinent and Europe. Resulting from the opportunities presented by the normalization of relations between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Israel, both with whom India has warm and favorable relations, Michaël Tanchum argues that:

> *India's . . . Arab-Med Corridor to Europe is an emerging multi-modal, commercial corridor that could radically reconfigure trade patterns between the Indian Ocean Region, the Middle East and Europe by creating an arc of commercial connectivity spanning Eurasia's southern rim from India's Arabian Sea coast to Greece's eastern Mediterranean coast. For India, this new connectivity constitutes a strategic paradigm shift of enormous geopolitical consequence that could reshape its role in the Eurasian economic order.*[16]

Finally, there is Russia's own economic community of states that the BRI overlaps in crucial ways and at critical spatial junctures.[17] None of these alternatives is likely to derail the BRI, but each will possibly interact with BRI projects in Asian zones in less friendly ways. Furthermore, where the pivotal countries and others along the BRI have close links with other major powers, these countries will feel the pressure to maintain a distance between themselves and China. Israel, Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE fall into this category. Returning to India's new Arab-Med initiative, which has been warmly received by several Gulf Cooperation Council and Mediterranean countries, this project will not only set India up as a direct competitor to China's BRI but also make transit across Asia more competitive and thus create numerous opportunities for India and its trading partners to serve Eurasian markets more easily and quickly. To quote Tanchum again:

> *India has a new strategic map. A new multi-modal, India-to-Europe commercial corridor is emerging from the interlinkage of the Arabian Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean that could radically reconfigure trade patterns between the Indian Ocean Region, the Middle East, and Europe. One of the early fruits of the 2020 diplomatic normalisation between the UAE and Israel is the rail connection being established from the UAE via Saudi Arabia and Jordan to the Port of Haifa on Israel's Mediterranean coast. Combined with the trans-Mediterranean maritime link from Haifa to the European mainland at the massive transhipment port in Piraeus, Greece, India's maritime connectivity with the UAE will soon form part of a larger arc of commercial connectivity that extends from India to Greece. Freight rail service from Piraeus through the Balkans and Central Europe means that Indian goods can reach Austria, the Czech Republic, and Germany—connecting India to major markets and manufacturing centres of Europe. Linking India's Arabian Sea coast to Greece's Eastern Mediterranean coast along Eurasia's southern rim, India's Arab-Med Corridor to Europe carries the potential to transform the connectivity architecture of Eurasia and India's place in the global economic order.*[18]

Warm relations between Greece and Israel (now energy partners in the Eastern Mediterranean as well), on the one hand, and ever closer strategic ties between Israel and the UAE, on the other,

have for the first time created the opportunities for India to change gears and directly compete with China in shaping Eurasian interactions. As the UAE and Israel build connectivity through Saudi and Jordanian territories, and develop a rail link and port facilities in Dubai as well as Haifa, so the prospects of India's access to European markets, and vice versa, through Dubai (near India) and Haifa (near Europe) become an ever-closer strategic reality. The Middle East, therefore, sits at the heart of this potentially powerful network of relationships between the Indian Ocean and Europe. Another advantage of India's initiative is that the partner countries will not risk incurring the wrath of the United States and its allies for forging close ties with an adversary. India, as a member of the so-called Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) of democracies, can count on the support of the West as well as its Asian partners in making the Arab-Med project a reality.

For the Gulf Arab countries, the prospects of a "food corridor" between them and India is an added attraction of this Indian initiative, providing investment for Indian agriculture in return for securing access to food products and farmland for these countries' growing but food insecure populations. The best part of the Arab-Med project is that as most of the connectivity projects are already under way, and facilities such as ports are already in place, it does not require huge quantities of investment capital to secure the infrastructural underpinnings of this corridor. Connections can be made quickly, and agreements made between countries that already have favorable views of each other, despite close relations with China in many cases. Thus, potentially, the Indian Arab-Med Corridor initiative could circumvent the BRI's geographic spread to the western edges of Asia and the West's core region of influence. Andrew Korybko sums up the potential of the Arab-Med project rather well when he states that:

> *It's impossible for India to economically compete with China in Iran, but it might have the edge over the People's Republic when it comes to the transit states along with the AMC* [Arab-Med Corridor] *for simple geographic reasons. It's much easier to carry out Indian-EU trade across the AMC than it is for the EU to trade with China across any land-based route. India wants to market itself as an alternative of sorts to China even though it can never fully replace the People's Republic's role in the global economy over the past few decades. Some EU countries also have political motivations to diversify their trade ties with China by expanding economic connectivity with India. This can be achieved through the AMC, especially since all those others whose territories it'll transit through are also on good terms with the bloc. If successful, then the AMC could become a serious economic force in Eurasia. It could also present an economic alternative to China's . . . BRI. BRI's primary corridors transit through Russia, Central Asia, Iran, and Pakistan [who] are very close with China. HOWEVER, the AMC's transit states pursue much more balanced policies between East (China) and West (EU/U.S.), which makes them more politically appealing to some economic actors. Therefore, India could present the AMC as a form of "competitive connectivity" in Eurasia that pursues mutually beneficial and balanced outcomes for all stakeholders alongside BRI. Its grand strategic aim would be to give countries an alternative to BRI when it comes to East-West trade.*[19]

The final point also captures the essence of the EU's and Japan's approaches, of course.

But how committed might India be to such strategic undertakings? In the past, India has vacillated so wildly between cooperation with the West and convergence with Russia and China as to raise

questions about its reliability as a partner. Indeed, as Ralph Cossa states:

> *it is not an exaggeration to observe that on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, India seems intent on cooperating with the United States and being part of an emerging alliance of democracies, promoting multilateral cooperation . . . while on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, New Delhi further enhances its strategic relations with Beijing and Moscow, aimed at preventing a unipolar world.*[20]

With that said, India is beginning to display a greater sense of urgency in its policies; closer cooperation with Japan, the United States and its European allies; and deeper engagement with other Asian countries (including Iran) sufficiently as to raise concern in Beijing.

As if India's initiative was not enough of a challenge for China to manage, the EU too has been developing plans for Eurasian connectivity traversing the Middle East and continental Asia. The EU's interest in building Eurasian networks began at the end of the Cold War, when Russia was weak and China was still a decade away from the BRI and had not yet emerged as the Asian economic magnet it has become. The intergovernmental Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) was launched in 1993, with Europe's promise of financing the technical assistance needed for developing

The East Coast Economic Corridor is envisaged to be India's first coastal corridor. This corridor aligns with the national objectives of expanding the domestic market, supports portled industrialization (Sagarmala initiative) and the Act East Policy, and inserts domestic companies into the vibrant GVCs of East and Southeast Asia (Asian Development Bank)

east-west transport corridors from Central Asia all the way to the North Sea.[21] The initial allocation of €15 million to TRACECA was perhaps indicative of the EU's rather modest ambitions, and while the organization's membership has expanded to 39 members, the fact that 15 years later only 70 projects have been financed speaks to the limited scope of this initiative.

Europe launched a grander initiative, entitled the EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy, in 2018.[22] The strategy has land, rail, sea, air, and digital networks at its heart, all aiming to provide sustainable and efficient access across Eurasian economies. Though trying to interact with China's BRI efforts, the EU's initiative put the Union in the driving seat of such networks. As the EU's highest body made clear: The European Commission's vision for its initiative:

> *provides the basis for an EU strategy on connecting Europe and Asia. The principles of sustainable, comprehensive, and international rules–based connectivity inform this strategy. Through this approach, the EU will enhance regulatory quality and level [the] playing field of connectivity, drawing inspiration from its internal market. It will contribute to the development of transport, energy, and digital networks since it [is] experience[d] with cross-border connectivity. It will seek to strengthen its partnerships with third countries, regions, and international organisations. It will increase cooperation in education, research, innovation, culture, sport, and tourism, helping to promote diversity and the free flow of ideas. To support these different policies and actions, the EU should use all levers and tools in its financial framework to mobilise public and private investment in sustainable connectivity. A joint effort of the EU and its Member States for better communicating, branding, and marketing connectivity projects and programmes with Asian partners will also play a crucial part in the success of the strategy.*[23]

The purpose of the European initiative and its mission were clear from the outset, but to emphasize its intent on December 1, 2021, the EU announced the launch of a much greater project, namely the €300 billion Global Gateway strategy (GGS).[24] The GGS is planned as a public- and private-sector-funded project to invest in "global infrastructure." This "roadmap for investment in the developing world" is the EU's follow up response to China's westward Eurasian march and it purposefully centers European values as the GGS driving force.

The European Commission made this announcement in terms of the GGS "increasing investments promoting democratic values and high standards; good governance and transparency; equal partnerships; [and] green and clean secure infrastructures . . . that catalyse private sector investment." Furthermore, the EU aims to:

> *offer not only solid financial conditions for partners, bringing grants, favourable loans, and budgetary guarantees to de-risk investments and improve debt sustainability—but also promote the highest environmental, social, and strategic management standards. The EU will provide technical assistance to partners to enhance their capacity to prepare credible projects ensuring value for money in infrastructure. Global Gateway will invest in international stability and cooperation and demonstrate how democratic values offer certainty and fairness for investors, sustainability for partners, and long-term benefits for people around the world.*[25]

Not surprisingly, Beijing saw the Global Gateway as a predatory agenda and one likely to result in European interference in the partner countries' internal affairs.[26] At the strategic level, Beijing

was clear that the GGS should define its boundaries with reference to the BRI, warning against competition with China. The two sides should not aim to replace "each other," China warned, but China has not seen EU forays into Asia as a strategic threat, given the clear structural, financial, and governance and management limitations of the GGS.[27] The fact that nearly half of EU members have signed memorandums of understanding with BRI has also weakened the Europeans' hand, arguably, dividing European strategic perspectives on China. Clearly the EU's efforts recognize the importance of Asia to Europe, but do not correspond with the scale of the undertaking to create a meaningful presence in Asia. Despite the European Commission's citing of China as a "systemic rival" and "economic competitor" in 2019, the close economic relations between the two will mean that for the foreseeable future the EU will not pose a strategic challenge to China's Eurasian role.[28] For China, it is developments in Asia itself which are of greater interest.

We now turn to Japan, which has also displayed ambitions regarding continental connectivity. It has done so with emphasis on cooperation with partners India and the EU, without of course neglecting China. With Japan's endemic economic problems in the 1990s and beyond, it became fashionable to write it off as a heavyweight Asian power that was a passive actor and a dependent power on the strategic plain. But the unrelenting rise of China, compounded by concerns about U.S. intentions in the Pacific region, have led to Tokyo stepping up its diplomatic, economic, and security engagements in the Indo-Pacific region.[29] Thus, it is no coincidence that Japan's defense budget has been rising rapidly relative to that of China, albeit on a lower scale, and no surprise also that it has vowed to step up its defense cooperation with such key countries as Australia and India.[30]

At the same time, Tokyo has tried to maintain good relations with China and ensured minimum disruption in its rich economic partnership, which has turned Japan into the single largest investor in China and made the latter Japan's largest trading partner. Reinforcing these economic ties, Japan played a central role in the negotiations and ratification of the 15-member Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership designed to weave Asia's Pacific economies closer together.[31] Furthermore, Japan has been pressing the United States to bolster its military and economic presence in the area and has welcomed AUKUS (Australia-UK-U.S. security partnership) as a clear sign of the United States and the United Kingdom strengthening their security engagement in the Indo-Pacific region.[32]

How do we account for Japan's efforts to push its own connectivity initiative? While there are clear domestic drivers for Japan's efforts to build and strengthen regional and global networks, there is also evidence that Japan is on the front foot at least in part in response to China's BRI.[33] In this regard, Kensuke Yanagida provides a clear analysis of Japan's connectivity initiative and its political context:

> *Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) initiative guides its vision for the region. Based on the new Japanese diplomatic paradigms established in the 2000s, namely the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity and the Asia's Democratic Security Diamond, the FOIP has evolved into a comprehensive regional cooperation framework with a geographic coverage spanning from Asia to Africa and including the Pacific and Indian oceans. The FOIP seeks to bolster economic and security cooperation, and Japan in particular aims to ensure a rules-based international order.*[34]

Yanagida further notes that in addition to this important function:

> *The Japanese government has stated clearly that it will cooperate with any country that*

meets the basic principles of FOIP. One of the three pillars of FOIP is pursuit of economic prosperity by improving regional connectivity, including physical infrastructure development. Therefore, as part of Japan's broader regional vision, connectivity is one potential area that can promote greater multilateral cooperation and regional prosperity in the Indo-Pacific.

Japan has played a key role in regional infrastructure investment and connectivity through the establishment of its "quality infrastructure investment" (QII) principles. QII aims to ensure commonly accepted norms and standards for infrastructure investment based on the principles that had been agreed to by the G-20: openness, transparency, economic efficiency (including life-cycle costs), and fiscal soundness. Japan has made diplomatic efforts to put QII on the agenda in the international arena. The basic principles of QII were first recognized at the G7 Ise-Shima Summit hosted by Japan in 2016. Subsequently, they have been promoted through the G-20 and . . . OECD. At the 2019 G-20 Osaka Summit, the G20 Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment were endorsed by leaders, including major donors to emerging economies. QII principles have also expanded through bilateral and multilateral partnerships that have included the EU, India, and Africa. Furthermore, the United States, Japan, and Australia launched the multi-stakeholder Blue Dot Network, led by the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation and established under the bipartisan Better Utilization of Investments Leading to Development (BUILD) Act of 2018. The Blue Dot Network aims to evaluate and certify infrastructure projects based on the G20 Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment.[35]

This detailed account of Japan's activities and initiatives underlines the important and growing role that Japan is playing in the Indo-Pacific, further reinforcing its multilateral approach as a counter to the Sino-driven BRI and is underpinning it by the promise of substantial funding and technical and governance support. Thus, in the year before the pandemic (2019), Japan invested $367 billion in infrastructure projects of the six biggest ASEAN economies, far exceeding China's $255 billion. In cooperation with the Asian Development Bank, it has further committed to dispersing $200 billion in infrastructure projects in Asia and beyond.[36]

In this initiative, the aims are clear as well as the way forward, placing Japan in the driving seat of a further connectivity project, but one based on close coordination with partners, including the United States. This major initiative, of course, was built on the joint Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) launched in 2017 to help Africa's development in a "liberal and value-based order"—partly to compete with China's strong presence in Africa and partly to ensure that they are not left out of Africa's anticipated economic boom this century.[37] In the context of AAGC, Japan's significant official development assistance (ODA) funds to Africa ($2.1 billion in 2019) could now be channelled in a structured way and India (itself the largest recipient of Japanese ODA in Asia) could be engaged at the strategic level, and with the active participation of sub-Saharan African states themselves.

Japan's visibility thus rises, its partnership with India raises its credibility further, and Japan can also compete with China in Africa within an alternative multilateral platform. Japan, in East Asian strategic calculations, is far from a spent force. As it modernizes its military and develops and strengthens its diplomatic and economic engagements, it can act as

an effective arbiter in the West's dealings with China as well as serving as an effective tripwire against China's expansionist policies. Japan is providing competitive alternatives to China's BRI in many parts of the world now, thus reinforcing its alliance structures, but it is doing so without alienating China.

Conclusion

China's bold BRI project, aimed to create pathways for trade across Eurasia, is driving change and arguably transforming Eurasia's landscape.[38] Conceptually and materially, Asian regions are being redrawn and their geographies integrated along new pathways. Despite the BRI's transformative potential, this initiative is based largely on China's own economic calculations and its domestic strategies for growth and development in the 21st century. At the same time, the BRI feeds into China's ambitions as a Eurasian, if not global, power. China sees the current period as a golden opportunity to shape Eurasia and, in the process, also reshape the international system to its own advantage.

Unquestionably, China has made massive inroads in the delivery of the BRI. In Southeast Asia, Central Asia, South Asia, West Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and even the Eastern Mediterranean and South America, the BRI's footprint is not only visible but also growing. The geostrategic instabilities of Asia, however, have stirred others into action to compete again, if not to counter China's Asianization strategy. In the absence of the United States driving Indo-Pacific connectivity, it has been the EU, India, Japan, and to a lesser extent Russia that have responded to the Chinese challenge. Almost all these connectivity initiatives aim to realize the geopolitical and geographical importance of continental Asia. At face value, then, Asian countries individually, and Asian regions collectively, should stand to benefit from all this international attention.

Questions remain, however, most critically as to whether these different initiatives will further cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region or lead to the reinforcement of cleavages and the creation of new points of confrontation. The answer hinges on our assessment of China as a global power. China's rise, arguably, is inevitable. It has been argued that:

> *as China's influence continues to grow, Beijing's strength is likely to reshape the international arena. One of the major changes will be a wider margin of manoeuvre for countries that oppose the U.S., which has long been accustomed to its status as the sole superpower. Iran is only one example, and it will not be a surprise if other states that oppose American hegemony also receive support from China, even if they have no specific resources or obvious strategic advantage to offer Beijing. This "take-all-comers" approach from China marks an epochal shift in international affairs. In the aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse, few if any countries could afford to risk exclusion from the emerging Liberal world order by balking at American demands for democratization, financial liberalization, or disarmament. Since the early 2010s, a new superpower has been rising and from its partners—countries as diverse and mutually antagonistic as Israel and Iran—it demands only one thing: profit. Many other countries might take this bargain, as the one thing that China demands it also offers. The more these two superpowers develop into isolated systems, the more the world must worry about escalation. Today, these two superpowers depend on one another, but if at some point this changes, escalation will be rapid.*[39]

Despite the country's many structural problems and domestic economic weaknesses, China has

already accumulated sufficient resources and made deep relationships to sustain its upward trajectory. Indeed, many observers of the international system assume that China will eclipse the United States to become the world's greatest power before the middle of the 21st century. Lawrence Freedman is only one in a long line of analysts who believe that:

> *China is seen as the natural successor to the United States as the dominant power. Its dramatic economic growth has propelled it from an also-ran into the front rank of powers. It also has size. Its territory is vast and its population large. In addition, after downplaying its great power ambitions, it has recently become more open and assertive.*[40]

But this does not go far enough to help take stock of China's emergence as a strategic competitor. There are those who variously argue that China will be dominant irrespective of Beijing's policy choices[41] or that denying China what it sees as its rightful place in the post-unipolar order "could push Chinese foreign policy toward protesting, delegitimating, or overthrowing the liberal order."[42] Neither line of analysis will make happy reading in Washington, DC, particularly as the premise of such arguments appears to be that the West has lost the race for global dominance. Moreover, if we accept that China's rise is systemic and unlikely to be peaceful, then, as John Mearsheimar has argued:

> *what matters is the balance of power. And the fact is China has become so powerful over the past 20 years.*
>
> *There is a serious chance that (China) could become a regional hegemon in Asia. And the United States does not tolerate peer competitors. The idea that China is going to become a regional hegemon is unacceptable to the United States.*
>
> *So, it's this clash of interests that are generated by this fundamental change that's taking place in the balance of power. It is driving the competition. And I would note that you'll hear a lot of talk about the fact that the United States is a liberal democracy, and that China is a communist state. And, therefore, this is an ideological clash.*[43]

But China's rise, in the context of superseding the United States as the world's greatest power, is not inevitable and perhaps is even unlikely. Michael Cox makes a strong case that the sheer size of the U.S. economy, the global reach of its financial power, and of course its world-beating military capabilities and global military presence will ensure that the United States will continue to stay ahead of its competitors.[44] This is underpinned by the country's resourcefulness, its corporate muscle, its creativity, and its ability to renew and regenerate itself.

Given continental Asia's complex geopolitics, inter-Asian and Eurasian rivalries, on top of its diverse, fragmented, and economically and demographically unequal regional systems, China's bid for Eurasian supremacy has inevitably generated strategic responses by other powers. Balancing and bandwagoning are on display in equal measure in this vast geography precisely because multipolarity is an enduring and often destabilizing strategic feature of this supercontinent. Furthermore, if China feels more compelled to extend its "strategic periphery," world reactions will also increase.[45] This is the strategic dilemma that international relations literature sees as power transition. However, it would be a mistake to take the purported power transition from the United States to the People's Republic of China at face value or as the endgame. If the future of the world system is to be found in Eurasia, then there must be a focus on that supercontinent. To understand China going forward, we will need to understand its changing relations with its continental neighbors. A more nuanced understanding

of China's position in Eurasia's complex geopolitics and the ways in which the multipolarity of Asia, in terms of subregions and the interaction between the Asian major powers and Asian regional powers, shapes this supercontinent will be a significant step forward.[46] At a time when major economies are consolidating and looking for ways to shorten their supply chains and reduce their exposure, we should be examining the BRI's response to this new reality and China's broader response to BRI's Eurasian rivals, for it is here that Asia's new geopolitical map is being redrawn. PRISM

Notes

[1] See Michiya Matsukawa, *The Japanese Trade Surplus and Capital Outflow*, Occasional Papers 22 (New York: Group of Thirty, 1987); Bela Balassa and Marcus Noland, *Japan in the World Economy* (Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics, 1988).

[2] Herman Kahn, *The Emerging Japanese Superstate: Challenge and Response* (Hoboken, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1971), xi.

[3] Ibid., 171.

[4] Desmond Ball et al., *Asia's New Geopolitics: Military Power and Regional Order* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 165.

[5] See Anoushiravan Ehteshami, "Asianisation of Asia: Chinese-Iranian Relations in Perspective," *Asian Affairs*, January 2022, available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03068374.2022.2029037?needAccess=true>.

[6] See Frederic C. Deyo, ed., *The Political Economy of the New Asian Industrialism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); Nigel Harris, *The End of the Third World: Newly Industrializing Countries and the Decline of an Ideology* (London: Penguin, 1987).

[7] See Anoushiravan Ehteshami, "The Rise and Convergence of the 'Middle' in the World Economy: The Case of the NICs and the Gulf States," in *Global Interests in the Arab Gulf*, ed. Charles E. Davies (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1992), 132–168.

[8] In the 1900–1987 period, the annual average gross domestic product growth rates of Japan (4.3 percent), the Republic of Korea (4.2 percent), and Taiwan (5.1 percent) overshadowed those of China (2.9 percent) and India (2.1 percent). See Angus Maddison, *The World Economy in the 20th Century* (Paris: Organisation for Co-operation and Development [OECD], 1989).

[9] In terms of export volume annual growth rate averages from 1900 to 1986, Japan's stood at 7.5 percent, Republic of Korea's at 7.9 percent, and Taiwan's at 8.2 percent, compared with India's 1 percent and China's 3.4 percent. In terms of exports per capita, China's moved from 33 cents in 1900 to $30 in 1986, India's from $1.25 to $12, but Japan's from $2.31 to $1,603, Republic of Korea's from 38 cents to $835, and Taiwan's from $2.37 to $2,056 in the same 1900 to 1986 period. See Ibid.

[10] See World Bank, "GDP Growth (Annual %)—China," available at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=CN>.

[11] Wenran Jiang, "China's Economic Growth and Its Global Quest for Energy," in *China, India and the United States: Competition for Energy Resources* (Abu Dhabi: Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2008), 279–309.

[12] "China's Belt and Road Initiative in the Global Trade, Investment and Financial Landscape," in *OECD Business and Financial Outlook 2018* (Paris: OECD, 2018), available at <https://www.oecd.org/finance/Chinas-Belt-and-Road-Initiative-in-the-global-trade-investment-and-finance-landscape.pdf>.

[13] Werner Pascha, "The Political Economy of New Multilateral Development Bank and Reserve Arrangements in East Asia," in *China's New Silk Road: An Emerging World Order*, ed. Carmen Amado Mendes (New York: Routledge, 2019), 78.

[14] David Sacks, "Countries in China's Belt and Road Initiative: Who's In and Who's Out," *Council on Foreign Relations*, March 24, 2021, available at <https://www.cfr.org/blog/countries-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-whos-and-whos-out>.

[15] Christopher Nedopil Wang, *China Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Investment Report H1 2021* (Beijing: International Institute of Green Finance Green BRI Center, July 2021), available at <https://greenfdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/21_07_22_BRI-Investment-Report-H1-2021.pdf>.

[16] Michaël Tanchum, *India's Arab-Mediterranean Corridor: A Paradigm Shift in Strategic Connectivity to Europe*, South Asia Scan No. 14 (Singapore: Institute of South Asian Studies, August 2021), 4.

[17] Russia's six-member Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) was launched within a year of the launch of the BRI to consolidate its own position in Asia. But in terms of financial commitments and scale and scope, the EEU offers no real competition to the BRI or its real rivals in Eurasia.

[18] Tanchum, *India's Arab-Mediterranean Corridor*, 7.

[19] Andrew Korybko, "The Geo-Economic Consequences of India's Planned Arab-Mediterranean Corridor," *Frontier India*, October 11, 2021.

[20] Ralph A. Cossa, "Security Dynamics in Asia," in *International Relations of Asia*, ed. David Shambaugh and Michael Yahuda (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 373.

[21] Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia, "History of TRACECA," available at <http://www.traceca-org.org/en/about-traceca/history-of-traceca/>. It was interesting that the phrase *TRACECA: Restoration of the Historic Silk Route* was incorporated into the vocabulary from early on—*and without a single reference to China*.

[22] European Commission, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank: Connecting Europe and Asia—Building Blocks for an EU Strategy* (Brussels: High Representation of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, September 19, 2018), available at <https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/joint_communication_-_connecting_europe_and_asia_-_building_blocks_for_an_eu_strategy_2018-09-19.pdf<.

[23] Ibid., 13.

[24] European Commission, "Global Gateway: Up to €300 Billion for the European Union's Strategy to Boost Sustainable Links Around the World," press release, December 1, 2021, available at <https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_6433, December 1, 2021>.

[25] Ibid.

[26] "China Slams EU's €300 Billion Gateway Project, Will It Actually Counter Xi Jinping's BRI?" *Crux*, December 2, 2021, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CI0gvfr6V8k>.

[27] "Wary of EU's Global Gateway to Rival BRI, China Says They Can Complement Each Other," *Devdiscourse*, December 2, 2021, available at <https://www.devdiscourse.com/article/business/1831616-wary-of-eus-global-gateway-to-rival-bri-china-says-they-can-complement-each-other>.

[28] Pepijn Bergsen, *The EU's Unsustainable China Strategy* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, July 2021), available at <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/2021-07-07-eu-unsustainable-china-strategy-bergsen.pdf>.

[29] Kei Koga, "Japan's 'Indo-Pacific' Question: Countering China or Shaping a New Regional Order," *International Affairs* 96, no. 1 (January 2020), 49–73.

[30] Yoshifumi Takemoto and Kiyoshi Takenaka, "Japan Plans Record Extra Defence Spending as China Threat Eyed," Reuters, November 19, 2021, available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japan-plans-record-67-bln-plus-defence-spending-extra-budget-kyodo-2021-11-18/>.

[31] This large free trade agreement came into force on January 1, 2022, making this the largest trading bloc in the world and binding more closely East Asia's "big three" economies.

[32] "Press Conference by Foreign Minister Motegi Toshimitsu," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*, September 21, 2021, available at <https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/kaiken/kaiken25e_000038.html#topic1>.

[33] Kai Neagle, "Why Is China's Belt and Road Initiative Being Questioned by Japan and India?" *E-International Relations*, May 2, 2020, available at <https://www.e-ir.info/2020/05/02/why-is-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-being-questioned-by-japan-and-india/>.

[34] Kensuke Yanagida, "Japan's Connectivity Initiatives in the Indo-Pacific," *National Bureau of Asian Research*, September 11, 2021, available at <https://www.nbr.org/publication/japans-connectivity-initiatives-in-the-indo-pacific/>.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Jakob Ranglin Grissler and Lars Vargö, *The BRI vs. FOIP: Japan's Countering of China's Global Ambitions*, Issue Brief (Stockholm: Institute for Security and Development Policy, February 8, 2021), available at <https://www.isdp.eu/content/uploads/2021/02/The-BRI-vs-FOIP-IB-08.02.21.pdf>.

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[38] Faisal Ahmed and Alexandre Lambert, *The Belt and Road Initiative: Geopolitical and Geoeconomic Aspects* (New York: Routledge, 2022).

[39] Role Yellinek, "How Can China Maintain Good Relations with Both Israel and Iran?, *Middle East Institute*, September 29, 2020, available at <https://www.mei.edu/publications/how-can-china-maintain-good-relations-both-israel-and-iran>.

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[41] Oliver Stuenkel, *Post-Western World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016).

[42] Steven Ward, *Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 213.

[43] Kenji Minemura, "John Mearsheimer: U.S.-China Rift Rruns Real Risk of Escalating into a Nuclear War," *The Asahi Shimbun*, August 17, 2020, available at <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/13629071?s=09>.

[44] Michael Cox, "Power Shift, Economic Change and Decline of the West?" *International Relations* 26, no. 4 (2012), 369–388.

[45] See Joshua Eisenman and Eric Heginbotham, eds., *China Steps Out: Beijing's Major Power Engagement with the Developing World* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

[46] Mehdi Parvizi Amineh, ed., *The China-Led Belt and Road Initiative and Its Reflections: The Crisis of Hegemony and Changing Global Orders* (New York: Routledge, 2022).

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Panda Power? Chinese Soft Power in the Era of COVID-19

By Amit Gupta

Much like competition between the United States and the former Soviet Union, the rivalry between the United States and China is not only one of military-strategic and economic challenges but also one of ideas. The West, particularly the United States, has had the advantage of presenting the more compelling image to the rest of the world in the form of what Joseph Nye, Jr., dubbed *soft power*. The argument goes that while China makes propaganda efforts, the United States enjoys soft power—the attractiveness of its culture, political ideas, and policies—and this gives America an international advantage. As the Australian security analyst Hugh White put it, "Everybody admires China, but no one wants to be China."[1]

While this was true in the early years of the post–Cold War era, the Chinese have since used their newfound wealth to create a more friendly image for themselves. If they are able to successfully distribute their version of the COVID-19 vaccine around the world, we may see Beijing benefiting from a boost in its image—despite the abrasive "wolf warrior diplomacy" of the past few years, its military forays in the East and South China seas, and the fact that the Chinese government was initially less than forthcoming in sharing data on the pandemic.[2] With a recent analysis suggesting that China's economy will overtake that of the United States in 2028, China's attempts to rebrand its image will not only have more resources but also find an increasingly eager international audience that seeks to engage the newly emerging number one global economy.[3] Soft power, after all, means little without an economic and a military capability to back it up, and China has both. To discuss the Chinese challenge, this article makes its argument in three parts: first, it argues that Nye's definition of soft power has limitations, and in fact, the Chinese can influence global public opinion with a mixture of propaganda and soft power. Second, it describes China's attempts to influence global public opinion and the extent to which it may succeed. Finally, it examines the possible future of the Chinese soft power challenge and what the United States can do to counter it.

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The Fallacy of Soft Power

In recent times, Nye's description of soft power is the one that has gained the maximum usage in the analysis of international relations, but the idea itself has been around at least since the 1930s when Edward Hallett Carr wrote his seminal book on international politics, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*. Nye's description of soft power argued that it is the attributes of a society that cause it to be liked by other nations and that, therefore, allow a country to better prosecute its foreign policy:

> *Soft power is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. When you can get others to want what you want, you do not have to spend as much on sticks and carrots to move them in your direction. Hard power, the ability to coerce, grows out of a country's military and economic might. Soft power arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies. When our policies are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, our soft power is enhanced.*[4]

Nye's formulation of soft power emerged in the 1990s, in the early phases of globalization, and it was based on a description mainly of American society (although other Western nations were included), whose economic prowess and cultural power had been so influential in winning the Cold War. It was America's economic strength that allowed it to create a global market and, therefore, shape the consumer culture of the world. For example, American consumer goods such as Nike sneakers and Levi's jeans were sought internationally after the 1992 Olympics when the U.S. basketball "dream team" captivated the world. Michael Jordan shirts and sneakers were global bestsellers and Hollywood movies had conquered the global film market.

Writing about the impact of American consumerism, Benjamin Barber described the emergence of "McWorld," and in an expansion of his original *Atlantic Monthly* article into a book, he showed how American movies and culture have monopolized the global market.[5] It was for this reason that sociologists had started using the terms *globalization* and *Americanization* interchangeably. American military and economic superiority led to the formulation by Charles Krauthammer of the "unipolar moment," when the United States, because of its military strength and the fact that it had created a single global market, could successfully enforce a liberal international order.[6] Francis Fukuyama similarly suggested that we had reached the end of the history of ideas since liberal democracy had won the debate of ideas for structuring the international system as well as national societies.[7]

Nye's definition of soft power was based on American military and economic might and the fact that authoritarian and totalitarian regimes had bankrupted themselves in trying to create an alternative version of political order. This definition of soft power, however, is increasingly under challenge. Not only has American economic power been contested by the rapid growth of the Chinese economy, but its moral authority, which was the basis of the attractiveness of Western societies, has also been adversely impacted. Liberal democratic societies have re-entertained formerly taboo right-wing ideas, and their own economies are beginning to slow down. In such a situation, the Western model is viewed with some skepticism around the world. Furthermore, Nye's discussion of soft power only tangentially accepted that non-liberal democratic states could have soft power—although he did initially point out that the Soviet Union in the 1950s and 1960s had been able to exert a similar soft power due to its high levels of productivity.[8] For this discussion, therefore, E.H. Carr's version of soft power is a more useful tool for the current analysis.

Carr wrote about the power of opinion and

saw it as being as important as the military and economic instruments of power in the realm of international relations. While discussing the power of propaganda, Carr highlighted the power over international opinion enjoyed by organizations such as the Catholic Church, as well as the influence the Bolsheviks had over international revolutionary and workers groups across both Europe and the colonized world.[9] A similar type of admiration existed for Adolf Hitler's Germany, and the Nazi dictator was able to use the 1936 Olympics to create a positive international image of his country. Carr's use of the phrase *to shape opinion* is more value neutral than that of Nye's, whose version of soft power has liberal democratic values and society as its foundation. If, however, we view Chinese soft power through the lens of Carr's work, it becomes clear that Beijing has been able to create its own version of a positive global image.

The Elements of Chinese Soft Power

China's soft power rests on overt propaganda efforts such as its government-funded global expansion of Chinese media and Confucius Institutes, and more subtle attempts through funding of Hollywood productions and the growth of a large foreign student body in China.

China's Global Media Expansion. In the aftermath of World War II, Western nations had the monopoly on the flow of information around the world. The United States built up a state-sponsored media service that included the Voice of America (set up after Pearl Harbor) but more importantly, perhaps, established Radio Free Europe/Radio

China Central Television (CCTV) headquarters
October 3, 2012
By 杨志强Zhiqiang

Liberty to broadcast to the communist nations of Eastern Europe. In postcolonial settings, traditional mediums of broadcasting, such as the British Broadcasting Corporation and its Dutch and French counterparts, were broadcasting to their former colonies because of a lingering sense of responsibility toward these nations that lacked the resources to build up a healthy fourth estate.[10] While the latter argument sounds noble, there was also the rational interest to retain influence and shape affairs in these nations. Thus, the Western nations' media, which, as the Cold War developed, also included Radio Moscow, had a monopoly on the transmission and flow of global information. Yet by the early 2000s, competitors with deep pockets began to emerge around the world. Al Jazeera was established in 1996 and by 2006 had started its English language service. The channel's Arabic and English services were seen as challenging the Western narrative on the Middle East and hurting American war efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Chinese were not far behind. In 2000, their television network, China Central Television (CCTV), began an English language service, and by 2010, it was estimated that the Chinese channel had a budget of $6.6 billion to send its message around the world.[11] China has lavishly funded these efforts at getting its message out and reducing the influence of Western nations in creating an objective media flow around the world. According to one estimate, Xi Jinping has given China Global Television Network (the international division of CCTV) $10 billion to spread China's message. In comparison, the Broadcasting Board of Governors—which oversees Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Asia, and broadcasts to Cuba and Iran—had a budget of $637 million for fiscal year 2021.[12] The Chinese media have sought not only to project the Chinese perspective on international affairs but also to buy off dissenting voices in the countries where they operate.

Moreover, China is seizing an opportunity: as the budgets of Western mainstream media organizations shrink, China has set up offices around the world and hired journalists who are desperate for jobs. In the case of a London office of a Chinese media organization, over 6,000 people applied for 90 jobs, and this is a trend seen increasingly around the world as journalists scramble for a shrinking pool of jobs.[13] The Chinese have also assiduously wooed journalists around the world, giving them all-expense-paid trips to China to return and write positive stories about the Chinese economic miracle.[14] China has also adopted the strategy of "borrowing boats," which is to use the media of another country to push its own message globally and gain the appearance of objectivity in reporting. Media in the United States, Finland, and Australia have Chinese investors and are used to disseminate such news content.[15]

Along with the global charm offensive, the Chinese government has sought to build up the infrastructure that transmits news around the world, thereby giving them some element of control over the broadcast product. As Louisa Lim and Julia Bergin note:

> *Beijing has also been patiently increasing its control over the global digital infrastructure through private Chinese companies, which are dominating the switchover from analogue to digital television in parts of Africa, launching television satellites and building networks of fibre-optic cables and data centres—a "digital silk road"—to carry information around the world. In this way, Beijing is increasing its grip, not only over news producers and the means of production of the news, but also over the means of transmission.*[16]

While the enormous Chinese advantage in resources may seem worrying, its impact is lessened

by both the nature of Chinese broadcasting as well as the multiple platforms, both public and private, that the United States uses to get its message across the world. In addition, Chinese media is viewed with some suspicion since it is seen as promoting the interests of the Chinese Communist Party and Beijing. And thanks to Chinese media muzzling of social media, it does not have the type of outlets that the United States has used to allow for the free flow of information globally. Facebook may have allowed fake news into the United States, but it has also facilitated the transmission of information to countries with less developed media capabilities.

On the other hand, a global media presence, even a flawed one such as China's, is a powerful tool because it permits Beijing not only to send its message around the world (where it will find willing listeners), but to also allow China to challenge the West's positions on issues where America and its allies may be on the defensive. These issues include climate change, the invasion of Iraq, America's immigration policies, and the fact that Western nations bought up most of the personal protective equipment reserves after COVID-19 erupted and cornered the stock of emerging vaccines designed to mitigate illness from COVID-19.[17] Such an attack would find a global audience much in the same way that Al Jazeera found a global audience (and more important, a Middle Eastern audience) during the Iraq War and its aftermath.

Confucius Institutes. Confucius Institutes were founded in 2004, and by mid-2021, they had become a global phenomenon. By one estimate they were enrolling over 9 million students in over

As Confucius said in around 500 BC, "When it is obvious that the goal cannot be reached, don't adjust the goals, adjust the action steps."
By Soft Power 30

Table 1

Movie	Total Revenue ($USD billion)	Domestic ($USD million)	%	International ($USD)	%
Avengers Endgame	$2.79	$858	30.7	$1.93 billion	69.3
Lion King	$1.65	$543	32.8	$1.11 billion	67.2
Frozen II	$1.45	$477	32.9	$ 972 million	67.1
Spider Man: Far from Home	$1.13	$390	34.5	$741 million	65.5
Captain Marvel	$1.12	$426	37.8	$701 million	62.2

Table 2

Movie	Approx. Revenue in China ($USD million)
Avengers Endgame	$629
Lion King	$120
Frozen 2	$122
Spiderman: Far from Home	$198
Captain Marvel	$154

Source: Box Office Mojo: International Box Office 2019.

160 countries and were set up to provide "Chinese language instruction . . . [and] . . . designed to help improve China's international image or reduce what [People's Republic of China] officials view as misconceptions about China."[18] Unlike most countries that seek to put their cultural and educational centers in major cities or at the most prestigious universities, the Chinese government took a more broad-based approach and sought to saturate countries with these institutions by including smaller cities and less-prestigious universities.

The creation of Confucius Institutes in the United States began in 2005 with an agreement between the governments of China and the United States, and initially over 100 such institutes were set up on college campuses. The institutes were welcomed because they brought in not only sorely needed expertise on Chinese history, culture, politics, and language but also attractive financial investments. As of June 2022, however, only 18 institutes remain on college campuses in the United States.[19] The reason universities shut down such centers lay in four major concerns that were brought out in a report by the National Association of Scholars (NAS):

- *1. Intellectual freedom. Official Hanban* [the organization that funds and directs the institutes] *policy requires Confucius Institutes to adhere to Chinese law, including speech codes. Chinese teachers hired, paid by, and accountable to the Chinese government face pressures to avoid sensitive topics, and American professors report pressure to self-censor.*
- *2. Transparency. Contracts between American universities and the Hanban, funding arrangements, and hiring policies for Confucius Institute staff are rarely publicly available. Some universities went to extraordinary efforts to avoid*

scrutiny, cancelling meetings and forbidding NAS from visiting campus.

- *3. Entanglement. Confucius Institutes are central nodes in a complex system of relationships with China. Confucius Institutes attract full-tuition-paying Chinese students, fund scholarships for American students to study abroad, and offer other resources. Universities with financial incentives to please China find it more difficult to criticize Chinese policies.*
- *4. Soft Power. Confucius Institutes tend to present China in a positive light and to focus on anodyne aspects of Chinese culture. They avoid Chinese political history and human rights abuses, present Taiwan and Tibet as undisputed territories of China, and develop a generation of American students with selective knowledge of a major country.*[20]

The report goes on to state that the institutes had a list of topics that were off-limits for discussion that included, the "status of Tibet and Taiwan, the Dalai Lama, the Tiananmen Square massacre, and criticism of the Communist Party's legitimacy."[21] The Chinese government was laying down an ambitious plan globally to influence how the academic world shaped its discussion of China and this was, as the report points out, to move students away from controversial issues to ones that portrayed China in a positive light.

Moreover, the bulk of the Confucius Institutes are in the Western nations, giving credence to the argument that this is a Chinese charm offensive in economically important countries to soften the image of China in these societies. Not surprising, citing the violation of academic freedom, many American universities shut down their Confucius Institutes or terminated their collaborative arrangements with Hanban. A less-flattering reason admittedly lay in the U.S. National Defense Authorization Act of 2018 that prohibited Defense Department money being used to fund Chinese language programs at universities that hosted Confucius Institutes. As one critic pointed out, "We are now in a pick-your-poison, lose-lose situation, with the inevitable effect of compromising the academic integrity of the university, either by keeping the Confucius Institutes or allowing the United States government to intervene in the curriculum."[22]

China and Hollywood. The third part of Chinese soft power comes from China's efforts to rebrand its image through its links and investments in Hollywood since the American movie industry is one of the most globalized parts of the national economy. Table 1 shows the high level of Hollywood's dependency on the international market, particularly China, where Hollywood took in about $2.6 billion in revenues. China's market significance can be seen in more detail if one delves deeper into the international box office figures (see table 2).

This huge international demand for American films has played into China's investment plans as the Dalian Wanda corporation not only purchased the AMC theater group but also invested in a film production company. Other Chinese corporations followed suit, and as John Pomfret wrote, the results were predictable—in the last two decades neither the Chinese authorities nor China itself have been portrayed in a negative light in a Hollywood movie.[23] As a well-researched report on China's influence in Hollywood argues, the strength of the Chinese market, coupled with investments in both the United States and China, have led to a situation in which Hollywood production companies are engaging in self-censorship to secure one of the coveted annual release slots for Hollywood movies in China (currently the Chinese allow 34 Hollywood movies to be released annually).[24] As a consequence, Hollywood has removed content that is offensive to China, reshaped characters such as the Ancient One in *Dr. Strange* from being Tibetan to Celtic, and worked, as

the Chinese censors demand:

> *not merely to censor content or themes that it* [Beijing] *finds threatening, but rather to also proactively work to shape film narratives so that they portray a specific vision of China: one that is thriving, harmonious, powerful, and—perhaps most importantly—unified under the unchallenged and benign leadership of the Party.*[25]

This influence, while none too subtle, is not generally noticed by the average American filmgoer and is likely to continue since the Chinese authorities realized that they can "borrow the boat" by reshaping Hollywood's output. Given that most Hollywood companies are in fact multinational corporations with assets and interests in China (Disney, for example, has theme parks in Shanghai and Hong Kong, while Universal has also invested in a theme park), we can only expect this attempt at influence to grow.

The fact is that the Chinese have begun to invest in specific Hollywood productions. Movies such as *Skyscraper* and *Green Book* were partly funded by Chinese investment, and such investments may continue in the future. At the same time, China is building up its own film industry to ostensibly compete with Hollywood, though such efforts have yet to bear fruit. The Chinese blockbuster *Ne Zha* made approximately $719 million in China but a mere $3.6

While a $125M opening weekend ($142M including Thursday) in China is excellent in itself, that was only the start of the story. Wolf Warriors 2 went on to earn over 200M RMB (~$30M) a day for 8 straight days, bringing its total as of August 7, 2017 to $345M.
August 7, 2017
By Chris from Shenzhen, China

million in the United States, demonstrating that the appeal of Chinese movies is still confined largely within its borders and in the Chinese diaspora.[26]

China's incursions into Hollywood bring out both the weaknesses and strengths of its soft power. China is a long way from creating a cultural product that sells globally in the way that Hollywood movies and television do, but China's growing economic clout, and the fact that America's film and television industries are now truly globalized, make it possible for Beijing to reshape the international perception of China. Despite the downturn in U.S.-China relations, the film and television industry will only continue to develop global networks as movies and television shows flow across all continents, thus giving China, with its growing economic power, the opportunity to continue to shape the narrative about Chinese society and politics.

As a part of the attempt to influence the entertainment sector, Xi Jinping also has ambitious plans to build up a $813 billion domestic sports industry that would rival the sporting industries of the United States and Europe.[27] These sports include basketball and soccer, where Beijing believes it can create an international sporting brand. The Chinese adopted the model of U.S. Major League Soccer and initially brought in aging soccer players to play for them who could no longer hold a spot on a major European or South American team roster.

Now, however, the Chinese are getting national team players and World Cup–winning coaches such as the Italian Marcello Lippi and the Brazilian Luiz Felipe Scolari. It will be difficult for China to become an attractive alternative venue for soccer since the traditional powerhouses with the best marketing of the sport are the European and South American countries. Similarly, with basketball, it would take a major investment, by perhaps offering even more lucrative salaries than the American National Basketball Association, to shift the global center of basketball from the United States to China.

These efforts show that China's ambition, vision, and resources are considerable. It hosted the 2022 Winter Olympics, and Xi's ambition is to host and win the World Cup.

Education. Perhaps one of the strongest bases of Western, particularly American, soft power has been the prestige of its educational systems that have provided quality education to students from countries around the world. Since colonial times, the patterns of international student flows have been established, in which students from the non-Western nations have come to the West to obtain an education. Until the 1960s, this flow was primarily toward the Western European countries, whose ties with their former colonies created a natural talent pool to draw from. Thus, universities such as Oxford, Cambridge, the Sorbonne, Erasmus Rotterdam, and Coimbra were able to bring in students from the former colonies and send them back with not only an education but also a cultural grounding in the host country. Many of these students became politicians, technocrats, and bureaucrats in many nations, thus reinforcing the links between the former colonizers and the formerly colonized.

The situation changed dramatically in the 1960s as American universities became the leaders in global education and the change in U.S. immigration policies permitted naturalizing and employing students from the entire world. Furthermore, the United States, from the time of the Manhattan Project, became adept at bringing global intellectual labor into the country to make the next great scientific and technological advance. For example, Europeans such as Leo Szilard, Albert Einstein, and Enrico Fermi were in part responsible for the success of America's nuclear program; the German Werner von Braun headed the Apollo program; and Indian-American immigrants such as Satya Nadella, Vinod Khosla, and Sundar Pichai have headed, or head, Microsoft, Sun Microsystems, and Google (Nadella was educated at the University of

Table 3. World's Top 20 Universities, 2020

Rank	University	Country
1	Harvard	United States
2	Stanford	United States
3	Cambridge	United Kingdom
4	MIT	United States
5	U California, Berkeley	United States
6	Princeton	United States
7	Columbia	United States
8	Caltech	United States
9	Oxford	United Kingdom
10	Chicago	United States
11	Yale	United States
12	Cornell	United States
13	UCLA	United States
14	Paris-Saclay	France
15	Johns Hopkins	United States
16	University College London	United Kingdom
16	University of Washington	United Sates
18	California San Diego	United Sates
19	University of Pennsylvania	United States
20	ETH Zurich	Switzerland

Source: *Academic Ranking of World Universities, 2020*. A report by Shanghai Jiao Tang University.

Wisconsin–Milwaukee, Khosla at Carnegie Mellon, and Pichai at Stanford and the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania).

The United States, therefore, not only set up and funded world class institutions but also attracted world-class academic talent by providing the pathway to citizenship. At the same time, the Europeans were cutting academic budgets and legislating restrictive citizenship laws. By being an open society, the United States won the battle for global intellectual labor as can be seen by the global rankings of universities around the world and the obvious U.S. academic hegemony.

Table 3 makes the point that the United States and Western nations still dominate international academia: 15 of the top 20 universities in the world are American and only two are non-English speaking (although ETH Zurich does conduct classes in English). China, however, is catching up quite rapidly in the realm of higher education. While the United States has 206 universities in the top 1,000, China, which in 2003 had 9 universities in the top 500, now has 168 in the top 1,000. The Chinese accomplished this by pumping money into higher education and seeking to attract international student and faculty talent. As seen in tables 4 and 5, in 2001 China was not a global force in education, but by 2017 it was rapidly catching up.

How does this buildup of education affect Chinese soft power and global influence? The answer is that these students will be part of China's global network, work for Chinese corporations around the world as well as in China and, perhaps, take Chinese culture and values home with them. Thus, while China may still be behind the West in the education sector, it is catching up. And given that it gives a considerable number of degrees in the sciences and the professional fields, the advantage for China is that the value system of an open society is not a disadvantage that works against its educational soft power efforts. Instead, students will be looking at the economic benefits they get from Chinese diplomas. As China's economic global reach expands, these students may find China's corporations more willing to hire them because they are acculturated in Chinese operational and cultural practices. The delivery of an affordable education coupled with future employment may be the clincher that makes the Chinese model more

attractive in the future. While for the Chinese to win this academic war they will have to attract the best academic talent, that may not be as big of a hurdle in the post-COVID-19 world.

COVID-19 and Chinese Vaccine Diplomacy

China may be one of the few countries in world history that has created an international problem and then, possibly, could gain credit for solving it. China's initial reaction to the outbreak of COVID-19 was less than forthcoming, leading to large-scale international criticism. Worse, because of their successful attempts to internationally isolate Taiwan, Taipei's warnings about the lethality of COVID-19 and the dangers of a pandemic were ignored by international authorities.

Once the pandemic spread globally, the Chinese were blamed, but the ineptness of organizations such as the European Union gave Beijing a reprieve. The beleaguered Italians asked the European Union for help, but little was sent. However, by March 2020, China sent healthcare workers and medicines to Italy[28] and to countries ranging from Serbia and the Czech Republic to the Philippines.[29] Initially, a potential game changer for China may well have been the distribution of vaccines to developing nations around the world when the Trump administration decided not to join the Coalition of Epidemic Preparedness Innovations' COVAX alliance. China and 182 other countries did, and their goal was to provide vaccines globally with a substantial number of countries in Asia and Africa getting vaccines at subsidized rates.[30]

In this context, Xi announced that China would make its vaccines available around the world as a global public good, thus distributing the vaccine equitably at subsidized rates. It was expected that internationally China would first supply vaccines to the countries where it was tested—Brazil, Indonesia, Turkey, and Mexico signed up to test the vaccines

Table 4. Distribution of International Students by percentage, 2001

Country	Percentage of International Students
USA	28
United Kingdom	11
Germany	9
France	7
Australia	4
Japan	3
Spain	2
Belgium	2
All other countries	34

Source: Project Atlas, 2019

Table 5. Distribution of International Students, 2017

Country	Percentage
USA	24
United Kingdom	11
China	10
Australia	7
France	7
Canada	7
Russia	6
Germany	6
All other countries	23

Source: Project Atlas, 2019

by different Chinese companies.[31] Subsequently, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates approved the Sinopharm vaccine for delivery in their countries. The advantage for China's vaccine diplomacy is that its large pharmaceutical industry could produce billions of vaccines at reduced costs for international distribution,[32] while those in the West have been commandeered for the domestic public only (at the time of this writing wealthy countries with

14 percent of the world's population had acquired 53 percent of the most promising vaccines).[33] Nevertheless, on January 21, 2021, the Joe Biden administration announced that "the United States would join COVAX and play an active role globally on COVID-19."[34] In a show of its own successful vaccine diplomacy and soft power efforts, the United States pledged to donate more than 1 billion doses of coronavirus vaccine,[35] and, as of September 2021, the United States was the world's largest donor of vaccines, supplying more doses globally than China, Japan, India, the United Kingdom, and France combined, and delivering more than three times the 34 million doses donated by China alone.[36]

The Value of Chinese Soft Power

Hugh White's point about China cited above—that everyone admires China, but no one wants to be China—is seen as the strongest factor in favor of China's attempts to project a preferred image abroad. That the Chinese model has lifted millions out of poverty and created a technologically advanced society is viewed with admiration in different parts of the world—much in the same way that the Soviet Union was admired in the 1950s for its economic and technological progress. Furthermore, Chinese soft power is what John Wong described as economic soft power, where Chinese investments and the Belt and Road Initiative bring potential prosperity to different parts of the world.[37] The fact that the West has not come up with a comprehensive plan to counter the Belt and Road Initiative only strengthens the Chinese assertion that their developmental model, which is a central part of their soft power, offers more to the rest of the world's developmental efforts.

In contrast, Nye has written that China's soft power is limited by its nationalism, which has recently been described as wolf warrior diplomacy, and by the limits of a closed and nontransparent society.[38] Nye's argument about nationalism and aggressive behavior in the international system, however, applies not only to China but also to the United States. In 2005, at the height of the Iraq insurgency, Australia's Lowy Institute released its annual foreign policy poll that showed Australian public opinion was quite critical of the United States, even though 72 percent of Australians agreed that the Australia, New Zealand, and United States Security Treaty was important for Australia's security interests. Instead, only 58 percent of Australians had a positive opinion of the United States while 69 percent had a positive opinion of China. Most Australians did not support the country's involvement in a potential future U.S.-China war over Taiwan, and 51 percent wanted a free trade agreement with China while only 34 percent were in favor of a trade agreement with the United States.[39] Thus, despite the strength and desirability of American soft power, foreign policy actions and economic self-interest were driving Australian opinion.

By 2021, the Lowy Poll showed that while 76 percent of Australians had a positive opinion of the Chinese people they had met, 93 percent were worried about Chinese military activities in the region. Fifty percent of Australians had negative views of China's economic growth, while 79 percent of those polled believed that Chinese investment in Australia had a negative impact. When asked about the United States, 76 percent of Australians polled thought that Americans and Australians shared common values, but 58 percent held that Donald Trump had weakened the alliance between the two countries.[40] Again, foreign policy and economic interests were driving Australian public opinion about the public standing of the two great powers.

The nationalism argument that Nye makes cuts both ways since nations react badly to extreme nationalism in any country regardless of its domestic political system and the level of transparency in its society.

Moreover, the level of transparency, or lack of it,

can be overcome by broader economic and political commonalities between China and the countries where it practices soft economic power. Shanthi Kalathil, for instance, pointed out that China was successfully able to use its soft power to get African nations to obstruct progress in the World Trade Organization, while in the United Nations there was broad support for the Chinese position on human rights.[41]

China's influence in the United Nations (UN) is now quite strong because of its foreign policy, its economic interests, and its relationship with African nations. To take the latter first, Jeremy Feltman argues that:

> *China's influence in the Security Council is . . . linked to its relationship with Africa. Especially with South Africa currently on the Council, China can usually count on the "A3"—the three rotating African seats on the council (three of the "E10")—taking China's positions seriously. China's commercial and financial relations with Africa play an important part, but it is more than the alleged "economic blackmail" that gets China respect from the African member states represented on the Council: Unlike the P3 (with their own colonial baggage), China studiously avoids taking positions on Africa-related peace and security issues that differ from those of the African states themselves.*[42]

While in terms of institutional leadership, Chinese nationals now head four of the 15 UN specialized agencies.[43]

The effectiveness of Chinese economic soft power is not restricted to developing nations. In Europe, Greece, which has benefited from large-scale Chinese investments, blocked a European Union statement on Chinese violation of human rights in the UN.[44] Similarly, since Italy has joined the Belt and Road Initiative, agreements have been signed between Italian state media and Chinese media groups, which have led to concerns that the Italian media is now giving a less critical view of China (although despite such efforts public opinion has not moved to have a more positive impression of China).[45]

There are two implications from this discussion. First, soft power efforts in themselves cannot compensate for bad foreign policy moves, and this applies to both democracies and authoritarian governments, though certainly with less impact for the former. Second, the international opinion of China is based in part of Beijing's actions, and if that country were to mellow its approach, it may well see a rise in its soft power. Suggesting, therefore, that Chinese soft power has severe limitations is not a useful way of looking at the influence that China has in the international system. Instead, one should remember that perhaps three to four dozen of the 190-odd members of the UN fall within the definition of being a liberal democracy, and for the rest, the liberal-democratic concerns about China fall on audiences that are less receptive.

A U.S. Response

As this article demonstrates, China, despite lacking the advantages of an open society, is using its considerable economic resources and a coherent strategy to gain greater global influence and paint a more positive picture of itself around the world. Thus, despite the crackdown on democracy in Hong Kong, the mass imprisonment of the Uighurs, and the general bellicosity in Asia, China continues to grow its global influence. This influence can only increase as China's international reach expands through trade arrangements such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, which has brought together 2.2 billion people in a free-trade arrangement; the Belt and Road Initiative that will bring investment to countries where others are unwilling to invest (although the reported advantages of the

Group Photograph of Leaders at Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Summit in Manila, Philippines November 14, 2017
By SHIVRAJ

Belt and Road Initiative to recipient nations have been exaggerated); and the possible signing of a Comprehensive Arrangement on Investment that allows the European Union and China to invest in each other. These deals can only build up China's economic might and with that facilitate its attempts at shaping the narrative and boosting its international image. In light of these facts, what should the United States be doing to counter China? The answer lies in both immediate and long-term steps to maintain the strength of the American brand.

First, there has to be a concerted plan from the United States to provide global leadership to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. This plan would include emergency funds for subsidizing effective vaccines to the rest of the world. In the medium to long term, it also requires the United States to propose the creation of an international health order that works to create health security around the world. America has the resources and the expertise not only to develop such a plan but to implement it. The first Bush administration's efforts to control HIV/AIDS is a case in point and may well be the most significant long-term achievement of that administration.

Second, the U.S. Government should be proactively working to make the American soft power brand increasingly attractive to the rest of the world. One way is to devote governmental resources to make American education more accessible to the rest of the world. Considerable progress has been made in this context with the development of Massive Open Online Courses, where the best American universities have done a sterling job of offering technology, humanities, and social science courses around the world through the internet. The American government, at very little cost, can help these courses become part of college curriculums around the world—especially in countries with poor education systems.

Also, the United States needs to stop penny-pinching on public broadcasting and use public funds to spread the American brand and values globally. While China spends $10 billion on its international broadcasting, the United States begrudges its agencies a real budget and instead complains about allocating $637 million—less than one-tenth of what the Chinese spend—on such efforts. A robust broadcasting budget, working in tandem with American private news and entertainment channels, would go a long way to counter the Chinese and Russian narratives and have a real impact in the Middle East, where the United States

has suffered from a negative image for decades.

Third, America's greatest soft power advantage is its open society, and this means educational access and the continued ability to attract the best minds from around the world. Immigration policies that support such efforts would not only boost the country's technological edge but also continue to make the United States attractive to the rest of the world. The Chinese have a well-thought-out strategy backed by money, but they still face constraints because of their societal and political structures. The United States, on the other hand, must take bold and innovative steps to maintain its global brand name and soft power advantage. PRISM

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The Limits of Victory
Evaluating the Employment of Military Power

Michael H. Levine

On November 28, 1984, then-Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger appeared before the National Press Club in Washington, DC, to deliver a speech titled "The Uses of Military Power." The previous year had brought mixed results in the deployment of U.S. combat troops overseas. An invasion of the small West Indies country of Grenada wrested regime control from the one-party socialist People's Revolutionary Government in favor of a relatively stable democracy. In Lebanon, however, the bombing of a Marine Corps barracks complex in Beirut killed 305 troops and civilians, including 241 Americans, and led to the withdrawal of the multinational peacekeeping force months later. Perhaps most central to Secretary Weinberger's speech was the Vietnam War, an event that two decades later still struck deep into the institutional fabric of the U.S. military.

The Secretary argued that combat forces should be deployed resolutely with "the sole object of winning" in cases where vital national interests are at stake.[1] Moreover, the use of force must meet six criteria: vital national interests, wholehearted commitment, clearly defined political and military objectives, congruent ends and means, domestic support, and last resort. Seven years later, many viewed the U.S. triumph in the Gulf War as a vindication of this doctrine. Today, this way of thinking is known as the Powell Doctrine, in reference to former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell. In the aftermath of the Gulf War, President George H.W. Bush gleefully declared, "By God, we've kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all."[2]

The Weinberger Doctrine continues to figure prominently in considerations of strategy today.[3] Polls indicate that most Americans have soured on what politicians and pundits on both sides of the political spectrum derisively term *forever wars*.[4] Scarred from the mixed results of the post-9/11 wars, many Americans would prefer a ticker tape standard: unless troops can return as victors in a welcome home parade, the war should not be fought. This is not a new articulation of strategy but, rather, sustains a storied tradition dating back centuries—namely, effective strategy is that which promotes clear desired endstates and then pursues these goals through decisive engagement. This tradition draws its roots from the military revolution of the Napoleonic era, and it remains a valuable foundation for strategic thought. However, the failure to recognize

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Napoleon at Austerlitz colored lithograph, ordered by the emperor Napoleon, by Antoine Charles Horace Vernet (called Carle Vernet) and Jacques François Swebach, ca. early 19th century (Courtesy JoJan)

the limits of this doctrine persists and has led to confusion and frustration by citizens and policymakers alike.

Americans are inheritors of this distinctly Western strategic culture marked by both an optimism in the ability to foresee endstates and an emphasis on the binary distinction between victory and defeat. This view perpetuates a false dichotomy between clear goals that yield victory, on the one hand, and muddled pursuits that are inconclusive or end in defeat, on the other. Instead, decision-makers should conceive of the use of national power in terms of advancing interests at acceptable costs. We call this the *interest-cost approach*. It is distinct from the victory-defeat approach whereby successful strategy identifies political endstates and then achieves these goals via decisive engagement. The victory-defeat approach makes two errors in its underlying assumptions. First, the statesman is never endowed with sufficient information to determine endstates with full clarity. Second, decisive engagement is not always an option, and even if it is achieved, success is not the painful-but-final victory its proponents believe it to be. Simply put, there is no decisive engagement that can permanently secure interests. Ticker tape parades may make great theater, but they do not offer the marked distinction of the right wars to be fought. What makes strategy effective is not whether decisive victory can be achieved (although this might be a contributing factor), but rather *whether the interests of the state have been advanced at tolerable costs*. This interest-cost approach provides the flexibility and humility that the single governing law of international relations—avoiding global anarchy—demands.

This article contains four sections. The first section explains the foundations of the victory-defeat model in the Napoleonic strategic tradition, focusing on the historical period and the two most prominent writers of the era: Carl von Clausewitz and Antoine-Henri Jomini. The purpose is to show how deeply enmeshed the victory-defeat approach is in Western thought. The second part examines the history and writing of the doctrinal canon to demonstrate the limits of this view and why the interest-cost model offers a more workable paradigm. A more complete survey of the Napoleonic period reveals that Clausewitz and Jomini suffered from a selective historical memory that led them to privilege decisive engagement in ways that continue to be misleading for strategists today. In the third part, we sharpen the claim that the victory-defeat model is a culturally specific phenomenon by contrasting it with the Chinese strategic tradition. The last part closes by examining some implications of our argument.

Decisive Engagement as the Truth of Strategy

The Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815) combined the full force of two seismic events—the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution—to mark a true military revolution. Gone was the military strategy of the Old Regime whereby armies were the precious commodity of a dynastic ruler to be used sparingly and toward limited ends. In its place arose a concept of total war. The French Revolution fundamentally changed the concept of citizenship from a bond forged by the happenstance of birth under the same ruler to one predicated on ethno-linguistic ties. To further this new nationalism, revolutionaries in France declared that the national interest "required war, for the nation must will its dignity, its majesty, its security, and its credit, and can only recognize them at sword point."[5] In 1793, France declared mass conscription (*levée en masse*), thereby militarizing the entire French nation for war.

The brilliance of Napoleon Bonaparte lay in exploiting the unique social and political developments of his era. By the time he was crowned emperor in 1804, his military strategy and foreign policy were largely one and the same. He sought maximum diplomatic leverage and, consequently,

Departure of the Conscripts in 1807 by Louis-Léopold Boilly, ca. 1808 (Musée Carnivalet)

his military aims were to defeat the major armies of Europe. At Austerlitz in 1805, Jena in 1806, Friedland in 1807, and Wagram in 1809, Napoleon achieved decisive victory through great battles that were punctuated by offensive action, local superiority at a decisive point, and exploitation via pursuit. He pursued this strategy to the end. At Borodino (1812), he finally got the set-piece battle with the Russians he craved, but he could not win it conclusively. After losing at Leipzig (1813) and again at Waterloo (1815), the tactics and strategy that he lent his name to left him to die in exile on Saint Helena.

Clausewitz's *On War* attempts to lay out principles that transcend a particular time or place and is largely successful in doing so. Nonetheless, Clausewitz, who was present at Borodino, naturally drew on the fresh memories of the Napoleonic era to write his classic work. In words that could have come from the French emperor himself, Clausewitz asserts, "Of all the possible aims in war, the destruction of the enemy's armed forces always appears as the highest."[6] He ranks the top three ways to achieve victory as destroying the enemy army, seizing the enemy capital, and attacking the enemy's strongest ally.[7] Likening war to "nothing but a duel on a larger scale," Clausewitz conceives of a "pure concept of war" whereby "the fighting forces must be destroyed."[8] Clausewitz privileges "the engagement" above all else. He writes that the "whole of military activity must therefore relate directly or indirectly to the engagement. . . . it follows that the destruction of the enemy's forces is always the means by which the purpose of the engagement is achieved."[9] *On War* argues that for all the various ways to advance political interests, nothing can be as decisive as destroying the enemy army via a major battle.

On this matter Jomini offers striking continuity. Jomini, a French-Swiss officer who served in both the French and Russian armies during the Napoleonic Wars, sought to describe warfare by

"invariable scientific principles."[10] The theme of these principles was a single prescription for victory: "offensive action to mass forces against weaker enemy forces at some decisive point."[11] If such a maxim is obvious today, it is because of the enduring legacy of Jomini himself. The proposition was foreign to strategists of the Old Regime. Today, decisive engagement is, in the words of military scholar John Shy, "so deeply imbedded in Western consciousness that many adherents refuse to accept it as a 'mode' of thinking at all but insist that—correctly understood—Jomini and latter-day Jominians simply offer the Truth about war, or at least about strategy."[12]

The importance of decisive engagement is further evidenced by an aversion to irregular warfare. In fact, it is a testament to the legacy of Clausewitz and Jomini that intrastate war is today conceived as "irregular" despite such conflicts representing the preponderance of wars in the post-Westphalian era. Clausewitz buries his discussion of small wars in chapter 26 of book 6, and only then to remark that such conflicts were recent phenomena that had been insufficiently researched. He is largely dismissive of such endeavors, holding that "it can be argued that the resources expended in an insurrection might be put to better use in other kinds of warfare."[13] Jomini is only slightly more receptive, noting that the Peninsular War (1808–1814) is ripe for study to learn of the challenges inherent in irregular war. However, he too concludes dismissively that:

> *As a soldier, preferring loyal and chivalrous warfare to organized assassination, if it be necessary to make a choice, I acknowledge that my prejudices are in favor of the good old times when the French and English Guards courteously invited each other to fire first—as at Fontenoy—preferring them to the frightful epoch when priests, women, and children throughout Spain plotted the murder of isolated soldiers.*[14]

Clausewitz and Jomini join in another key respect: the primacy of strategic clarity. Since war, as Clausewitz famously observed, is a continuation of policy, the statesman must understand the desired political endstate. Clausewitz writes that the "first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature."[15] Jomini offers a similar task for the strategist: "The first care of its commander should be to agree with the head of the state upon the character of the war."[16]

Taken together, the strategy comes into clear focus: Determine the policy ends, seek decisive engagement, and defeat the enemy army either in whole or in part. Once complete, the "purpose of the war has been achieved and its business is at an end."[17] This strategic design sounds familiar to those steeped in the Western tradition—yet even its chief architect had his doubts. Clausewitz considered only chapter one of book one complete and included a prefatory note to *On War* explaining the need for extensive revisions. Namely, he wanted to distinguish between Napoleonic total war and limited war. In the former, the goal was to destroy the enemy to secure ideal terms, while the latter sought to occupy peripheral territory to be used as diplomatic bargaining chips. The note reflects Clausewitz's concern that he would be read to favor only wars that yield sweeping military victories, a position at odds with his overarching thesis that war serves policy. Instead, the military endeavor remained contingent on the policy objectives. The statesman must identify the desired political endstate and apply means congruent to those ends.

Recognizing the insatiable nature of state interests, Clausewitz the realist acknowledged that wars did not mark strategic ends but rather produced a new international reality in which political

actors coped. No doubt reflecting on Napoleon's demise, he writes, "Even the ultimate outcome of a war is not always to be regarded as final. The defeated state often considers the outcome merely as a transitory evil, for which a remedy may still be found in political conditions at some later date."[18] Clausewitz rightly observes that for all the value of decisive engagement, it is not a panacea. However, he does not sufficiently explore the implications of this critical point. His is an error of emphasis. He did not have to reach far back in history for correction. To fully appreciate the limits of decisive engagement, we must broaden the examination of Napoleon's rise and fall.

The Napoleonic Wars and the Limits of Victory

No statesman pushed the bounds of decisive engagement more than Napoleon, yet few exposed the limits of the strategy to the same degree. For all the stunning victories that allowed France to periodically seize hegemonic control of the European continent, France never secured a lasting victory. Wars on the periphery never resulted in the culminating conventional battle Napoleon desired, and the set piece conflicts he did secure at Leipzig and Waterloo proved his undoing. The lesson of the Napoleonic era is the exception that proved the rule: Decisive engagement cannot deliver permanent victories but, like all strategy, can merely advance interests at corresponding costs.

A clear starting point for this discussion is in the western region of Vendée where, enraged by the militarization of French society by elites in the far-off capital, an anti-government insurgency ultimately seized the town of Saumur in June 1793. This was no small far-off war. Napoleon himself acknowledged that with most of his forces in the east, Vendeans could have reached Paris and the "white flag [of the Catholic and Royal Army] would have flown over the towers of Notre Dame before it was possible for the armies on the Rhine to come to the aid of the government."[19] A brutal counterinsurgency campaign marked by indiscriminate killing suppressed the rebellion. Nonetheless, the Vendeans never surrendered their political aims. The Vendean insurgency rose again after Napoleon's return from exile, and 30,000 troops that would have otherwise supplemented France's outnumbered forces at Waterloo were instead sent west.

His struggles in Haiti were no less taxing. A critical economic asset, Haiti exported sugar, coffee, indigo, and cocoa, constituting more than one-third of France's foreign trade, 40 percent of Europe's sugar imports, and 60 percent of the continent's imports.[20] An uprising for independence led to brutal bloodshed, claiming the lives of 200,000 blacks and "mulattos," 25,000 white colonists, 50,000 French troops, and 15,000 British troops. The war yielded Haitian independence at a staggering cost. Fighting the insurgency with the same ruthless tactics as the Vendée, Napoleon could never attain the pitched battles that he so desperately craved and was forced to call back his troops to Europe.

Last and most significant, the Peninsular War sparked a rebellion from which the term *guerrilla war* got its name. Between 1810 and 1812, the French deployed more than 350,000 troops to the Iberian Peninsula. Working in tandem with regular forces, Spanish irregulars drained Napoleon's resources from the moment he placed his brother on the throne in 1808. By the fall of 1813, the toll had become overwhelming. Great Britain crossed France's southern border, while Austria, Prussia, and Russia closed in from the east. Napoleon abdicated the throne in April 1814. In exile on St. Helena years later, Napoleon would lament, "That miserable Spanish affair is what killed me."[21]

Vendée, Haiti, and Spain demonstrate three limits of the victory-defeat paradigm. First, endstates can serve as north stars but never as prophecies. At best, Napoleon could focus on

various policy goals—pacified colonies, domination of Europe, and so forth—but his ends and means adapted to changing circumstances that he could not fully control or predict. Second, decisive action cannot always be attained. All three of these conflicts denied France a set-piece battle, yet each was important enough to fight nonetheless. Third, decisive action, when achieved, does not mark permanent victory but rather yields an advancement of interests at some corresponding cost. In Spain, for example, clear conventional victories could be considered wins in that they advanced French interests by placing a puppet regime in Madrid. Rather than signal an end, this merely rearranged an international power distribution that continued to be litigated through armed conflict. Even in Central and Eastern Europe, where decisive victories did not create insurgencies, surrender terms then created new realities that political actors fought over. In 1814 and again in 1815, strategic aims that Napoleon had hoped to resolve via decisive engagement were once more adjudicated on the killing fields of Leipzig and Waterloo. Napoleon could advance interests but never win them permanently.

Clausewitz and Jomini shared Napoleon's aversion to all but decisive conventional conflict. If statesmen could only spell out their interests plainly, and then pursue them by politics with the addition of other means, they would find success. However, this assumes a level of foresight that no statesman, not even Napoleon, possessed. Policymakers suffer from bounded rationality on both epistemological and metaphysical grounds. No decisionmaker is endowed with the totality of information (a phenomenon Clausewitz famously called the "fog of war"). As such, it is unrealistic to assume that the statesman can do much better than make an educated guess from the outset as to "the kind of war on which they are embarking."[22] Moreover, even if all the information was available, policymakers must deal with the contingent nature of history. Events interact in complex ways, with known inputs yielding unknown outputs. Even if one was omnipresent at the outset of a policy pursuit, the interaction of social and political forces would soon create a new scenario with which to cope.[23] Moltke the Elder stated, "No plan survives first contact with the enemy," but the boxer Mike Tyson observed even more bluntly, "Everyone has a plan until he gets punched in the face."[24]

In sum, the victory-defeat approach defines successful strategy as fulfilling two requirements: clearly defined political endstates and decisive engagement. This view has deeply planted roots in a tradition born from the Napoleonic experience. However, it is an overly narrow reading of that era and makes two unrealistic assumptions. First, endstates are useful planning tools but can never be fully determined and must change with variable circumstances. Second, decisive engagement cannot always be achieved, and when it can, the results are not necessarily permanent. By contrast, the interest-cost model defines success in terms of advancing interests at acceptable costs. Doing so is consistent with the historical record and leaves the policymaker better prepared to cope with an international system marked by anarchy and insatiable interests.

Examining an Alternative: Chinese Strategic Culture

The American historical memory recalls its most prominent wars in terms of battles won and lost. Such an approach flows directly from the Western canon of Napoleon, Clausewitz, and Jomini. This doctrine is so deeply implanted in Western strategic culture as to call to mind a parable recounted by the author David Foster Wallace:

> *There are these two young fish swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says "Morning, boys. How's the*

China's terracotta army

> *water?" And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes "What the hell is water?"*[25]

Indeed, such is the influence of the Western strategic tradition that the victory-defeat lens seems to most Americans as self-evident as water to a fish. In an era of great power competition, it is increasingly important to recognize the strengths and limits of this paradigm, as well as its alternatives.

Keeping in mind the potential biases of the author of this article as a student of the American tradition, and with a cautionary eye toward avoiding military orientalism and overly broad characterizations, the Chinese case can present a potent alternative. In modern China, "Karl trumps Carl."[26] Marx's philosophical principles partner with Sun Tzu and the ancient principles of Confucianism, making for, seemingly, a solely semantic difference in strategic logic. Where the U.S. method is to *create*, the Chinese method is to *exploit* and *capitalize*. The victory-defeat approach is supplanted by one using dialectics to approach strategy through an "objective-subjective" technique of formulation. The differences between the two strategic cultures are subtle, fundamental, and profound.

If asked, many would be quicker to offer Sun Tzu or Mao as the titans of Chinese strategy rather than Karl Marx.[27] But the presence of Marx in the strategic logic of the People's Republic of China should come as no surprise. Marxism's influence on Chinese strategic logic stems from the concept of dialectical and historical materialism. Marxism posits that historical events are interpretable as a series of contradictions and their solutions.[28] For Marx,

the conflicts were social and material. Communist regimes derive some level of legitimacy from this principle—the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) claims to be the sole entity capable of divining these enduring truths and solutions. Mao and the party he led served as the vehicle for Marx's insertion to Chinese strategic culture. In *On Protracted War* (1938), Mao invoked the idea that war "is a contest in the subjective ability between commanders . . . in their struggle for superiority and for the initiative based on material [objective] conditions."[29] Leading thinkers in the CCP and People's Liberation Army continue to use the dialectic to develop the fundamental feature of Chinese strategic logic: the objective and subjective.

Objective reality refers to "the objective world [the strategic environment] which exists independently of man's will and has its own law of development."[30] Man's will takes the form of the *subjective*, which is "man's ability to comprehend the objective world and consciously transform it to achieve certain purposes."[31] The objective is the situation, and the subjective is the manmade strategy. Key to understanding the difference is that rather than trying to muscle an endstate on the strategic situation, the subjective initiative of a strategy seeks to agree with objective reality.[32] Any subtle or fundamental change in the latter demands an adjustment to the former.

The alignment of the subjective according to the laws and trends of the objective leads to the achievement of Sun Tzu's concept of *shi*. Sinologists disagree as to the exact translation of shi and whether it is the "key defining idea" in Master Sun's work but concur it is pivotal.[33] *Shi* can be more broadly conceptualized as "the propensity of things," and its determination allows the cultivation of leverage and influence—a strategic advantage.[34] Only when strategy (the subjective) comports with the situation (the objective) is *shi* reached. Put another way, the strategist capitalizes on the situation's essence (objective reality) and tendency toward an outcome by developing a subjective strategy to exploit it. It necessitates an unceasing, in-depth analysis of the strategic environment to ensure alignment of one's strategy because "by developing a full understanding of those factors that define one's relationship with the enemy, and by actively controlling and shaping the situation . . . one is able to *ride the force of circumstances to victory*."[35] The passive and reflexive approach fosters what Alistair Iain Johnston labeled "a pervasive acceptance of absolute flexibility"—attacking or defending according to the opportunity provided by the ever-changing situation.[36]

The essence of American strategy has been posited here as seeking lasting victory through a decisive engagement. In contrast, the essence of Chinese strategy is "to make 'someone do something for himself that he is actually (unknowingly) doing for you.'"[37] This is brought about by applying the concept of stratagem in the process of formulating a subjective strategy to exploit *shi*. *Stratagems* are designs that seek to mislead the enemy and trick them or divert their attention. It calls to mind Sun Tzu's "winning without fighting." Some have argued that both concepts may originate from ancient Chinese notions of morality emphasized in Confucianism.[38] Confucius placed a premium on harmony, a prioritization that manifested in edicts that "benevolence should be put in first place" and emphasized being polite and honest when dealing with barbarian tribes.[39] One could morally deal in foreign affairs by exhausting "all the influences of civil culture and virtue" to gradually attract enemies into submission.[40] These thoughts were not limited only to Confucianism but are also found in Taoism: Lao-Tzu, the veritable plankowner of Taoism, opposed aggressive actions and warned that the world could not be conquered by force of arms.[41] Scholars at China's own Academy of Military Science concede that "traditional Chinese

security strategy was a rational one in which exerting cultural and political influences was as [*sic*] the main focus while applying limited military means as an adjunct, and the goal of this strategy was to 'spread the influences of Confucian virtue into the periphery.'"[42] With the understanding that Chinese strategic culture is much older than that of the West, the quotation can perhaps provide unique insight to how Chinese strategists understand their own history—a selective historical memory still seen today, and one markedly different from that of the United States.

But do these stuffy and nebulous conceptual principles really amount to anything in Chinese strategy? Are they reflected in the real world? Looking at the words and approaches used by successive leaders of the CCP, the answer appears to be yes. Mao's affinity for the dialectic has been noted, and his invocations of Sun Tzu and stratagem while balancing the Soviet Union and United States throughout the Cold War are wide-ranging. China's strategy of "hide and bide" has been attributed to Deng Xiaoping, wherein he advised CCP cadre that China should keep a low profile and bide its time—exploiting the current objective reality—while convincing increasingly global powers that they could profit from China's rise. In a 1998 meeting of Chinese diplomats, Jiang Zemin identified the objective trend of the times as a "trend toward multipolarity" that emerged after the end of the Cold War and asserted that China was presented an opportunity for "undermining hegemonism and power politics."[43] Jiang later calcified what he called China's "Strategic Opportunity" of the first two decades of the 21st century, in which China could exploit the post–Cold War trends of diffusing power, worldwide recognition of national self-determination, and economic globalization by using a subjective strategy of growing strong from these trends and riding their tides toward China's interests.

Xi Jinping has broken with the "hide and bide" strategy used by Deng and Jiang and asserted that China now "stands tall," "offers a new option for other countries," and should "take an active part in reforming and developing the global governance system."[44] Though less subtle, Xi's new strategy still respects the objective-subjective paradigm. In a 2018 speech to a conference of CCP diplomatic cadres, Xi told the audience that "to have a good grasp of global developments and *follow the underlying trends of the times* is a constant and crucially important task that requires our abiding attention."[45] Even the name of Xi's new approach, *socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era*, acknowledges a change in the objective strategic environment.

Finally, the Chinese approach is equally tangible at the operational level. Attempted creation of fait accompli reflects a desire to achieve *shi*, creating the foundation for a future situation where armed confrontation would tip to Chinese victory and deter adversarial intervention. Toward the creation of such an advantage, Beijing employs the concept of "three warfares." An apparent legacy of Confucian moralistic principle and Sun Tzu stratagem, three warfares engages an adversary in the realms of public opinion warfare (propaganda), psychological warfare (aimed at adversarial will/decision), and legal warfare (employed at all levels for legitimization).[46] These warfares embody the objective-subjective in two ways. First, according to Elsa Kania, a prominent rising analyst studying the Chinese military, the "three warfares have the potential to establish favorable conditions for battlefield success and eventual victory."[47] In other words, the establishment of "favorable conditions" (the objective) is done using the three warfares in the subjective. Second, the preference for this approach indicates the Chinese have identified the usefulness of these nonviolent approaches given the trends of the strategic situation (proliferation of information technology, difficulty in discerning the veracity of information, and respect for the rule of law).

In sum, the Chinese approach can be defined as the limited advancement of interests given costs calculated based on an ongoing, flexible, in-depth understanding of the objective situation that seeks to align actions with identified trends. The result of the application of the modern Chinese strategy has been dubbed "salami slicing," a series of small actions that do not serve as casus belli themselves but may cumulatively produce a larger and/or unlawful action. It stands in stark contrast to the victory-defeat paradigm, explaining at least in part why the United States has struggled to counter those tactics and techniques it labels as Chinese attempts at hybrid or gray zone warfare. Americans continue to draw a line between politics and war, connecting the two by the single thread of political ends. Chinese strategists acknowledge the Gordian knot tying together politics, war, and everything else in a complex system. American strategists continue to prepare for and seek their set-piece battle, wishing to cleanly impress their ends before returning to a booming victory parade. Chinese strategists, understanding the realities of working within a complex system, wage a hundred quiet and small battles each day.

Implications for Policymakers and Citizens

The shift from the victory-defeat model to the interest-cost model inspires numerous possible changes to the employment and evaluation of national power. In this section we offer three proposals.

Limitations of the Ends-Ways-Means Approach. One byproduct of the victory-defeat approach is the U.S. military's embrace of an ends-ways-means strategic logic. To summarize, political ends are established and sought, while ways are designed to best achieve them using available means manifesting as resources, power, and capabilities, formulated with an eye to the associated costs and risks.[48] This is not, by any stretch, an unwise way to approach strategy. In fact, it is well-informed by the writings of great strategic thinkers and lessons drawn from historical conflicts, as this article has illustrated. But the ends-ways-means approach is not a panacea.

The weakness in the ends-ways-means approach is that ends are established based on a snapshot analysis of the strategic situation. The situation is seen for what it is at the outset of the strategy's formulation, and this comprehensive evaluation forms the sought-after outcome. Though logical enough, it does not account for the complex and fluid nature of conflict. Think of it this way: the international system is itself a complex system wherein actors simultaneously participate using all their elements of national power across multiple domains, with the actions of one incessantly influencing the environment and the behavior of others. The constant feedback of these actions makes for an ever-changing environment impossible to predict. Within that system, states, at times, again participate in *another* complex system: war. Why, knowing that these are the systems in which one acts, would one attempt to formulate and strive for static, situationally—or environmentally—defined ends that constitute rigid and absolute victory? Strategists are left hamstrung to strive for goals defined in the context of an outdated situation and to iteratively reevaluate the entire strategy in search of "victorious" strategic ends.[49] The term *ends* itself is indicative of the problem; it sees too clean a break, too neat a stopping point for the effects of the system's actors.

Here we find that the American strategic logic is a particularly active one. It believes that strategists should impress on the future their desired endstate (through Clausewitz's "engagement" or Jomini's "offensive action") despite the system's complexity. The National War College is clear on this point: "Strategists must consider what kinds of outcomes are reasonable—and achievable—given the advantage and leverage they are able to *create*."[50] Emphasis

on the active role of the strategist was not an inevitability but is instead the result of an American strategy informed by the victory-defeat paradigm and reinforced by selective historical memory.

Strategists need not dispense with the ends-ways-means approach. The limits of this methodology, however, must be made plain from the outset. Ends are useful to orient action but necessitate flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances. Ways and means must recognize the inherent complexity of action: known inputs invariably yield unknown outputs. In an April 1864 letter, Abraham Lincoln wrote, "I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me."[51] Adding such a sentiment to the ends-ways-means methodology could provide much-needed humility to a sometimes-hubristic American strategy.

A Change in Political Rhetoric. Perhaps the most immediate consequence of this paradigm shift is a much-needed change in American political rhetoric in favor of presenting a more nuanced view of American history. The passage of time has a misleading way of glossing over the detail, drama, and complexity of the past. History is not teleological; it is contingent. Nothing is preordained or inevitable, but the forces of human behavior make them appear so. It is commonplace for policymakers and citizens alike to long for the era when the United States won wars. This creates an unrealistic and counterproductive barometer for when and how national power should be exercised.[52] A historical reappraisal need not recast the victors of our most memorable wars. The focus should instead be narrowly fixed on what victory truly meant—what was gained, and at what cost. Meanwhile, instead of perceiving conflict across the range of military operations as anathema to the American strategic tradition, one should recognize it as figuring prominently. Decisive engagement is not a cure-all, and when it cannot be achieved, there still may be interests at stake. The overarching question remains whether the gaining interests are worth the price to be paid.

This change will be synergistic. Instead of a ticker tape parade, citizens will demand of their representatives a foreign policy that is the best among a menu of options constrained by the circumstances. Policymakers in turn will speak openly about the inherent tradeoffs in any foreign policy rather than promise a stark and misleading contrast between victory or inaction.

A less appealing (but no less significant) implication is that policymakers must recognize the biases of their audience. The tradition of the victory-defeat paradigm will not wash away overnight, and domestic support consistently wanes when perceptions of a quagmire take root. Still, the American state has interests that must be advanced. Honest dialogue about communications strategy is typically frowned on, coming dangerously close to the distasteful notion of propaganda. The reality, however, is that decisionmakers have an obligation to explain their policies and build support by ethically and responsibly casting judgments in the most favorable manner possible. Where public perception cannot be moved, policymakers should consider two consequences of these domestic constraints. First, a policy may be beneficial for the state but will not sustain the support necessary to wage it successfully. Second, where interests are compelling, covert, or low-level, involvement that avoids prominent media attention may be the most viable option. Doing so carries risk but may be sound policy nevertheless.

Expansion of Options, Moderation of Goals. A likely objection to the interest-cost approach is that it leads to endless intervention, often in pursuit of nonessential interests. After all, the Weinberger Doctrine was intended to constrain U.S. involvement overseas. In an often-cited debate over U.S. action in Kosovo, then-US. Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright complained to General Colin Powell, "What's the point of having

this superb military that you're always talking about if we can't use it?"[53] Without question, the interest-cost approach expands the menu of options available to policymakers. Unshackled from the misguided constraints of the Weinberger Doctrine, the United States can advance its interests through a broader exercise of national power. However, this change would also force a level of discipline and humility that the alternative approach does not. Given the uncertainty of endstates and limits of decisive engagement, policymakers must take seriously the limits of power any state possesses—including a global power such as the United States.

The issue with counterinsurgency, for example, is not that such campaigns never work—in fact, counterinsurgents have prevailed over insurgents only one-third of the time since World War II—but rather that the costs are often too high to justify intervention.[54] The same can be said of the use of nuclear weapons in war. What advancement of interest would be sufficient to justify the use of these weapons? The question does not exclude the potential resort to nuclear arms. Instead, it forces the decisionmaker to evaluate on first principles under what situation nuclear war would be wise. The answer will place the threshold at some nearly inconceivably high bar, but the threshold would be established nonetheless. Questions regarding humanitarian intervention, war by proxy, and foreign aid, which are stripped of meaning under the victory-defeat model, could similarly be framed in this manner.

Conclusion

Neither Secretary Weinberger's 1984 speech nor the sentiments of many of his fellow citizens appeared in a historical vacuum. Two-and-a-half centuries before he took the podium, a Western strategic canon emerged privileging strategy that identifies political endstates and achieves these policy goals through decisive engagement. The foundations of this victory-defeat approach remain steady: the West remains the dominant military presence in global affairs to this day. But while most of the foundation stands strong, cracks remain from the earliest days of construction. The victory-defeat approach developed from an overly narrow view of the Napoleonic experience. Rather than a peripheral issue to be ignored, the limits of decisive engagement should be understood as central to Napoleon's fall as they have been to American successes.

Scholar Eliot Cohen is correct when he writes, "Perhaps the greatest error a strategist can make, in fact, is believing in the chimerical notion of 'victory'—as opposed to incremental and partial success, which then merely gives way to new (if, one hopes, lesser) difficulties."[55] The policymaker and citizen alike would be wise to dispense with an artificial notion of final victory. Instead, the barometer must be what it always ought to have been: successful strategy that advances interests at acceptable costs. PRISM

Notes

[1] Caspar Weinberger, "The Uses of Military Power," remarks prepared for delivery by the Hon. Caspar W. Weinberger, Secretary of Defense, to the National Press Club, Washington, DC, November 28, 1984, available at <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/military/force/weinberger.html>.

[2] Maureen Dowd, "After the War: White House Memo; War Introduces a Tougher Bush to Nation," *New York Times*, March 2, 1991, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/03/02/world/after-the-war-white-house-memo-war-introduces-a-tougher-bush-to-nation.html>.

[3] We use Lawrence Freedman's definition of *strategy*: "The art of creating power." See Laurence Freedman, *Strategy: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), xii.

[4] J. Baxter Oliphant, "After 17 Years of War in Afghanistan, More Say U.S. Has Failed Than Succeeded in Achieving Its Goals," Pew Research Center, October 5, 2018, available at <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/05/after-17-years-of-war-in-afghanistan-more-say-u-s-has-failed-than-succeeded-in-achieving-its-goals/>.

[5] MacGregor Knox and Williamson Murray, *The Dynamics of Military Revolution: 1300–2050* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 63.

[6] Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 99.

[7] Ibid., 598.

[8] Ibid., 90.

[9] Ibid., 95

[10] John Shy, "Jomini," in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 146.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., 184–185

[13] Clausewitz, *On War*, 478.

[14] Baron De Jomini, *The Art of War*, trans. G.H. Mendell and W.P. Craighill (Radford: Wilder Publications, 2008), 24.

[15] Clausewitz, *On War*, 88.

[16] Ibid., 49.

[17] Ibid., 91.

[18] Ibid., 80.

[19] Quoted in Anthony James Joes, *Resisting Rebellion: The History and Politics of Counterinsurgency* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 55.

[20] Max Boot, *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present* (New York: Norton, 2013), 93.

[21] Quoted in Joes, *Resisting Rebellion*, 66.

[22] Clausewitz, *On War*, 88. This Clausewitz excerpt became particularly popular with critics during the early years of the Iraq War. Two of the best-selling books on the war at the time—Michael R. Gordan and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), and Tom Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2003–2005* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007)—quote this passage verbatim. The implication (not at all mistaken) is that the U.S. Government failed to grapple with the growing insurgency after the fall of Saddam Hussein. In sharing the Clausewitzian overestimation in the ability to foresee challenges, the authors risk overdrawing their condemnation. While it is true that the United States fell shockingly short in its initial planning and execution for Iraq reconstruction, the totality of negative consequences cannot serve as a grab bag for criticism. Instead, after-action criticism must be narrowed to what could reasonably have been known given the bounded rationality that constrains any given actor's projection of follow-on stages and endstates. This does not absolve the Bush administration of criticism, but it does narrow the terrain on which such critiques are leveled.

[23] To be sure, uncertainty is not an excuse for strategic nihilism. National power should always be exercised with some goal in mind, but humility and flexibility must reign supreme.

[24] Mike Tyson, Twitter post, October 17, 2018, available at <https://twitter.com/miketyson/status/1052665864401633299?lang=en>.

[25] "5 Takeaways from the Greatest Commencement Speech of All Time," *Time*, May 22, 2015, available at <https://time.com/collection-post/3894477/david-foster-wallace-commencement-speech/>.

[26] This phrase is borrowed from the first chapter of renowned military sinologist Timothy Thomas's sweeping overview of Chinese military strategy. See Timothy L. Thomas, *China Military Strategy: Basic Concepts and Examples of Its Use* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, 2014), 11.

[27] Ibid., 11–12.

[28] Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, ed., *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975; originally published 1939) 105–130, available at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1939/x01/>.

[29] Peng Guangqian and Yao Youzhi, eds., *The Science of Military Strategy* (Beijing: Military Science Publishing House, Academy of Military Science of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, English version, 2005), 57. See also Thomas, *China Military Strategy*.

[30] Wu Chunqiu, "Dialectics and the Study of Grand Strategy: A Chinese View," *China Military Science*, No. 3 (2002), 144–145, in Thomas, *China Military Strategy*, 16.

[31] Wu, "Dialectics and the Study of Grand Strategy," 146.

[32] Timothy L. Thomas, "China's Concept of Military Strategy," *Parameters* 44, no. 4 (Winter 2014–2015), 42.

[33] Ibid., 44.

[34] Thomas G. Mahnken, *Secrecy & Stratagem: Understanding Chinese Strategic Culture* (Double Bay, NSW, Australia: Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2011), 21. Emphasis added.

[35] Tao Hanzhang, *Sun Tzu's Art of War: The Modern Chinese Interpretation* (New York: Sterling Innovation, 2007), http://www.freading.com/ebooks/details/r:download/OTc4MTQwMjc3NzAxMQ==55.

[36] Alastair I. Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 25.

[37] Thomas, *China Military Strategy*, 24.

[38] See Tiewa Liu, "Chinese Strategic Culture and the Use of Force: Moral and Political Perspectives," *Journal of Contemporary China* 23, no. 87 (May 4, 2014), 556–574, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2013.843944>.

[39] Ibid., 559.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Lao-Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, trans. Stephen Addiss and Stanley J. Lombardo (Indianapolis: Hacket Publishing, 1993). See also Liu, "Chinese Strategic Culture and the Use of Force."

[42] Tiejun Zhang, "Chinese Strategic Culture: Traditional and Present Features," *Comparative Strategy* 21, no. 2 (April 2002), 79.

[43] Jiang Zemin, "The Present International Situation and Our Diplomatic Work," in *Selected Works of Jiang Zemin*, vol. I (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2011), 193.

[44] Xi Jinping, "Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era," speech delivered to the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Beijing, October 18, 2017, available at <xinhuanet.com/English/download/Xi_Jinping's_report_at_19th_CPC_National Congress.pdf>. The official English transcript begins by marking the second page as "1." These passages are found on pages 9 and 54 of the English language transcript, respectively.

[45] Xi Jinping, "China's Diplomacy Must Befit Its Major Country Status," in *The Governance of China*, vol. II (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2014), 480. Emphasis added.

[46] See Sangkuk Lee, "China's 'Three Warfares': Origins, Applications, and Organizations," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37, no. 2 (February 23, 2014), 198–221.

[47] Elsa B. Kania, "The PLA's Latest Strategic Thinking on the Three Warfares," *China Brief* 16, no. 13 (August 22, 2016), available at <https://jamestown.org/program/the-plas-latest-strategic-thinking-on-the-three-warfares/>.

[48] For a comprehensive explanation, see Steven Heffington, Adam Oler, and David Tretler, eds., *A National Security Strategy Primer* (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 2019), emphasis added, available at <https://nwc.ndu.edu/Portals/71/Documents/Publications/NWC%20Primer%202020%20Final.pdf?ver=NKiGA4Ocm119DU5GveImYw%3d%3d>.

[49] To be fair, the ends-ways-means approach does advocate for iterative assessment to ensure a strategy is effective. However, it cedes only that ends should be changed as a last resort.

[50] Heffington, Oler, and Tretler, *A National Security Strategy Primer*, 50.

[51] Abraham Lincoln, "Letter to Albert G. Hodges," *Abraham Lincoln Online*, April 4, 1864, available <http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/hodges.htm>.

[52] World War II is frequently cited as the example to emulate. Yet this case fits well within the interest-cost model. The war was fought over hegemonic control of the European continent—the central question of global politics since the 1648 Peace of Westphalia and a resurrection of the primary issue of World War I. Rather than settle this question with the fall of Nazism, World War II gave way to a U.S.-Soviet Cold War where domination of Europe remained the central battleground. The war advanced a central interest but did not resolve its foundational point of contention.

[53] "A Muscular Apostle of Restraint," *The Irish Times* (Dublin), December 18, 2000, available at <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/a-muscular-apostle-of-restraint-1.1121690>.

[54] Seth Jones, *Waging Insurgent Warfare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 177.

[55] Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 198.

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China, the West, and the Future Global Order

By Julian Lindley-French and Franco Algieri (With the support of The Alphen Group)

"Hence in the wise leader's plans, considerations of advantage and of disadvantage will be blended together."[1]
—Sun Tzu

The primary purpose of this article is to respectfully communicate to a Chinese audience a Western view of the future world order. China needs the West as much as the West needs China. However, the West has awakened geopolitically to the toxic power politics that Russia is imposing on Ukraine and China's support for it. China is thus faced with a profound choice: alliance with a declining and weak Russia or cooperation with a powerful bloc of global democracies that Russia's incompetent and illegal aggression is helping to forge. The West is steadily morphing into a new global Community of Democracies with states such as those in the G7, Quads, and Quints taking on increasing importance as centers of decisionmaking.[2] All three groupings reflect an emerging implicit structure with the United States at their core, European democracies on one American geopolitical flank, with Australia, Japan, South Korea, and other democracies in the Indo-Pacific region on the other American geopolitical flank.

The force that is forging such a community is China as it morphs into a superpower. Specifically, China is choosing to be an aggressive putative superpower. President Xi Jinping's aggressive worldview is of a China defined by its opposition to the United States and, by extension, America's democratic allies and partners. A new world is being forged from within the increasingly hot cauldron of U.S.-Chinese strategic competition. However, does that mean this new world is inevitably now set on a crash course to conflict, something akin to a re-run of the collapse of pre–World War I Europe into systemic war? Or is it not too late for both sides to forge a pragmatic peace—a peace forged from respect, rather than destructive and disrespectful confrontation? On the face of it, President Xi seems to have made his choice, but in some very important respects siding with Russia in geopolitical conflict with the community of democracies seems counterintuitive when we

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look at China from a Western perspective (as this article does). This perspective also implies China's "choice" might not be as firm as some would have it—a profound but essentially simple choice between siding with Vladimir Putin and confrontation with the West or continued growth, wealth, and power through collaboration with the West?

The facts speak for themselves. Using the most favorable economic statistics for the combined Chinese and Russian economies—purchasing power parity—their combined economies are worth some $27 trillion in 2022. Using the same data for G7 countries, the core of the emerging Community, the total is $39 trillion.[3] Add Australia and South Korea to the aggregate and the figure is $42 trillion. If nominal gross domestic product (GPD) is compared, the contrast is even more striking with the combined GDPs of China and Russia in 2022 totaling $20.2 trillion, while the combined GDPs of the G7 countries amount to $45.2 trillion, which when Australia and South Korea are added increases to $48.8 trillion.[4] Critically, China's trade with the democracies is over 10 times greater than that with Russia,[5] while in 2020, China's merchandise trade surplus with the rest of the world totaled $535 billion, with much of that figure due to surpluses with both the United States and Europe.[6]

There are two assumptions that can be drawn from these statistics and one question. First, China's current grand strategy is clearly aimed at displacing the United States as the preeminent global power and thus assuming a central place on the global stage. Any such ambition presupposes that "just in time" globalized trade that has made China rich will not be replaced by a just-in-case culture in the West, which will see a marked acceleration of reshoring if China is deemed a hostile power. Second, the ambition to become the preeminent global power is deeply rooted in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). By 2035, China may well have a larger nominal GDP than the United States, spend more on research and development, possess a world-class military, and have secured essential 21st-century resources. China may also have established a rival global currency to the dollar. However, the policy assumes that all things being equal the United States and its allies will not react in the interim. It remains highly unlikely China will ever decisively eclipse the United States as the world's preeminent power, precisely because China is equally unlikely to become a member of the global Community of Democracies to which the "West" is transitioning. Is Russia worth the price? Russia might offer China an energy source and a useful conduit for the transshipment of goods to Europe, when Europe opens its doors to Moscow in the wake of the Ukraine war, but it offers little else to China in terms of the future development of the Chinese economy and society. Rather, Putin's Russia is far more likely to drag China into conflicts which are not in China's interest.

China, the West, and Power Pragmatism

The rupture in dialogue between the United States and China that has occurred in recent years has sown deep mistrust. The growing tension between economic interdependence and increasingly militarized geopolitical competition is also placing the rules-based international order under ever increasing strain. With his attack on Ukraine, Putin has now destroyed many long-held assumptions among Western elites about peace, war, economic interdependence, and globalization, while Russia's blatant atrocities against Ukrainian civilians has further reinforced a determination in the West to respond. The belief that economic interdependence would be enough to prevent major war has again been revealed to be false, just as it was in Europe in 1914. There is now a belated realization even in Europe that the reliance on external autocratic powers to feed both its energy hungry and consumer-obese societies, far from promoting peace, has simply

revealed the many vulnerabilities of a decadent West. That world is over, and the post-COVID-19 world will demand a wholly new set of geopolitical assumptions on the part of hitherto complacent Western leaders.

Equally, China would be profoundly mistaken to conflate apparent Western decadence with terminal decline. The West is not as weak or as divided as many of its Chinese detractors would like to believe. If anything, the "West" is gaining in both reach and relevance because the West itself has become a geopolitical paradox in which the "West" is no longer confined to the West. The ideas that underpin the West mean it has evolved from a place into an idea that, at times, is applied hypocritically and incompetently.[7] Consequently, there is a Community of Democracies emerging worldwide that whatever the cultural influences share a profound set of beliefs about economics, law, and governance. Such a community, by its nature, is fractious and for a Chinese audience the antithesis of order, even if pluralism and harmony have always coexisted in Chinese philosophy. Equally, history would also suggest that the greater the challenge to the West, the greater the collective resolve to resist and prevail.

The result is a kind of geoeconomic standoff. China is vital to future Western peace and prosperity, while the West remains even more vital to future Chinese peace and prosperity. Whatever form the West takes, the future relationship of the democracies with China will be the defining geopolitical relationship of the 21st century. As China and the West may never be partners in the full sense of the word, and over many issues they will not, both Beijing and the U.S.-led West must avoid confrontation. It is simply not in the interest of either China or the West.[8] In other words, China and the West do not have to like each other, but it is a critical interest for both sides to actively foster a level of mutual respect and understanding to at the very least establish a culture of power pragmatism at the core of the relationship that is robust enough to survive the inevitable tensions geopolitical competition will spawn.

Power pragmatism will also demand adjustments on the part of the West. The West must collectively recognize that the 400-year preponderance of Western "rules" is at an end and that new rules are now needed, of which China will be a co-architect. Equally, China must recognize that whereas an anarchic absence of rules in international relations might afford Beijing short-term opportunities, it will also ensure the enduring hostility of the West and, over the medium term, impose great costs on China. There may be temporary strategic appeal for China to be in close partnership with Putin's Russia. However, the Ukraine tragedy has revealed that Russia is an unstable, incompetent, unreliable declining power the only real capacity of which is to act as a spoiler for those states more powerful than it is, including China.

That Was Then, This Is Now

The very idea of a "West" was effectively born on the USS *Augusta* in August 1941, when America and Great Britain came together to fight World War II.[9] The very essence of the liberal international order

Prime Minister Winston Churchill meets with President Franklin D. Roosevelt on board the U.S. Navy heavy cruiser USS *Augusta* (CA-31), off Argentia, Newfoundland, on August 9, 1941 (Naval History and Heritage Command)

is the institutionalization of power in both alliances and institutions. The liberal international order is designed precisely to counter Realpolitik and the balances (or unbalances) of power anarchy in international relations so beholden to President Putin. President Xi?

Chinese readers will appreciate that the so-called liberal international order evolved from European history. The paradox is that the liberal international order was not always that liberal or that ordered. Perhaps the greatest influence initially, and paradoxically, was the British Empire for two reasons: it was the most powerful of the European empires, and it spawned the United States of America. For all its many imperfections, the imperial international order was grounded in an early idea of law and can trace its roots back to Magna Carta and the slow emergence of liberal parliamentary democracy with the American Revolution of 1776–1783, which was in many ways a continuation of the English Civil War of 1642–1649. As Britain and America evolved politically so did the idea of international order and eventually the very idea of a "West." The West is thus an evolution and consequence of projected values and imperial power, built first and foremost on mercantilism. For much (not all) of the West, "liberalism" has been as much about free trade as about the relationship between the state and the citizen, which is why globalization emerged from it. And Western power was not always either "liberal" or "Liberal," particularly in its dealings with China as the 1842 Treaty of Nanking and the other so-called Unequal Treaties attest.

Like any global order, the liberal international order is about the projection of values through power. As late as 2000, many in the West assumed that the supremacy of the West would mark the final, definitive victory of the liberal order over all others. The remarkable rise of China has profoundly challenged such complacency. Beijing's hitherto agile grand strategy, allied to the crash of the banking system in 2008 and the Eurozone crisis in 2010, have helped Chinese values emerge to compete with those of the West in ways and to an extent that was wholly unexpected. Chinese power has thus come as a shock to the West and its liberal international order, partly because of naivety, partly because of Western arrogance, and partly because of a failure to properly understand the "other." Consequently, the world is once again engaged in a grand strategic contest between values and interests (Westerners often conflate and confuse the two) and the contending historical narratives that underpin them.

Some believed they could preserve Western dominance through globalization, using trade and multinational corporations to create an international order locked in their favor and thus avoid systemic competition. Rather, the outsourcing of supply chains simply paid for the rise of China (and to a far, far lesser extent Russia) with very different ideas about power and order. The implicit message of globalization from the West to China was thus: if you keep us comfortable, we will live with the increased vulnerability implicit therein and by and large ignore areas of contention. However, it was precisely contention that saw the mask of Western complacency begin to slip. First, it was over Western concerns about China's intentions toward the Republic of China. Second, it was over China's abandonment of the post-1997 Basic Law agreement with Britain over the status and liberties of Hong Kong. Third, it was over China's disputed claims in the South China Sea. Fourth, it was over Beijing's support for Pyongyang. Fifth, it was over the treatment of the Uighur minority. Finally, it was over COVID-19 and the pandemic.

In short, many in the West slowly came to realize, albeit painfully, that they simply could no longer afford to look the other way to preserve their lifestyle on the cheap. The Western response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine suggests that this previously

unrealistic mercantilist, consumerist worldview is finally being abandoned in favor of a return to some form of strategic realism. Equally, the West's response to Ukraine is also beginning to challenge a Chinese view of a decadent, indebted post-Afghanistan West that is little more than a glorified Disneyland for the Chinese middle-class to visit. The undoubted galvanizing factor in the reawakening of the West was China's unwillingness to share knowledge about the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic. Beijing's seeming obsession with secrecy and control was patently counterproductive when open collaboration could have lessened the impact of the pandemic on an underprepared world.

This shift in the Western paradigm of power is also evident in an increasingly self-critical discourse about the relative strengths and weaknesses of the liberal international order. There is a new orthodoxy emerging in which debates over the theoretical weakness of the liberal international order are being replaced by a cold realization that any dream of imposing universal Western norms and values on the whole world is bound to fail. This abrupt abandonment of such hitherto firmly held beliefs was even described as "Westlessness" at the 2020 Munich Security Conference.[10] Behind such ideas is a profound loss of self-confidence on the part of some in the West after 20 years of repeated shocks that have undermined the assumptions of the 1990s and created profound divisions within the old transatlantic West about the nature of the world and how to deal with it. These divisions were given a turbo-boost with the 2016 election of President Donald J. Trump in the United States and the decision of the British people to exit the European Union.

China and the Rise of the Community

President Xi seems to have concluded that the great geopolitical game of the 21st century is now over. But it is just getting started. He also seems to have concluded that China's assured future is simply about the systematic application of overwhelming Chinese power in all its manifestations, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region, with Russia acting as China's geopolitical wingman allied to a combination of U.S. political, economic, and military overstretch and European geopolitical unworldliness. In other words, Beijing will just need to keep applying pressure where and when it wants for President Xi's vision of a China supreme by 2035 to be realized. Such a worldview would represent a profound failure to properly understand the nature and power of the emerging global Community of Democracies. What is mired in the mud of Ukraine is not the liberal international order, but rather the West's previously misplaced assumption that its values and its interests would no longer need to be fought for.

Rather, a shared belief is now emerging in the West that if global peace and prosperity are to be preserved the liberal international order is more important than ever, albeit reinforced by political and strategic realism allied to more deliberately and consistently applied hard and soft power. The pace and scale of this shift will depend to a large extent on the Community's perception of China—partner, engaged challenger, or threat? Consequently, it is really up to China if the supply chains whether or not just-in-time globalization retreats into just-in-case regionalization and exclusive communitarization. In other words, while the ethos and essence of globalization will continue, states that do not conform to the norms, values, and behavior of the Community will become increasingly isolated from it with supply chains adapted accordingly.

The scale and range of sanctions imposed on Russia in the wake of its invasion of Ukraine is also a first example of a new kind of statecraft. Indeed, while neither democracy nor a commitment to the United Nations Charter is solely Western, democracy is the closest thing in the world of today to a social media–reinforced universalist creed. Democracy may have emerged from Greek political

and Western Christian thought, but the West is no longer the sole owner. Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, and many Middle Eastern and African countries do not see themselves as "Western," but they are democracies, and it is democracy that is a defining feature in their respective international relations.

To be part of the Community, China would also have to accept many, but not all, of the West's norms and values. Alternatively, China could seek to create a standalone post-SWIFT community together with a few outliers such as Russia.[11] If China chooses that path, it will choose to be excluded from communitarization. Though the Community would clearly pay a price for such a fissure in relations with China, the Ukraine war has demonstrated that many democracies would be willing to make such sacrifices. Consequently, the transactional costs of power would become far higher for Beijing because China would effectively be excluded from globalization, the very process that has made China rich and powerful. In other words, in the absence of the West's kind of soft power, China's debt diplomacy will only ever buy Beijing so much influence for so long.

Flashpoints

The most obvious and immediate flashpoint is the relationship between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China. While there are no direct constitutional parallels between Ukraine and Taiwan, any "special military operation" against Taipei would meet with a fierce and united Community response. Nor will China's claims to the South China Sea and its self-declared economic exclusive zone ever be accepted by the Community, not least because the historical basis for the claims is seen as entirely spurious by the Community and Realpolitik at its most brazen. Indeed, China's perceived undermining of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea reinforces the impression of a pick and mix approach to international norms, conventions, and law. The West

Cihu Beach is located in Kinmen County, Taiwan. You can see Xiamen City, China on the other side. The entire row of anti-landing piles inserted at an angle of 45 degrees makes this beach a special battlefield scene.
Photo by Huang Yu Ting
June 26, 2020

and the wider Community will thus continue to challenge China's claims by undertaking freedom of navigation missions and other measures designed to thwart overtly Realpolitik-driven Chinese ambitions. The Community also has growing concerns about China's intentions in the Arctic. Are they peaceful? Or, by declaring itself a "near Arctic power," is Beijing seeking to project coercive power into Europe's strategic neighborhood? Europeans are finally awakening to the consequences of Chinese ambitions in their strategic backyard.

The geopolitics of the 21st century will in many ways be defined by the new industrial revolution and the shift to renewable and rechargeable sources of power. Indeed, perhaps the most dangerous flashpoint could well be energy and the new industrial revolution. China is already and legitimately competing for oil and gas supplies. If the CCP is to continue to deliver economic growth and prosperity to its people, the soul of political legitimacy in China, it will also need to embark on a profound energy transition. The systematic investment by China in cobalt, lithium, and the extraction of other so-called critical minerals and rare earth metals in places such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda demonstrate the extent to which Beijing is determined to get ahead in what will be a very competitive game.

There is dangerous paradox at the heart of this so-called green industrial revolution. Not only is it transforming relationships across the entire supply chain between energy provider and product consumer, but it is also making the world less safe. Put simply, there are not enough known sources of lithium to make all the batteries that will be needed to power much of the future. Though there are significant known sources in Serbia, Germany's Rhineland, and Britain's Cornwall, the main producers of lithium are Australia, Chile, and China, followed by Argentina, Zimbabwe, and Portugal.[12] Western companies competing with China and its state enterprises to extract critical minerals are already complaining of unfair Chinese trading practices, even in Europe, and an exploitative culture as harsh as any 19th century imperialist.

If China continues to maintain its current policy of "beggar thy neighbor," it will reinforce the growing impression that Beijing has a narrow view of the Chinese interest and that it will take any steps and adopt any measures to secure them. While China may appear to be ahead of the game at present, given the contracts it has established with partners across the globe, it is only an appearance. Like the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), China's exploitative relationships with such partners are also fragile, not least because of concerns that China's behavior toward Africa or Latin America is neocolonial.[13]

There is an alternative: China finds an accommodation with the United States and its allies and partners to develop legitimate, fair, and environmentally friendly extraction of critical minerals as part of a collaborative approach to the new industrial revolution. Such cooperation could thus help establish a precedent for cooperation in 21st century geopolitics. China and the Community would then invest their competitive energies in making the green revolution work in support of the agreements made at the 2021 Glasgow Climate Change Conference rather than engage in an ever more dangerous and costly economic, political, and military standoff. Thankfully, there are already fora and frameworks, such as the World Trade Organization, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and of course, the European Union (EU)–China Partnership, where such leadership could be exercised and formalized, and a new rules-based global order established of which China was an architect. It is a long shot given Xi's stated position, and the United States and its allies would be naïve in the extreme if in parallel they failed to counter military China. The alternative would be a new/old form of geopolitics shaped

by the dangerous "policy" of competitive anarchy and chaos.

Stakeholder China and the D10 Plus 1

What would be the best forum for meeting stakeholder China? By its very nature, there is no one locus for Western foreign and security policy. One option could be to invite China to a D10 Plus 1 construct that was built on the grouping of G7 industrialized powers plus Australia, India, and South Korea. Given the nature of the Chinese state, there is no question that at times Beijing finds it difficult dealing with pluralistic democracies and too often seeks to exploit contending U.S. and European positions. There is always the temptation in Beijing to try and divide and rule, but as recent pressure on Australia and EU member-state Lithuania attests, the more China pushes the more the Community coheres.[14] A new global framework such as the D10 Plus 1 would offer two "commodities" vital to China: order and predictability. Order in by creating a D10 Plus 1 (that is more applied than the G20) it would provide both a framework and a structure for pragmatic discussions. Predictability would protect trade, and with it, China's role as a workshop of the world. The offer to China would be clear: by partnering with the Community, China is far more likely to continue to prosper than by confronting it.

There will be frictions that will need to be managed. The liberal international order is about more than just economics, with several dimensions that China will need to engage with, including security and defense, democracy, rule of law, and, of course, human rights. Given contending views on such matters, the relationship will need to be constantly managed, but that is precisely the reason for such frameworks as a D10 Plus 1. The most important benefit to China is that it would be seen as a genuine stakeholder in a new global order that China helped to craft. The "price" would be that China will no longer be able to cherry-pick those rules it wishes to observe and ignore those it does not. As for the old West, particularly increasingly unrealistic Europeans, they will have to decide if they are only going to deal with regimes they like, or recognize that many regimes they do not like, they need.

The Paradox of Chinese Strategy

As geopolitics both intensifies and shifts, the next 5 years will be critical to managing China's relationship with the West, both old and new. China's legitimate and competitive ambition is to become the world's most powerful state, and Beijing is systematically investing to that end as part of its so-called Centennial Goals.[15] What is emerging by way of response is a form of hard-edged and increasingly China-skeptic concerted multilateralism that balances the threat of decoupling from China with the search for a new reciprocity. COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine have simply concentrated the collective strategic minds of Americans, Europeans, and other democracies the world over. China is at present deemed guilty by association with Putin's Russia and is thus reinforcing a new willingness of democracies to confront the hard security choices implicit in China's rise that was lacking prior to COVID-19 and Ukraine. The new West, in the form of the Community, is thus a recognition within many democracies that the threat China now poses across the full spectrum of geopolitics, including military, needs to be confronted and together.

Contemporary geopolitics is thus increasingly looking like a new global "battleground" as China seeks to forge new relationships so that it can use the many dark sides of globalization to its advantage. At present, the main theater of competition remains essentially economic with China seeking to exert control over countries through debt dependency, as well as financial and military efforts to displace the United States both regionally and globally. It is paradoxical as a strategy as it is both profoundly anti-Western yet like Putin's war in Ukraine it relies

on Americans and Europeans to fund it. The West, for all its many faults, is simply not that dumb. It is also a high-risk strategy that could catastrophically fail leading to an increasingly militarized struggle between the U.S.-led Community and China that the latter would inevitably lose.

In the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, China needs to understand three fundamental geopolitical shifts. First, the democracies are coming together across the globe to counter the Chinese military threat. That is precisely why the 2021 Australia, United Kingdom, United States (AUKUS) Agreement was forged. Second, American leadership is being reinforced, as evinced by Finland and Sweden wanting to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Third, Americans, Europeans, and their democratic partners worldwide are beginning to develop longer term strategy together. That strategy has yet to be fully formed, but there are several elements beginning to emerge that would be markedly accelerated if China, say, were to invade Taiwan. These include a discreet but robust engagement within the Community over critical issues such as information warfare, cyber attacks, and the theft of intellectual property; the slow establishment of a common strategic understanding and approach to dealing with China; and an honest analysis of the downstream significant challenge and the possible threat China could pose. For example, the June 2022 NATO Madrid Summit Declaration contains the strongest language yet about the nature and scope of the threat China poses.

In the post-pandemic world, the Community is likely to adopt a Harmel-style dual track of comprehensive dialogue with China and reinforcing its defense capabilities.[16] This is precisely because the Community is a network of regimes and coalitions emerging to contain China through such mechanisms as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Critically, even the EU, that bellwether of geopolitics, is now adopting a precautionary approach and beginning to treat China as a strategic challenger. The Chinese-Russian strategic partnership is also becoming seen as proof within the EU as some level of malice aforethought, which is being rapidly reinforced by growing Chinese influence in the Arctic. In other words, there is a growing sense in Europe that while Beijing speaks the language of collaboration, it practices the power of hard geopolitics.

Transatlantic Backbone

The transatlantic relationship is the backbone of the West and the cornerstone of the Community of Democracies and is already adapting to meet the challenge posed by China, not least by ensuring that the United States is not alone in engaging China. However, Western policy toward China faces significant constraints. Though the United States has seen China as an essentially geopolitical challenge, much of Europe, with Germany to the fore, has hitherto seen China as a mercantilist opportunity. With the dark reality of COVID-19 and the Ukraine war, that divide is now weakening. Still, a consistent transatlantic position, let alone policy, would require four distinct sets of actors to agree all of which have contending interests—the EU, the United States, the stronger European states, and the corporate sector. "Policy" in such circumstances thus tends to take the form of communicating with Beijing parameters for state behavior across geopolitics, trade practice, the rules-based order, and human rights the breaching of which could see the suspension of globalization from which China benefits.

Equally, a de facto policy review is now also under way to identify what the United States and Europe can do together in the face of perceived Chinese assertiveness.[17] Consequently, the United States' and European positions have tended to converge on a range of issues, most notably Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the perceived ill-treatment of the

Uighur minority. Europeans are also beginning to make stringent efforts to improve resilience across the bio, digital, and espionage spectrum in the face of what are perceived as intrusive Chinese actions and threats to European critical infrastructures. If unchecked, China is also likely to see its own many vulnerabilities exploited by way of retaliation. If the Euro-Atlantic "West" is no longer sufficiently powerful in and of itself to convince Beijing to become a responsible stakeholder in a new global international order, the G7 and new multilateral fora, such as a D10, will become increasingly important both for the legitimization and credibility of collective democratic action. Corporate actors will also play an important role in upholding the values they espouse in their dealings with China.

If China intends to become a full-spectrum military rival of the democratic world, there will be profound consequences for humanity. A new transatlantic division of labor is already emerging with NATO acting as a fulcrum for a globalizing transatlantic defense relationship. Both Great Britain and Germany are significantly increasing their respective defense budgets and investing across the hybrid, cyber, and hyperwar[18] continuum, which will be a distinctive feature of the coming geopolitics of force. The changing NATO defense and deterrence concept is also increasingly built on the premise that to remain credible, Europeans must become high-end military first responders in and around Europe, thus enabling the United States to shift significant force to the Indo-Pacific region in a Chinese-induced emergency. Some U.S. forces will remain in Europe as the ultimate guarantor of peace, but the United States will always seek to have sufficient military strength to counter China's military ambitions, wherever they are directed and Australians, Europeans, Japanese, South Koreans, and others will undoubtedly support them.

The essential paradox of China's actions of late is that the United States can only ever take European support for U.S. China policy for granted because China, with the incompetent assistance of Russia, is pushing Europeans back toward America. Some in Beijing may have hoped that the signing of the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment would have enabled Beijing to use trade and investment as a lever to sow divisions between the United States and its European allies. The Chinese must be sorely disappointed, although the real litmus test of shifting relations will be the extent to which Europeans will be willing to hold Beijing to account for breaches of World Trade Organization rules. China is also highly cyber competent, which is enabling its large-scale theft of intellectual property and production data. However, Beijing is already being actively countered on both sides of the Atlantic, as the recent abandonment of Huawei 5G technology by several European countries attest.

Russian Roulette and China's Gamble

It is Russia that is forcing China to gamble or choose. China can continue to gamble on an increasingly unpredictable and aggressive Moscow as part of some anti-Western Machiavellian power miscalculation. Or it can choose to work pragmatically and join with the Global Community of Democracies to shape a new world order from which China will continue to benefit. If Beijing chooses the former, it will have a complicated alliance with a declining power that will drag China into unwanted crises if for no other reasons than that is the nature of the Putin regime. If that is China's gamble, then it will become increasingly isolated from the very states and system that is the source of Chinese wealth and power.

Evidence? Russia's disastrous, poorly planned, and badly executed invasion of Ukraine reveals the extent to which Moscow's capacity for strategic incompetence affects China. Beijing has been forced to sit uncomfortably on the fence watching a close partner destroy the sovereignty of a neighboring state—the very antithesis of Chinese policy—while

President Volodymyr Zelensky meets with soldiers during working trip to the Kharkiv region, October 6, 2022 (President of Ukraine)

at the same time effectively bankrolling Russia. China cannot take the high ground over the right to sovereignty on which it insists while being seen to support Russia's efforts to march all over that very same principle. Indeed, if China does not condemn Russia for its actions, it will be condoning them, and seen as such. Given the power the dollar still affords Americans in the global financial system, President Joseph Biden's warning of consequences for Chinese support for Russia is for once not an idle threat, whatever some in Beijing might consider China's ability to counter such sanctions. Russia's invasion of Ukraine not only is an act of both weakness and desperation but also imposes on Beijing—deliberately or otherwise—wider geopolitical considerations. Moscow simply lacks the overwhelming power to realize its war aims quickly, whereas a long war could well see Russian default on more of its debts unless China props it up.

The choice Putin is imposing on China is like the war in Ukraine itself, a proxy for much broader geopolitics. The Ukraine war should showcase for China the "Leader of a New Global Order." However, to do that it must begin by restraining Russia and bringing this awful war to an end quickly.[19] For the West and much of the wider Community, Russia's cruel actions in Ukraine are *the* test of Chinese intent and statecraft. Will China be a competitive partner or complicating spoiler?

China, the West, and the Future Global Order

The Sino-Western relationship is at a tipping point. This article begins with a basic but indicative comparison of the respective economic and thus strategic weight of both China, Russia, and

the G7. Ultimately, facts are power, and power will (normally) prevail. In the wake of COVID-19 and the Ukraine war, successful engagement by the democracies with a rising China will depend more on application than innovation, allied to shared policy and solidarity across a new Community of Democracies, the core pillar of which will be the old transatlantic relationship.

Going forward, it is vital that neither China nor the Community fall victim to Cold War psychosis. China is not the Soviet Union reborn, and any close analysis of Chinese interests and those of the Community reveals a lot of parallels, even convergence. The Community also needs to develop a more finessed understanding about Beijing and its legitimate strategic ambitions and thus afford China the respect it clearly deserves. However, given the battering that Sino-Western relations have suffered over the past few years, it is also vital that both China and the Community reestablish the basis for a reliable partnership.

China has also invested a lot of strategic and actual capital in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), albeit as an instrument of strategic competition.[20] Such investment has certainly given China some short-term gains, but it would be a profound mistake for Beijing to believe that debt diplomacy, particularly if allied to coercive wolf-warrior diplomacy, can forge enduring alliances. In many ways, the BRI reveals the paradox at the heart of China's grand strategy. The relatively tepid condemnation of Russia's invasion of Ukraine by the likes of Brazil, India, Mexico, and South Africa implies there are several powerful democracies that might permanently align, even side, with China. That is highly unlikely. Should there ever be major confrontation between China, the United States, and the wider Community, Brazil, India and South Africa would almost certainly lean back toward their fellow democracies. The Sino-Indian relationship is, to say the least, further "complicated" by longstanding territorial disputes and China's support for Pakistan.

Furthermore, China is *not* (yet) an implacable enemy of the West, and there is no automatic reason that it should be in the future unless Beijing continues to decide that it is. There are also profound differences between Beijing and Moscow. While the former has proved itself capable of adopting a pragmatic approach, Putin has cast himself in the role of some latter-day King Cnut in an attempt to hold back the tide of liberalization, democratization, institutionalization, and globalization for which Russia is utterly ill-prepared, but which China has in many respects embraced.[21] One reasonable conclusion is that for all the rhetoric to the contrary, Beijing really does understand that the geopolitical center of gravity for China in the 21st-century will be its relationships with the world's powerful democracies. If China seeks to divide those democracies, Beijing will soon learn, as the Ukraine war attests, that real democracies stick together in emergencies. For example, the so-called 17+1 grouping is already crumbling. The cost of cooperating with China was revealed by Lithuania's defiance by recognizing the Republic of China. Beijing is already paying an opportunity cost for supporting Russia.[22]

Equally, China has repeatedly indicated that it is willing to support a genuine multilateral order, and, to some extent, Beijing should be at least given the benefit of the doubt. China must prove that its commitment to "multilateralism" is not simply a metaphor for an alternative to American power. President Xi's 2017 speech to the World Economic Forum in Davos was one of many such interventions that seem more than mere strategic posturing.[23]

What next? A program of post-COVID-19 confidence and security building measures would be welcome. Effort should be made to ease China's acute food security concerns, albeit conditional on China suspending some of the most aggressive aspects of its wolf-warrior diplomacy. American and European tech companies should also be afforded

the chance by Beijing to compete with state-subsidized Chinese companies in China. Above all, a major collaborative project is needed to jointly identify supply chain vulnerabilities *with* China, and, as proposed herein, opportunities should be sought to collaboratively manage the extraction, exploitation, and development of critical metals and strategic technologies. To avoid miscalculation and misadventure, both sides also need to establish a culture of realism, reciprocity, proportionality, and conditionality—realism to better understand China's legitimate interests and vice versa, reciprocity to build confidence, proportionality to avoid overreaction, and conditionality to help establish a trusted framework for cooperation, not least when there are tensions.

Such confidence-building, if successful, will over time turn norms into regimes, and regimes into the rules of a new world order that underpins, if not the institutionalization of state power, its mutualization, thus preventing the extreme state behavior evident in Ukraine with all the disruption and danger it brings. As the 16th century English philosopher Thomas Hobbes stated, "Covenants without the sword are but words and of no use to any man."[24]

Your call, China! PRISM

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Notes

[1] Lionel Giles, trans., *Sun Tzu on The Art of War*, available at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/17405/17405-h/17405-h.htm>. This quotation is often wrongly attributed to Lao Tzu, but Chinese readers will know this to be wrong.

[2] There are several such groupings. For example, the Quad within the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO) is made up of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany; the NATO Quint adds Italy. In the Indo-Pacific region, the Quad countries consist of the United States, Australia, India, and Japan.

[3] Global Firepower, "Purchasing Power Parity by Country (2022)," available at <https://www.globalfirepower.com/purchasing-power-parity.php>.

[4] Population U, "Countries by GDP Rank," available at <https://www.populationu.com/gen/countries-by-gdp#rank>.

[5] Trade Economics, "Trade Performance," available at <https://www.tradeeconomics.com/>.

[6] Statista, "Merchandise Trade Balance in China from 2010 to 2020," available at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/263632/trade-balance-of-china/>.

[7] See in this context also Lawrence Freedman, "The Crisis of Liberalism and the Western Alliance," *Survival* 63 no. 6, (November–December 2021), 37–44.

[8] In the EU-China Strategic Outlook of 2019, China is considered as "an economic competitor in the pursuit of technological leadership, and a systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance." See High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, and the Council: EU-China—A Strategic Outlook* (Strasbourg: European Commission, December 3, 2019), 1, available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52019JC0005>.

[9] On Saturday, August 9, 1941, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt met on the USS *Augusta* off the coast of Newfoundland, Canada. At the meeting, they established the Atlantic Charter and laid the foundations for an alliance that in time led to not only the creation of NATO but the very idea of the West as a force in the world.

[10] The Special 2020 Munich Security Conference readout stated, "[T]here is both a recognition that the liberal-democratic project is under increasing pressure and an understanding that the best way forward consists in a common transatlantic approach. After several years of transatlantic tensions, the shared commitment to seek a common Western grand strategy represents a promising first step. The next step will consist in translating the new transatlantic momentum into an actionable joint program that will deliver concrete results. For this to happen, transatlantic partners still must develop a clearer understanding of each other's to-do lists and priorities." Tobias Bundy, *Beyond Westlessness: A Readout from the Munich Security Conference, Special Edition 2021*, Munich Security Brief No. 1 (February 2022), available at <https://securityconference.org/assets/02_Dokumente/01_Publikationen/Munich_Security_Brief_Beyond_Westlessness_MSC_Special_Edition_2021_210224.pdf>.

[11] SWIFT, or the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications, is a Belgian-based cooperative society for providing financial and banking transactions worldwide. Russia has been expelled from SWIFT in the wake of its invasion of Ukraine. China's Cross-Border International Payments System is seen as a direct challenger to SWIFT.

[12] See NS Energy, "Profiling the top six lithium-producing countries in the world," November 23, 2020, available at <https://www.nsenergybusiness.com/features/top-lithium-producing-countries/>.

[13] See in this context Amitai Etzioni, "Is China a New Colonial Power?" *The Diplomat*, November 9, 2020, available at <https://thediplomat.com/2020/11/is-china-a-new-colonial-power/>.

[14] On November 21, 2021, the Republic of China opened a mission to Lithuania following which the People's Republic of China downgraded its diplomatic representation and expressed strong dissatisfaction with Vilnius. See "China Downgrades Its Diplomatic Ties with Lithuania over Taiwan Issue," Reutes, November 21, 2021, available at <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/11/21/china/china-lithuania-taiwan-relations-intl-hnk/index.html>.

[15] The Centennial Goals were established in 2012 and have two distinct elements. The first goal was to double 2010 GDP and per capita income for both urban and rural residents by 2021, the centenary of the Chinese Communist Party. That goal has by and large been achieved. The second goal remains to make China fully developed by 2049, when the People's Republic of China will celebrate its centenary. To realize the latter goal, Beijing will need the support of its Western partners. See David Dollar, Yiping Huang, and Yang Yao, *China 2049: Economic Challenges of a Rising Global Power* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, January 2020), available at <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/FP_20200106_china_2049_dollar_huang_yao.pdf>.

[16] Pierre Harmel was a former Belgian foreign minister who led a group of "Three Wise Men" who reported to the NATO's leadership in 1967 about the need for enhanced military capabilities for the Western Alliance to meet the threat then posed by the Soviet Union but also the need to simultaneously pursue dialogue, hence a dual-track approach.

[17] See in this context *Dealing with the Dragon: China as a Transatlantic Challenge* (Bertelsmann Stiftung Germany and Asia Program, Asia Society Center on U.S. China relations, and The George Washington University China Policy Program, June 2020), available at <https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/user_upload/ST-DA_Studie_Dealing_with_the_Dragon.pdf>; Hans Binnendijk and Sarah Kirchberger, *The China Plan: A Transatlantic Blueprint for Strategic Cooperation* (Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council, March 2021), available at <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/The-China-Plan-A-Transatlantic-Blueprint.pdf>.

[18] Amir Husain, "AI is Shaping the Future of War," *PRISM* Vol.9, No. 3, November, 2021, available at < https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2846375/ai-is-shaping-the-future-of-war/>.

[19] As early as 2005, Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick elaborated on China as a responsible stakeholder. See Robert D. Zoellick, "Whither China: From Membership to Responsibility?" Remarks to the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations, New York, September 21, 2005, available at < https://2001-2009.state.gov/s/d/former/zoellick/rem/53682.htm>.

[20] Interestingly, there are parallels between China's Belt and Road Initiative and Britain's imperial past. In May 2019, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) published a commentary highlighting efforts by the British to control strategic communications. See Jonathan E. Hillman, "War and PEACE on China's Digital Silk Road," CSIS, May 16, 2019, available at <https://www.csis.org/analysis/war-and-peace-chinas-digital-silk-road>. In the wake of victory over Napoleon, what had been primarily a commercially driven, mercantilist empire increasingly became an exercise in *Machtpolitik*, as British corporate and state interests merged, much as China's are doing today. The British strategy involved the construction of All Red Lines, an exclusive network of telegraph lines that helped facilitate London's command and control of its empire and gave Britain a critical strategic communications advantage over rivals. The British also used naval power to control the chokepoints controlling the world's sea lines: Gibraltar, Suez, Aden, Singapore, and so on. For a time, Britannia really did rule the waves. With the Belt and Road Initiative, China is endeavoring to do a similar thing in this digital age by seeking critical control over digital networks while erecting the "Great Firewall of China."

[21] King Cnut was an 11th- century Anglo-Danish king who, according to legend, wanted to demonstrate the limits to secular power compared to holy power. In the legend, Cnut put his throne on the seashore and commanded the tide to halt, which of course it did not. When the tide made his feet and robes wet, he claimed it proved the worthless power of kings compared to that of the Almighty.

[22] Lithuania's May 2021 withdrawal from the 17+1 Cooperation Forum was reinforced by the European Parliament's refusal to ratify the China-EU Investment Partnership so long as China imposed sanctions on European scholars and even members of the European Parliament. See in this context Andreea Brînză, "How China's 17+1 Became a Zombie Mechanism," *The Diplomat*, February 10, 2021, available at <https://thediplomat.com/2021/02/how-chinas-171-became-a-zombie-mechanism/>.

[23] "[W]e should pursue a well-coordinated and inter-connected approach to develop a model of open and win-win cooperation. Today, mankind has become a close-knit community of shared future. Countries have extensive converging interests and are mutually dependent. All countries enjoy the right to development. At the same time, they should view their own interests in a broader context and refrain from pursuing them at the expense of others." See President Xi Jinping, "President Xi's Speech to Davos in Full," remarks to the World Economic Forum, Davos, January 14, 2017, available at <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/01/full-text-of-xi-jinping-keynote-at-the-world-economic-forum>.

[24] See Richard Tuck, ed., *Hobbes Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 117.

View of the ruined city center of Kharkiv, March 1, 2022, after a Russian attack (DepositPhotos/Pavel Dorogoy)

Defining and Achieving Success in Ukraine

By Frank Hoffman

The Post–Cold War era ended with Russian President Vladimir Putin's series of strategic miscalculations against Kyiv. But the contest is much larger than a border dispute between Russia and Ukraine. A more overt contest has emerged, pitting Russia's grievances and illusions against the Western democracies and the vestiges of a rules-based order. That contest is most evident in Ukraine, which has passed through a critical turning point after Russia's attempted *coup de main* against the President Zelensky government in the capital failed spectacularly.[1] As noted in an insightful April 2022 study, Putin's initial gambit reflected "the death throes of an imperial delusion," but also indicated that Russia was preparing for a protracted and deadly struggle.[2] The West reveled over the former, and overlooked the portents of Moscow's preparations.

The U.S. strategy being employed in coordination with our Allies has adapted to changing circumstances, gaining both an appreciation for the conflict's serious consequences to international order and greater optimism about Ukraine's chances of success and not just its survival. This strategic reassessment is reflected in the policy goals announcement made by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan: " . . . what we want to see is a free and independent Ukraine, a weakened and isolated Russia, and a stronger, more unified, more determined West."[3] Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin echoed those comments, though his focus on the second policy aim was misunderstood as a unilateral escalation.[4] The implications of the policy and the consensus behind these goals is revealed by the accelerated security assistance the United States is providing and by the advance weaponry being supplied. Congress has substantially increased aid to Ukraine for the coming year to over $40 billion.[5]

The U.S. policy aims are reasonable, although their internal consistency may contain some challenges. A free and independent Ukraine is not necessarily one whose territorial integrity is restored or whose economic survival is assured. A weakened Russia that cannot repeat this debacle has certainly been achieved at this point, given the losses that Moscow incurred by its incompetent management of the war. A cohesive

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and stronger North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a worthy goal already in evidence given the Alliance's contributions to Ukraine, and now substantially augmented by the impending accession of Finland and Sweden.[6]

Yet, the war in Ukraine has passed its 150-day anniversary and is now a grinding war of attrition. Western sanctions have impaired Russia's economy but are not forcing Moscow to reconsider its policy at this time.[7] Russia has altered its war aims as well, but not altered its barbaric tactics. "What was proclaimed as a quick punitive expedition," notes one former intelligence officer, "has been revised into a war to annex as much of Ukrainian territory as possible and, within that territory, to destroy any concept of Ukrainian national identity."[8]

A predicted stalemate scenario that this author laid out in April 2022 is being borne out with the Russians making slow and costly advances, which is all that they can hope to achieve.[9] Neither side seems likely to prevail, although the future may present new circumstances.

The question of the day, to borrow the title of a famous book from the long war on terrorism, is "Tell Me How This Ends."[10] General David Petraeus' famous question looms just as large today. There is a lot of sentiment behind ensuring that Putin cannot win this war, and for declarations that "Ukraine must win," but not a lot of ideas on how to make that happen anytime soon.[11] Some columnists passionately press for a clear military defeat. Yet, the "Putin Must Lose" school does not offer a clear way to generate that endstate and does not weigh the related human costs or risks. The majority of commentary today is focused on "why" Ukraine must prevail, and less detailed when it comes to the "how."[12]

While there seem to be some clear and public aims in the United States, there is less agreement within NATO and precious few ideas on the ways and means to obtain them. In short, there is much consensus on ensuring a Russian loss, but little agreement on the ways to make that happen. Some seek peace for the sake of reducing the extensive human suffering in Ukraine, while others want off ramps to avoid "humiliating Putin."

The strategic discipline demonstrated to date by the U.S. government, employing all the tools of statecraft in close linkage with allies and parties, has been commendable. Putin's naked aggression has been blunted, and his strategic failure is evident to the entire globe, even if Moscow won't admit it. It is time to ask, as Eliot Cohen did, what is our goal or what will victory look like.[13] Is a battlefield victory by Ukraine the right goal and what would generate that result? What are the realistic chances of success, and what could undercut Ukraine's chances of succeeding on the battlefield? This article examines the ongoing war and explores options that lead to ending the conflict in some way that would constitute success or "victory." Decisive victory in a purely military sense is an unlikely prospect. A frozen conflict, a larger and longer version of Donbas across the entire Ukrainian frontier, is increasingly likely despite the efforts by the West to induce Russia to back down. The prospects of a grinding stalemate are evident and extending the fighting creates spillover consequences for other U.S. strategic priorities. A war of endurance may play to U.S./European economic advantages but could evolve in a way that harms longer-term interests.

Now is the time to reassess collective strategies for bringing this conflict to an end rather than accept the costs and consequences of its protracted character.

Is Victory Possible?

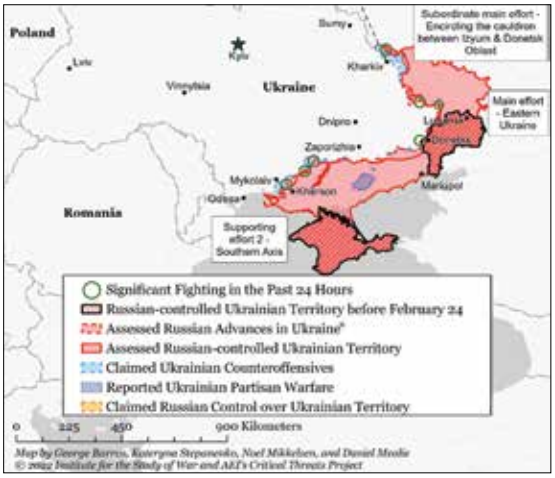
Few political or military options seem available aside from continuing the current approach, which is predicated upon massive security assistance to provide the arms the Ukrainian people need to defend themselves. Are the Alliance strategy and contributions enough? Can Ukraine build off its

initial success around Kyiv and thwart Russian advances along the eastern and southern coastlines? Some analysts believe that Kyiv could restore the status quo that existed before Russia launched its attack in February.[14]

Assessing the relative chances of Ukraine's ability to not just hold the line but regain the 20 percent of its territory from occupation raises a key question for the West. Can success be obtained with a strategy that relies so heavily on Ukraine to bear the entire human cost of combat? President Zelensky has vowed to retake all of the occupied territory. Is this feasible, and at what cost? The Ukrainians make it clear they are willing to bear that horrific cost, while also recognizing that they want to convert that battlefield success into a durable political solution. Yet, Ukraine, even with massive military transfusions, may not be able to regain its lost territory by force of arms. It would require offensives of combined arms maneuver against dug-in Russian forces for success, reversing the conditions of the prior battles and victories in the north. Ukraine has demonstrated remarkable courage, but it has also suffered grievous losses.[15] Russia is regrouping and making some gains, including in the contested Donbas. It is also learning lessons and adapting under fire.[16] It is making small advances to date, and the grinding progress has given Putin hope that he may secure all the Donbas and attrit the Ukrainian army's best forces. It is likely that Russia will be satisfied with a frozen conflict, perhaps with Moscow simply digging in along a rather extended front. It could also annex the occupied territory and try to install its own local governments. It is laying the foundation for introducing its own governance structure, Russian language signs, and issuing passports at this time. By the time this article is published, Russian could still be occupying a large chunk of Ukraine, as shown in figure 1.

A straight up military victory for either side is increasingly unlikely, but wars bring about unlikely

Figure 1. Ukraine Theater of Operations



circumstances and dramatic shifts in fortune. It helps to understand what one's policy goals are first to determine what constitutes success and to assess what is feasible.

Defining Success

It is time to question aims, assumptions, and risk. Most importantly, we need to ask if we have a "theory of victory" for this war.[17] Kyiv has now made their own hypothesis for a theory of victory much clearer. It may not be realistic but it is clear. Is the strategy and its inherent logic realistic about the complexities of the conflict? Does the military notion of victory and defeat capture the only options to resolve the conflict or at least stop the horrific violence? What trade space exists for negotiations, including territory or political constraints on both sides? Too many have deflected this issue, deferring to Kyiv. But there are Western chips on the negotiating table: sanctions relief, security guarantees, reconstruction costs, freedom of navigation, etc. Kyiv has borne the butcher's bill and thus should sit at the head of the settlement table, but it cannot write checks for U.S. taxpayers or unilaterally pass on bills for the West to pay. Moreover, the goals it sets for reclaiming territory from Russian

occupation have to be balanced against how much security assistance is available and offered.

The answer to the larger questions involves generating a broader "theory of success" for the West.[18] The U.S. representative to NATO called for a strategic defeat of the Russian Federation.[19] Those comments should mean that Putin's strategy in Ukraine is completely stopped. But that statement and Secretary Austin's widely cited comment in Poland about "weakening" Russia came across to allies in Europe as a call for regime change. The Secretary's statement simply outlined a longer-term goal, consistent with Mr. Sullivan's, to ensure that Russia cannot simply regroup and reattack Ukraine next year. Yet, this has surfaced cracks in the West about desired political outcomes and what constitutes "victory."[20] Is it about defending Ukraine, or a military defeat of Russia's armed forces, or a larger and more enduring end to tensions with Moscow? The two contests are inter-related but winning in Ukraine does not necessarily and automatically resolve the larger contest.

Opinions on U.S. objectives vary and emotive calls to embrace Ukrainian victory as the singular goal are increasingly voiced now, with little distinction from actions that best serve Washington's or the West's interests.[21] We also need to align our strategy with Ukraine's leadership. We need to come to an agreement on what constitutes success in Ukraine and on the larger challenge posed by Putin against Europe, writ large.

To reassess objectives going forward, we need to be clear-eyed about Putin's agenda. This is far more than a fight between Moscow and Kyiv. As the Atlantic Council noted, Putin seeks to dismantle the entire post–Cold War European security architecture and reestablish a Russian sphere of influence over Eastern and Central Europe.[22] He wants veto authority over how states in Europe exercise their sovereign rights of political, economic, and security association. He has designs on a weaker if not dissolved NATO. These are not objectives compatible with Europe's interests or security.

We also need to understand Putin's theory of victory, which is not hard to capture. Putin's logic is based on his willingness to pile more men and materiel, and accept higher losses, in order to simply grind down Kyiv's defense through sheer brute force. As Russian expert Keir Giles aptly put it, Moscow seeks to "keep up the pressure on Ukraine longer than Ukraine can keep up Western interest in supporting it in its fight for freedom."[23] That is Moscow's theory of victory in a war of endurance that Putin started.

U.S. Strategy: Interests and Risk

What are U.S. interests and what are our desired outcomes? According to Thomas Friedman, we must stay laser-focused on the U.S. national interest and not stray in ways that lead to exposures and risks Friedman does not want.[24] Friedman does not want the United States burdened with the obligation of a large protectorate in Eastern Europe, and is worried about the building momentum towards direct war with Russia. However, Friedman was vague about exactly what interests he sought to secure and in what priority. What exactly are the U.S. interests?

U.S. President Joe Biden understands the scale of the challenge and its character. He has spoken about how today's liberal democracies now face a test, a "great battle for freedom. A battle between democracy and autocracy. Between liberty and repression. Between a rules-based order and one governed by brute force. In this battle, we need to be clear-eyed."[25]

The Administration has been clear-eyed but also cautious. The Administration has lived up to its strategic guidance, and exploited diplomacy first, and reserved raw military force as "a last resort, not the first."[26] The Biden Administration deserves credit for conceiving of the conflict in more than military terms and for understanding that the

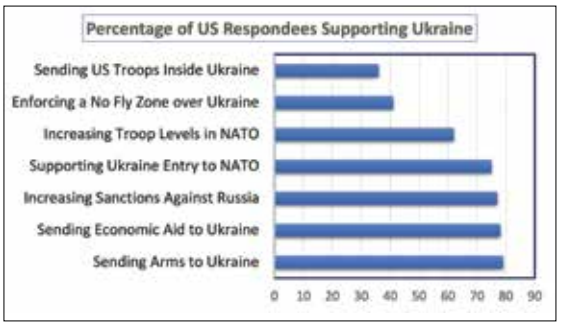
contest would be a war of wills and systemic attrition. The impulses of the "crusader reflex" in U.S. strategic culture were restrained and replaced with a prudent regard for consequences and risks.[27] The Administration's strategic discipline and statecraft is quite impressive to date, especially the coordination with allies in Europe. But we need to be equally clear-eyed when it comes to economic sanctions and diplomacy. The reassessment and accelerated military aid have bought time, but they may not guarantee Ukraine's success or secure America's strategic interests.

Russia's behavior touches on several national interests for Washington. Breaking them down, the United States has calculated that U.S. *vital* interests, particularly the long-term stability of Europe proper and a stronger NATO alliance, are the most critical. To protect these prioritized interests, Washington has elected to support Ukraine generously but restrict its support and not directly intervene with U.S. forces. It recognizes that Ukraine's sovereignty is challenged and understands the horrific suffering Russia has caused, but the Administration's geopolitical risk calculation concludes that the war against Ukraine does not require or warrant a more forceful or direct intervention.

This appears to comport with polling data collected by the Chicago Global Affairs Council, which showed large majorities of Americans support more aid, but indicate less support for taking risk in fighting.[28] However, this data was collected in late March and may not reflect the cumulative impact of inflation, gas price hikes, and other economic trends the United States is now facing.[29]

During the first Cold War, international law and norms were held as core national interests and were important enough to be enforced by the United States, often with military force. At different points in time, democracy and liberal values were national interests to be advanced, with hard power if needed. In today's context justice, human

Figure 2. (Adapted from Chicago's Global Affairs Council)



rights, international law, and norms of the rules-based order are described as important but not vital interests. Preserving our alliance and its collective security while also keeping a wary eye on the presumed more strategic competition with China appear to be the higher interests being prioritized at the highest level. These are the vital interests that seem to be operative in formulating U.S. strategy. Some may argue that the assessment is fear-based or risk averse, leading to crushing defeat for a democracy rather than a dangerous aggressor. But on balance, it arguably reflects prudence and strategic discipline based upon deliberative analysis versus idealistic imperatives or impulses.[30]

Evaluating Risk. We also need to appreciate what is at risk. Risk in national security is often not well defined.[31] Policymakers cannot merely act upon their understanding of a state's interests; they must examine risks and consequences of both actions and inaction as well. The purpose of thinking about risks is to avoid faulty logic and not allow human biases to creep in. Research suggests that intellectual rigor, self-examination, and openness to information and alternative perspectives represent an "antidote to the frivolous treatment of risk."[32]

The range of possible outcomes, desired or unintended, from the ongoing war are varied and dangerous. As the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley, defined it, "If this is left

Figure 3. Real Food Price Index 2006 to 2022

to stand … if Russia gets away with this cost-free, then so goes the so-called international order, and if that happens, then we're entering into an era of seriously increased instability."[33] This raises a question of just how to best preserve an international security order that lasted nearly 80 years without great power war. That order has been under challenge for the last decade or so.

The United States and Europe seek to reinforce the larger system indirectly with aid to Ukraine but not direct military power. The major interests in preserving the rules-based order and protecting human rights and international law may be gained in the long run vis-a-vis Moscow, but *not* at increased risk to NATO's internal cohesion or direct attack against the security of its member states.

Contagion is another risk. In this new version of Hobbes' world, we may need to revive the Cold War domino theory for autocracies. As *The Economist* noted in an editorial, "Reward Mr. Putin now, and the risk that other autocracies start launching similar invasions of weaker neighbors increases."[34] Handing a victory to Russia here is alleged to increase risk from other autocratic states with ambitious ideas about territory, including China and the South China Sea or Taiwan.

The risk of a larger war with the possible use of tactical nuclear weapons is the principal risk that captures NATO and European Union (EU) leadership attention. Whether or not Putin would use such weapons is a speculation with inordinate consequences. This may not reflect well on the large investment the United States makes on its own strategic deterrent if one concludes that it does not deter Russian behavior. Conversely, one might discount Putin's saber rattling as merely an application of Russian disinformation and reflexive control, a form of perception management that seeks to manipulate adversary decisionmaking.[35] Russia seems to have been very successful in embedding this perception into Western leaders.[36] But it *is* a potential risk.

Stability can be subjected to intensive pressures from something as simple as spikes in food prices, which can have downstream political repercussions in places like Africa and the Middle East, which are highly reliant upon agricultural imports from Ukraine and Russia. Russia seeks to exploit the chaos it has created for political gain, and its blockade of coastal ports and international waters, while "hoarding its own food exports, is a form of blackmail," according to the EU President.[37] Recent analyses on rising food prices suggest that this is a real problem, see figure 3.[38] Spiking food prices correlate with higher incidents of instability.

The conflict comes with short-range and long-term implications for the global economy. This is most evident in higher energy prices, which could seriously impact Western economies. Some European countries may be in recession as of this writing. Energy markets have seen crude oil prices almost double in the past year, and they are expected to stay high for some time.[39] Figure 4 shows the 50 percent increase in the price of a barrel of crude oil over a one-year period.[40] Making matters worse, natural gas prices also are in flux due to reduced demand, higher transportation costs, and sanctions against Russia. This will depress the global economy and possibly push key Allies in Europe into recession and political turmoil.

There are other risks as well from this grinding

war of attrition, including protracted violence and resultant humanitarian disaster. According to the United Nations, the number of people displaced globally by conflict, violence, and human rights violations has now crossed over 100 million for the first time on record, propelled by the 11 million forced to flee the war in Ukraine.[41] The second order effects—an unstable Europe, recession, disease breakouts, and food insecurity—will have major repercussions. The Russian blockade could cause a global food crisis, and possibly starve millions, and it is highly likely that many millions will face increased food insecurity.[42] There are numerous disruptions that are aggravated by Putin's aggression.[43] Figure 5, which provides an outlook on food security by country, reveals a larger problem that Ukraine's crisis merely exacerbates.[44]

The final risk concerns Ukraine's capacity over time. The Biden Administration's strategy has upsides in terms of its comprehensive and coalition-based approach. But the downside of the U.S. approach is that it takes months to implement and places a lot of faith in and burden on Kyiv and its troops to do the heavy lifting. We should recognize the limits of the Ukrainian armed forces. Ukraine is a nation under arms, counting on a combination of professionals and over-aged patriots. Although they have displayed heroic motivation and resilience, they may not have the manpower to hold their lines, absorb high-tech Western weapons, and undertake offensive operations to recover lost ground in the face of Russia's massive amount of stand-off firepower.[45] They may be able to sustain their defensive lines but may lack the combat power to push Russian forces back to pre-invasion borders. We underestimated Ukraine at the start of this war, but we still need an objective net assessment to see if the logic of our strategy produces a feasible outcome. Certainly, the long-range missiles now flowing in improve the odds.

In war, as Churchill once noted, "the terrible 'ifs' accumulate."[46] Risk accrues over time, for

Figure 4. Crude Oil Futures Prices

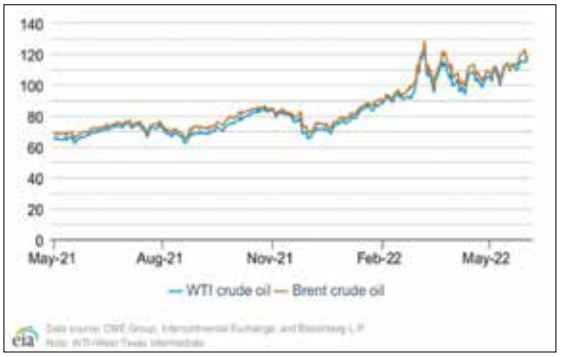


Figure 5. Food Insecurity Index by Country and Source

both sides. More risks to global security, including famine, emanate from this conflict each week. The instability Putin threatens by weaponizing wheat poses significant consequences for countries struggling to import grain and deepens food insecurity.[47] Miscalculation and escalation are constant risks. Reducing those risks and their likely implications is in our interest ultimately, and thus contesting Russian aggression is a strategic necessity.

Strategic Courses of Action

Having explored the contours of the strategic interaction, what courses of action does the West have given what we have observed and learned from 150 days of war? Can diplomacy resolve this crisis or should overt military support from NATO be

deployed inside Ukraine? This next section evaluates diplomatic and military options, and concludes with a discussion about merging them into a more comprehensive strategy focused on compelling an end to the war.

Diplomacy. Professor Barry Posen feels that a Ukrainian military victory is unlikely and that a political and diplomatic solution should be pursued. He argues:

> *In Ukraine, the Russian army is likely strong enough to defend most of its gains. In Russia, the economy is autonomous enough and Putin's grip tight enough that the president cannot be coerced into giving up those gains, either. The most likely outcome of the current strategy, then, is not a Ukrainian triumph but a long, bloody, and ultimately indecisive war.*[48]

Posen is rightfully concerned that a protracted and vicious conflict would extend the loss of human life and increase the damage to Europe's economy and is also wary of escalation—including the potential use of nuclear weapons. But key European leaders, including French President Emmanuel Macron and Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio, have previously advocated diplomatic solutions to the war.[49] They hoped that Putin would rationally assess his diminished chances of a battlefield success, as Posen suggests, and seek to get out from under the massive sanctions package levied on Moscow. But Putin did not act according to their analysis and it is not clear why Posen assumes that rationality prevails in the Kremlin. Putin is clearly not "a first-class strategist who should be feared and respected."[50] Putin's judgment is shaped by imperial illusions as shown by Jeffrey Mankoff in his *Empires of Eurasia*.[51] The imperial histories of Europe cast a long shadow even today, with Russia seemingly trapped between delusions of power and vulnerability. As William Burns, the U.S. director of the CIA put it, President Putin is "stewing in a very combustible combination of grievance and ambition and insecurity."[52] The American intelligence community finds Putin more unpredictable than ever.[53]

Would some sort of negotiated settlement with a Russian withdrawal from selected areas be feasible? There are calls for negotiations to this conflict but little common ground on what the deal might look like.[54] The Italian proposal, a cease fire and some concessions to promote a peace conference, is thin on actual compromises. Both sides have flatly rejected it.

Given the dynamics on the battlefield, both sides will have problems compromising and dealing with their domestic politics. Putin obviously has fewer concerns about his domestic base, but his actions to tightly control the information space and dissent inside Russia suggests he knows that his authority and position can be challenged. He needs to deliver some benefit for the horrible costs his war has imposed on his economy and his devastated military.

President Zelensky is strong politically but also has constraints. In a recent survey, 82 percent of Ukrainians polled stated that territory should not be given to Russia in trade for peace and "under any circumstances, even if this prolongs the war."[55] Just 10 percent of Ukrainians who participated in the poll indicated that they were willing to cede land now to gain peace. Given this, Zelensky cannot politically accept an agreement that locks in Russia's current position inside Ukraine, or survive politically if he goes against the majority of his electorate.[56]

At this point, neither side seems prepared to negotiate. Russia is making incremental progress in Donbas and holds a lot of terrain. The Ukrainians have mobilized and shifted to securing their eastern and southern regions, and expect greater success as they absorb advanced weaponry. A settlement is not in sight and a premature deal would alleviate

the horrible suffering inside Ukraine only temporarily. Russia may regroup over time and threaten Ukraine's freedom and peace in Europe yet again. At this point there seems to be no available mechanism or motivation to implement a political solution or even a cease fire. The latter may be palliative, stopping the massive violence, but it is certainly not conducive to long-term stability if it simply locks in the current battle lines and tensions—and with Putin holding three times more ground than before the war.

More Direct Military Force. If a political solution is not likely, are there military options that require consideration? Some analysists have argued that NATO should call Russia's bluff and use armed force for specific and narrowly defined humanitarian purposes, including no-fly zones or escorted naval convoys to enforce freedom of the sea. Some have called for more forceful options including some sort of U.N. Peace Enforcement Operation.[57]

More recently, advocates have called for a humanitarian mission to keep grain flowing to and from Odessa.[58] Others seek to use a NATO force to sustain trade going into and out of Ukraine's ports, which is possible but depends on Turkey and other Allied nations supporting the maritime force that ensures that Ukraine is not blockaded.[59] The Russian Navy suffered a setback in the Black Sea when the flagship cruiser *Moskva* was sunk but it still has the strongest naval force in those waters.[60]

Of course, using force invariably comes with potential risk of escalation. The authority and appetite for intervention in Ukraine, whether no fly zones or humanitarian escorts, are limited. Direct intervention has little appeal inside the Alliance, especially from states that have underfunded defense for years. Most observers feel that direct and overt intervention, with either planes in the air over Ukraine or troops on the ground, is a step too far. There is a risk that Putin would simply escalate further and possibly attack a NATO ally. Putin and his Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov never fail to condition Western policy makers with less than subtle commentary about their tactical nukes. Numerous Western leaders have cited fears of World War III and the chance of global war repeatedly since the start of the war.[61]

While there are few credible advocates for more direct intervention, the risk calculus needs recalibration due to Russian losses and clear dysfunction. Putin has little military force left to deploy; his army is starting to field legacy and junkyard quality systems.[62] He may attempt to escalate the conflict in response, inside of Ukraine or beyond in NATO countries, if the West was to inject any overt form of military force. To do so would risk pitting what is left of his diminished combat power against a much larger NATO force. A former U.S. policy official assessed those odds in stark terms, "If the Ukrainian military can fight the Russian military to a standstill, imagine what it would look like if the United States and its allies joined?"[63] There is ample evidence to assess how a contest of arms between Russia and a professional combined arms force will play out, and it is likely that NATO's airpower would make the Alliance far more effective than combat operations in Ukraine to date. The chances of Ukraine regaining all its lost ground may be slim, but it is difficult to imagine that either the United States or NATO would not prevail due to numerous qualitative advantages as well as evident and enduring Russian deficiencies. It is not hubris to conclude that U.S. forces would be effective in Ukraine, while also recognizing that Russia's armed forces have been learning from their experience.[64]

However, there are members in NATO not willing or able to provide combat forces for such an operation. An intervention could be a coalition of the willing, but activating that coalition may impose costs or risks to NATO members. Nor does the Alliance want to accept the risk of an attack on an Alliance member that would trigger a debate

Volodymyr Zelensky reviews military plans during working visit to Zaporizhzhia region and Donbas, June 5, 2022 (President of Ukraine)

on Article 5 obligations. A rupture in the Alliance hands a win to Putin. Moreover, geographic access for large ground forces into Ukraine is not easily resolved without major diplomatic and logistical challenges. The same is true for keeping the Black Sea open and preserving freedom of navigation in international waters. Putin's shift to the south made the Black Sea a new front in the campaign, one where NATO has fewer options in using force to break the blockade due to both geography and international law.[65]

Contrary to claims, realistic strategic gains from the use of force by the West are possible.[66] Yet, the uncertain dynamics of escalation and shared risks must be factored in. Gains may be achieved but possibly at the cost of even larger vital interests to Washington and NATO. At this point, defined NATO and U.S. goals are being gained and vital interests preserved without taking that risk. President Biden has made it clear that there are limits to U.S. goals and support, and he defined what his government will not do in Ukraine.[67] This includes placing combat forces inside Ukraine, which explains the current approach of unprecedented sanctions, intelligence sharing, and robust security assistance. Thus, our theory of success is tied to Kyiv's success and its theory of victory, which requires substantial fighting and far more additional military aid.[68]

Comprehensive Compellence. The pure diplomacy and military options could be combined in order to shorten the cruelty and compress the timelines of the conflict. This could be achieved by increasing political, economic, and military pressure with an approach that seeks an end to the fighting and the reestablishment of Ukrainian territorial integrity including the withdrawal of Russian forces from Ukraine. This approach—comprehensive

compellence—uses all elements of statecraft to pressure Putin to stop his aggression.[69] Having failed to deter him last February, we now seek to compel or induce Putin to stop his massive and brutal incursion. The elements of this approach are integrated and include political, military, and economic costs together to increase pressure and urgency. NATO's security assistance should focus on providing a more than adequate amount of long-range fires and sufficient loitering munitions with anti-radiation sensors to degrade electronic warfare capabilities. Improved air defense assets to deflect the Russians from employing precision missile attacks on key infrastructure are also needed.[70]

The EU initiative for a stronger oil embargo and the several increments of advanced rocket systems being sent indicate that adding more pressure is possible. For economic pressure, there is discussion about using Russia's frozen hard currency reserves to pay for reconstruction, albeit there are legal considerations to address.[71] Rather than seize the reserves, it may be more palatable for governments to transfer those funds to a body such as the International Criminal Court or the EU Court where a fund grandmaster will deal with claims from Kyiv. Even that funding will only address half of Ukraine's damages and recovery. The idea that Moscow will pay for its wanton destruction will help compel Putin to stop the terrorism he is sponsoring against Ukraine's civilian population. The announcement from European leaders to endorse Ukraine for candidate status in the EU is a productive element of what could be a comprehensive effort targeting the long-term viability of Ukraine and signaling to Moscow that a sphere of influence is not acceptable.[72]

Comprehensive compellence need not be all stick and no carrot. Carrots or diplomatic inducements could be part of a concerted approach towards Putin.[73] The problem is providing incentives that do not signal capitulation of any core interests. But surely there are various travel sanctions and property seizures from Russian oligarchs that may be negotiated as well as potential security guarantees for Russia and Ukraine to initiate discussions. Future energy options can be offered as an incentive later, as Putin may find that subordination to China is unappealing, especially as evidence grows that Russia's status as an energy superpower and strategic partner is declining appreciably.[74] Restrictions on Russian cultural and sporting events could be rescinded, as we are not at war with Russia's culture, just the regime. Zelensky has openly discussed a neutral status for his nation, and at one time acknowledged that territorial concessions were possible. Those concessions may no longer be acceptable to Kyiv, given the dynamics of the war and Ukrainian losses.

In addition, to further create a sense of urgency, the West can announce a series of energy levels it would allocate for Russian energy exports, in declining packages over the next few months. The longer Putin waits, the lower the future financial benefit from Russia's energy sales (and investment and technology) towards Russia's future options. The EU still has more powerful sticks that it could employ, including maritime tanker embargos.[75]

But diplomacy and a political solution will require painful compromise on both sides. These are not "face-saving" gestures or "off ramps" but a pragmatic reality for ending this conflict. Judging from President Joe Biden's *The New York Times* article, the need for a political solution is clearly recognized. The measured strategy implementing that policy right now should be strengthened and made more urgent until Mr. Putin realizes he cannot outlast the West and that he has to settle soon or accept "frozen sanctions" and other penalties for his frozen war.

Being pragmatic via comprehensive compellence does not mean a "sell-out" of Ukraine. Quite the contrary, it is simply a recognition of reality and the need to resolve a conflict that has

serious repercussions beyond Ukraine. The risk to European stability should help clarify NATO's goals and frame an endgame for the Alliance.[76]

Assessment

So, diplomacy offers few options, and in the military contest, we currently have a draw. But it appears that Ukraine is and will continue to expand its military power, while Russia's deteriorates. Lawrence Freedman is surely right that the systemic advantages of the West favor Ukraine, and that time favors Ukraine at the operational level of war.[77] Ukraine has asymmetric advantage in motivation and morale which counts for a lot. Clearly, given the country's existential challenge, it can mobilize more manpower despite the significant population differential (Russia's 145 million to Ukraine's 44 million). Moreover, what combat power Moscow can muster is increasingly outdated and may not be easily reconstituted.[78] This leaves the current strategy in play for now.

To secure its interests, the West will have to preserve its cohesion and support to Kyiv. Putin should *not* be allowed to dictate Moscow's control over its "near abroad," as that does not advance a stable order or sustain a free and independent Europe with NATO as a crucial element of its security. Russia is not going away, but neither can it be allowed to operate against its neighbors the way it has for the last decade.[79] While the decline of Russia is very clearly not a myth, Moscow will remain a persistent problem.[80] Over the mid-range it will not recover from the losses it has suffered, but Putin will remain reckless and retain unconventional options.

Kyiv's endurance is predicated upon an assumption of sizable external support, and here time may not favor the defenders of freedom. That assumption will be sorely tested by economic conditions including inflation, recession, energy prices, and empty food shelves in several regions. As long as it receives the support from the West, Ukraine can continue to thwart Russian advances. Sustainment of the West's support will be key to victory.[81] This could test the West's collective resolve to give Ukraine continued economic and military aid. Even Zelensky understands the potential for lagging support and the growing fatigue in the West.[82]

Putin is trying to stretch out the clock in the hopes that the Western public will tire of cold homes and pricey gas for their cars. Ukraine is operating off a different timeline as it seeks to push back Russian forces.[83] Putin's Army is likely to be destroyed waiting for the democracies and NATO to blink. At present, support for high levels of aid to Ukraine enjoys a considerable amount of support from the U.S. Congress. Polls suggest the American public is supportive even in the face of strain on the domestic economy. The Administration must work to sustain that support as it will be key to winning this war of endurance.

Russia has much larger problems in both material and manpower.[84] It faces severe challenges in a war of attrition, including simply maintaining its current force levels. It is evidently facing a manpower shortage, calling in prisoners, mercenaries, and retired veterans. Russia's forces are best described as exhausted and hollowed out.[85] If one takes a careful stock of the Russian military, it is possible to assess a growing need to withdraw their forces in Ukraine, and a long effort to reconstitute a ready force able to defend their current borders. Reconstituting the current force, including tanks, aircraft, precision munitions, and advanced communications gear is going to take 5 to 7 years. Substantial support from China and Iran may accelerate that effort a few years. But external support will not alleviate persistent deficiencies in manpower and leader development.

At this time (July 2022), the West should be less patient and push hard for an endgame to establish the just peace that should be its ultimate objective.[86] This comprehensive solution, mixing sticks

and carrots, should be offered as soon as possible to reduce the risks and the larger costs of this crisis. But not at the expense of Ukraine's prosperity and security. To advance that goal, the strategic discipline demonstrated by NATO to date must be continued but the pressure levied against Putin needs to be increased. One should not be cavalier about escalation when dealing with an unpredictable and mistake-prone opponent, but the West can continue to pressure Putin.[87]

Conclusion

Ukraine's military success against Putin's aggression is a necessary step in the larger contest with Moscow. The bigger picture requires us to implant in Putin's mind an acute appreciation for the West's capacity and willingness to defend the existing order. Moscow must be made to recognize it will not gain anything from its vicious campaign, and come to realize that its interests are being undermined by its own actions. Ultimately, Russia will have to realize that it will continue losing the larger contest with Western democracies. PRISM

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Napoleon Crossing the Alps by Jacques-Louis David, 1805 (Chateau de Malmaison)

Great Power Competition
Understanding the Role of Leaders in French Joint Forces

By Nicolas Delbart and Julien Riera

Engaged in counterinsurgency or counterterrorism operations for several decades, Western forces are now faced with the resurgence of Great Power competition (GPC) and the specter of high-intensity warfare. This type of conflict, characterized by the clash of symmetrical military powers confronting each other with high-tech capabilities in a wide range of domains and fields of action, marks the return of potentially high levels of attrition and the end of the relative operational and strategic comfort known during past asymmetric conflicts. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in early 2022 is an excellent example of this, demonstrating the disinhibition of a part of the stage with respect to international law.

Is France, seen as a balanced power, ready for this return to GPC? While it has never stopped considering this type of scenario and maintained all its military capabilities within a complete defense system, what about the preparation of its military leaders? Will future asymmetrical counterinsurgency conflicts and high-intensity multi-domain operations require the same set of skills?

Today, the personnel development of senior officers called upon to serve in a joint environment is based on training and experience acquired during highly standardized careers answering the challenge of mastering high technological weapons and the integration of their effect. However, such development raises the question of how best to adapt it to future conflicts.

Beyond the generational approach, this article proposes adaptations to career management for officers born after 9/11 to give them the necessary skills to meet the challenges of foreseeable conflicts in 2030–2040.

The strategic environment of the 2020s is characterized by both the resurgence of great powers and the appearance of new fields of confrontation[1] in every domain of human activity, in turn allowing for bypassing strategies or indirect approaches from both state and nonstate actors. These strategies combine military and nonmilitary, direct and indirect, regular and irregular courses of action, often difficult to attribute, but always designed to remain below the estimated threshold of retaliation or open conflict. Nevertheless,

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this competition continuum exacerbates tensions between powers and increases the likelihood of misunderstandings and, consequently, escalation to open conflict.

A scenario of direct state predation is also possible in areas on the periphery of French zones of interest, leading to a conflict with an equivalent or greater power.

With high-intensity warfare becoming increasingly likely, as demonstrated by the early 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, and after decades of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism efforts, Western forces, and particularly French Forces, need to shift their focus to the return of GPC.

Adapting to this kind of warfare will require concerted effort across the entire spectrum of capability development. This article will not be addressing the whole DOTMLPFI (doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership, personnel, facilities, and interoperability) capability development process to face high-intensity warfare, but rather the Leadership component alone; and more specifically, how best to prepare French military commanders for leadership roles in this specific context.

Many questions present themselves here. For example, is there really anything "new" in terms of warfare in this resurgence of GPC? What is the role of military leaders in this kind of competition? How do we better prepare them to meet the challenges posed by 21st century warfare? These are the questions we will try to answer here, addressing, in particular, the current state of development of officers' skills based on education and experience acquired along standardized career paths, seeking to respond to the dual challenge of mastering increasingly complex technologies while being able to integrate effects within coherent multi-domain approaches. While French forces achieve their goals effectively today, owing to effective capabilities including skilled leadership, certain adjustments could be made to better adapt future leaders' skills to upcoming challenges.

We will start with a consideration of how France understands GPC today and how it expects it to evolve. Doing so allows us to identify and analyze specific leadership issues and their consequences on superior officers' personnel development while focusing on how to optimize career management within the context of 21st century warfare.

French Forces Facing 21st Century Challenges

To better understand what is at stake for military leadership, we should start by considering what the coming decades are likely to be comprised of regarding employment scenarios, basing this study on current conflict analysis, trends, and anticipated outcomes.

2021 French Strategic Vision

In October 2021, French Chief of Defense Thierry Burkhard issued a strategic vision responding to the challenges seen on the world stage. It describes the geostrategic situation as "marked by the hardening of competition between the great powers, questioning of multilateralism and law, rearmament and disinhibition of regional powers, and multiplication of potential crisis."

It also establishes the French joint forces' ambition to respond to a continuum of engagement scenarios, with three potential steps from competition to contestation to dispute, with an escalation potential all the way up to what French doctrine refers to as high-intensity wars. The latter are characterized by a near-peer conflict engaging the full spectrum of their forces in a multi-domain, violent engagement. Such conflicts are also expected to result in high levels of attrition on both sides.

This strategic vision also clearly establishes the multi-domain character of power confrontations, with the competition continuum manifested in multiple fields: the typical sea, air, land, cyber, space,

and info sphere, as well as legal, economic, and network domains.

French forces have a role to play along this entire spectrum, and in particular: by providing strategic anticipation capabilities shedding light on the capabilities and ambitions of actors on the world stage; by reaffirming France's determination through prepositioning forces or international exercises; and finally, by proposing workable options at the political level.

When a competitor decides to transgress the rules, the competition turns into a challenge; and to avoid the risk of a fait accompli, the opposing forces must reaffirm national positions to facilitate a return to the international legal framework while controlling the level of violence.

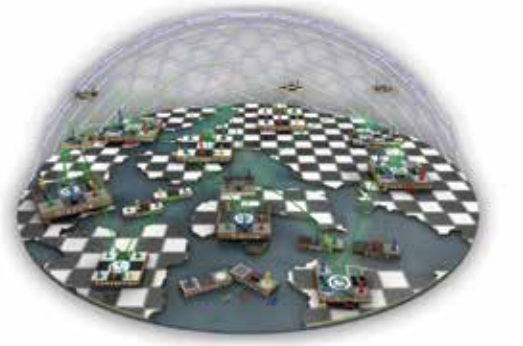
Finally, when actors, deciding to push their advantage and persisting in using force to achieve their objectives, provoke a reaction of at least equivalent level, confrontation occurs. This can occur in one or more theaters or domains, depending on the capabilities of the protagonists. In this context, forces must be prepared to deal with different types of conflict, depending on the capabilities of the adversary, up to and including high-intensity warfare.

This three-step (competition, confrontation, and dispute) approach to power competition highlights the importance of strategic anticipation in better understanding all actors' agendas and the different escalation thresholds.

This strategic vision responds to what we have seen over the past decade as well as what we can anticipate coming. Further, it states the realistic level of ambition that France can achieve on its own and the interoperability imperative to meet expected future challenges, as these will likely require a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or European Union (EU)-wide response.

Above all, the ability to operate within a coalition depends on effective interoperability across the entire spectrum of capability building. The question

Figure 1.



French Chief of Defense Burkhard's vision of the world chessboard: network-centric, interconnected and comprised of competition, confrontation, or dispute with France's competitors.

of equipment selection and its interoperability, regularly put forward in the context of strengthening European defense, is nothing without doctrinal and procedural interoperability.

Thus, the interoperability required to consider conducting armed conflicts within an ad hoc coalition, with no preexisting normative framework, requires the establishment of continuous bilateral military relationships with countries sharing similar interests in order to create conditions prerequisite to the success of a combined operation.

Finally, relying on coalitions for multi-domain operations implies being able to switch from joint-combined coordination to all-domain integration. As described in French doctrine, all-domain integration starts with the definition of common goals to allow for a fully integrated maneuver from all components in all domains, as opposed to the former joint-combined operation planning process focused more on synchronizing individual maneuvers within an overall scheme. It requires the ability to lead, to provide command and control (C2) and, above all, bring coherence to the effort to attain all national and mutual objectives.

Operation Hamilton (2018): An Example of an Ad Hoc Coalition. On April 7, 2018, after multiple

warnings and United Nations (UN) statements, Bashar al-Assad's Syrian regime used chemical weapons against its own population at Douma, crossing President Emmanuel Macron's stated red line. Within a week, a French-led joint-combined operation struck three chemical sites in retaliation. This simultaneous strike was comprised of more than one hundred munitions, mostly cruise missiles launched from French, U.S., and British aircraft and ships, despite the heavy Syrian air defense backed by a strong Russian presence.[2]

During this operation, French, U.S., and British forces not only achieved the political goal of striking Syrian chemical facilities, but they also demonstrated the ability to be immediately interoperable in a complex environment outside of any preexisting framework, each nation operating under its own authority yet within an operation led by one of the nations.

Such a unique configuration allows for swift responses but relies heavily on shared knowledge and interoperability to overcome the challenges of such a compressed timeline. This was made possible by the preexisting bilateral relationships between the countries' armed forces and the resultant overall interoperability.[3]

French strategic vision considers GPC as a potential three-step continuum of escalation from competition all the way up to high-intensity warfare. For political and force generation reasons, French 21st century high-intensity operations will very likely be conducted as part of a coalition. Military leaders' ability to operate in a combined joint interagency environment as well as preexisting bilateral relationships with potential allies will foster immediate interoperability to achieve both national and coalition military objectives.

Russian Strategy as an Example of Multi-Domain Escalation

At the time this article is being written, the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine has been launched but all the findings are not yet available; therefore, we will study previous conflicts, particularly telling in the matter: the 2008 war between Russia and Georgia as well as that in 2014 between Ukraine and Russia are interesting to analyze through General Burkhard's strategic vision.

In both cases, a former Soviet republic has experienced a revolution leading to the arrival in power of leaders turned toward the West and, thus, perceived by Russia as competitors rather than long-standing allies. These revolutions are referred to as the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and the Rose Revolution in Georgia. This political shift triggered a strong reaction, as keeping Western interference in the former Soviet sphere to a minimum has been one of the key objectives of Russia's strategy throughout the past decades.[4]

In both cases, Russia started with indirect approaches to support pro-Russia minorities and encourage their independence and the emergence of strong protest movements through indirect or information warfare approaches. This hard contestation, with loyalist forces fighting local militias, allowed Russia to bypass the international legal framework by citing the principle of self-determination of peoples to justify military intervention in the much-coveted territory.

Once again, the intervention was indirect and multi-domain, with a cyber-component shaping the environment for a swift campaign on the ground.

In August 2008, as Georgian militias were fighting for independence in south Ossetia, a large-scale cyber-attack aimed at government information systems and websites as well as private companies' websites was launched using denial of service tactics. Banking services were disrupted, causing massive ATM shutdowns, and leading to public

demonstrations. Forty-eight hours later, Russian troops had crossed the border and occupied 20 percent of Georgian territory.

Since then, the United States, Great Britain, France, and Georgia have officially attributed the attack to Russian agencies. Further, it is assumed the attack was part of a shaping or preparatory phase intended to disrupt the country and compromise Georgia's ability to react to the impending invasion.

This scenario is consistent with the Russian doctrine of "noncontact war,"[5] a strategy that aims to outpace enemy forces by relying on robust intelligence and C2 capabilities (C4ISR, or computerized command, control, communications, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance) supporting rapid decision-making loops and reaction forces capable of quickly implementing multi-domain engagement scenarios in regional conflicts before the enemy is even capable of mobilizing its own forces.

The 2021 French strategic vision of a three-step escalation is then particularly consistent with what is described in the Russian doctrine, and also what has been observed over the last decade in the European theater.

We can also note that this kind of scenario is likely to be repeated as Russia intends to counter and defeat any Western ambitions in its areas of interest, as stated in the new National Security Strategy signed by President Vladimir Putin on July 2, 2021.[6]

Future Warfare

Anticipating future warfare is an inherently difficult exercise. It relies on analyzing potential competitors' strategic visions and "daring to think differently, believing in the impossible, imagining the unimaginable and questioning what, only yesterday, had seemed immutable," as Florence Parly, the French Minister of Defense, said during her opening speech to the "Red Team" attached to the French Defense Innovation Agency and charged with analyzing long-term trends, opportunities, and risks via imagining possible future engagement scenarios. This type of work is, however, imperative in order to better identify the characteristics of future engagements and thus better train officers for the forms of conflict they will be facing when they assume greater responsibility.

Among other agencies, the Red Team's mission is to foresee those threats that could directly endanger France and its interests. In particular, it must anticipate the future technological, economic, societal, and environmental elements that could generate or prove central to potential conflicts on a horizon of 2030–2060. The Red Team is a singular initiative built on principles of openness and it adopts a multicultural approach that is complementary to current predictive methods. Its mission is to gather both warfare experts and science fiction writers to develop realistic, innovative, and predictive scenarios. The objective of the team's work, which is partly classified, is to foster strategic, operational, technological, and organizational reflections within and even beyond the armed forces.

Its conclusions highlight what could be the warfare of the next decades[7] and anticipates the growing impact of combined factors such as climate change, terrorism, technology, artificial intelligence, spacecraft, psychological operations, and others, all within a hyper-connected environment and with massive asymmetry based on access to resources and energy. With the rising cost of traditional warfare opposing forces in a symmetric, domain-to-domain direct conflict, the Red Team also imagines bypassing such strategies, similar to what we can currently observe but attacking what they identify as being the Western societies' centers of gravity: the sense of security across all domains and the ability to operate networks.

Another way of anticipating future warfare is to study what potential competitors are investing in, the typical duration of a procurement program being 5 to 10 years long. This can provide a good

indication of the capability of future competitors and, therefore, what kind of warfare to expect. A 2020 study sponsored by the U.S. Air Force[8] cross-examined key trends and investment priorities to give a refined definition of what future warfare may look like. It describes four types of potential war, from counterterrorism to what they call "high-end war," with overall findings very similar to the future warfare described above.

Recent anticipation studies highlight the same paradigm that has been observed in recent decades: the importance of mastering advanced technologies and combining their effects without sacrificing mass, while also remaining open to circumvention strategies requiring strategic anticipation and understanding.

What Are the Stakes for Future Leaders?

Now that we have seen what the French strategic vision entails for this decade and the coming ones, we can focus on its impact on leadership. How do we best lead 21st century operations? What are the stakes for future leaders? What challenges will they be facing? We will narrow this study down to high-ranking officers serving in a joint-combined environment.

Mastering High Technology and Combination of Effects

Multi-domain operations, wherein technological developments require ever-greater expertise, raise the question of prioritizing mastery of a particular environment or domain compared to a more generalized ability of officers to integrate effects within a multi-domain operation.

Indeed, French officers called to serve on operational or strategic staffs all come from a specialty or particular branch (fighter pilot, infantry officer, etc.). As each specialty is increasingly demanding, time spent mastering it comes at the expense of learning to integrate its effects with other specialties.

The training of a French Air Force pilot, for example, requires 5 years from induction to unit entry and an additional 5 years to achieve maximum operational qualifications over a maximal 15 years period spent at the squadron level, including the commanding positions. This leaves very little time to make that training pay off before having to employ the officers at the joint level to integrate effects within multi-domain maneuver. The French War College is this pivot point where officers learn how to integrate effects at the joint level.

Having more complex tools to employ will probably stretch this initial training, questioning its affordability—the time spent within the forces working as an operator being set in stone—to mitigate the risk of delaying joint, multi-domain training, and reducing its effectiveness.

Future technological developments must, therefore, take into account the imperative of simplicity of acquisition, at the risk of reducing the capacity of individuals to have time to integrate them. Another solution would be to select profiles dedicated to tactical level employment expertise and others to integration at the joint level. This solution is not considered realistic, as understanding combat at the lowest level is one of the bases of military planning.

The risk of a weakness in the integration of effects can be observed in the early 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, where, according to the first studies,[9] the weaknesses of joint coordination prohibited the use of aviation in support of the ground campaign, to the detriment of the effectiveness of the overall operation, which is de facto slower and vulnerable to Ukrainian resistance.

One of the first stakes for future military leaders seems then to lie in the ability to integrate effects and technologies—increasingly complex yet with less time allotted to mastering them—to achieve effective multi-domain operation and impose a favorable force

ratio in a chosen domain of the campaign.

Resilience to Ambiguity

Ambiguity is also among the most prevalent characteristics of conflicts described in General Burkhard's strategic vision. Indeed, the fields of confrontation, multiple and interconnected in a continuum of competition, contestation, and confrontation, are by nature less legible than traditional physical conflicts.

The outbreak of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine is symptomatic: if France and the United States had understood early the Russian will to take over Ukraine, they might have read impending events differently, as General Burkhard told the press on March 6, 2022: "The Americans said that the Russians would attack, and they were right. Our services rather thought that the conquest of Ukraine would have a monstrous cost and that the Russians had other options."

Not only must military leaders be correct in understanding an actors' will and motivation, they must also foresee, or at least consider, all options an enemy may use to achieve their ends. Key here is being able to adapt to ambiguity so as to anticipate enemy strategy and, thus, counter it more effectively. It takes strategic empathy to understand an actor's underlying constraints and motivations and read a complex situation with an eye toward anticipating its development.

On the other hand, while ambiguity complicates the assessment of any situation requiring anticipation, it is nonetheless a fundamental characteristic of military strategy. Maintaining doubt about our own intentions and intervention thresholds, meanwhile, is the basis of deterrence. We must be sufficiently credible that the adversary is persuaded of our reaction, yet at the same time create sufficient doubt about the threshold of our interests that the level of contestation is kept low.

This "fog of war" is an ancient notion, indeed; nevertheless, our reading of events is rendered even more difficult by factors that we can expect to find in the decades to come.

Attribution Paradox: Use of Proxies, Concealment. State or nonstate actors sometimes use proxies and prefer indirect approaches to generate effects without revealing their real intentions on the world stage. The examples of the migration crisis between Belarus and Poland in November 2021 or the Russian use of security companies like Wagner in the Sahel are particularly telling in this regard. Utilizing proxies makes it more difficult to tie events to the initial sponsor or perpetrator, increasing ambiguity and in some events undermining the legal basis for taking further action.

Some domains, like cyberspace or outer space, are by nature difficult areas to map and monitor. As a result, these realms provide enough concealment that an actor can apply effects with reasonable certainty that they cannot be imputed to them.

Information Operations. Another characteristic of multi-domain operations lies in the extended use of influence operations. While their existence is not new, their scale and impact have been increased by the massive deployment of digital tools and social networks, all potential vectors of informational or influence campaigns. The Red Team also underlines the tenfold effects of an information campaign in the context of future ultra-connectivity, driven by technological evolutions and by the connectivity imperative linked to the acceleration of the decision-making loop in times of crisis. Indeed, C2 structure will be more data- and network-centric than ever, presenting new structural vulnerabilities.

The existence of false information, whether intentionally disseminated or not, can be classified into three main categories: misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information, all potential parts of global operations designed to alter opinions within the public, military, or political spheres; create confusion; and/or shift perceptions.

Beyond this intentionally simplistic approach,

Figure 2. Journalism, 'Fake News' & Disinformation. UNESCO. 2018

recent studies[10] highlight that the whole cognitive process can be altered by information operations, putting the entire decision-making process under attack. While the military is used to fact-checking, intelligence rating, and cross-examination, and therefore less vulnerable to information operations, the impact of these operations can be significant on the population or at the political level, two fields of perception that can easily compromise military operations.

As mentioned above, we can anticipate that hyper-connected citizens and/or servicemembers will be more susceptible to influence via information operations, as "messaging" will be delivered more and more directly to individuals.

This ambiguous nature of future warfare calls for an even greater level of empathy from military leadership at the strategic level with the goal of better understanding all actors in a conflict, including their options and potential courses of action deployable across multiple domains becoming increasingly harder to read.

This strategic empathy will be all the more difficult to achieve as the architecture of C2 structures, centered on networks, could distance military leaders from the physical reality of operations.

Preparing Social and Political Leadership: National Security

Preparing for Attrition. High-intensity warfare, characterized by a full power confrontation of near-peer forces, would certainly drive higher attrition rates among competitors compared to what France has known in recent decades. Quantitative and qualitative symmetry can only lead to heavier losses. From this perspective, France has not known any near-peer competition since the Cold War. In fact, France has always had the technological or numerical advantage in every conflict it has committed to over the past decades.

Looking at a typical air campaign shows what attrition looks like in a near-peer conflict.

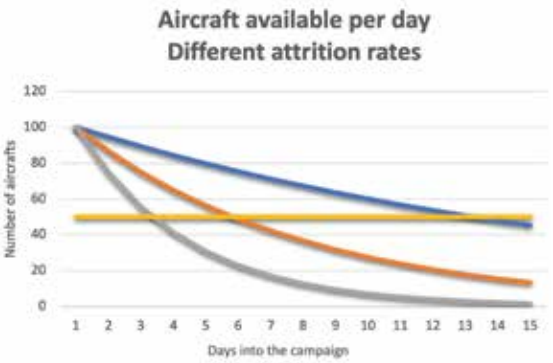
Figure 3, assuming an initial fleet of 100 aircraft and 2.8 sorties per aircraft per day, shows how many aircraft are available for each successive day of the campaign for three different attrition rates (2 percent, 5 percent, and 10 percent), with maintenance not factoring into the equation. With a 5 percent attrition rate, a competitor has lost half its fleet after 5 days of a campaign.

During the Falklands War, one of the last near-peer conflicts involving modern air assets, the attrition rate was 11 percent per sortie for Argentinian fighter jets, versus 2.1 percent for the British Harriers. After two weeks of conflict, out of 240 aircraft on day 1 of the campaign, Argentina had lost more than 100 aircraft and most of its fighting potential.

High-intensity warfare is clearly also a matter of military capabilities and their sustainability over time. The cost and time required for industrial production of modern equipment raise the question of their replacement in a high-attrition scenario. With a defense system like France's, built over multiyear equipment plans to afford expensive high technological program, the question of losing them in a few days bears consideration.

General Burkhard's strategic vision considers

Figure 3.



that bypassing strategies imposing a favorable force ratio in a chosen domain can answer some scenarios described in its three steps competition model; however, the strategic and political levels need to be ready to commit to upper-end outcomes and the potential loss of personnel and equipment on a major scale.

While public opinion can play a major role in how the outcome of a conflict is perceived, it can also influence political objectives and the determination to achieve a goal. In a context where a higher attrition rate is to be expected, one of the challenges of the military will be to factor public opinion into the global acceptance of war.

France has already experienced something similar in Afghanistan when, on August 18, 2008, a mechanized infantry platoon fell into a Taliban ambush while performing a foot reconnaissance of Sper Kunday pass, in the Uzbin Valley. After 20 hours of intense combat, involving up to 300 reinforcement troops, F-15 and A-10 fighter jets, Apache and Kiowa attack helicopters and French Caracal utility helicopters, the platoon finally escaped. Of 31 soldiers, 10 were killed.

This tragic event had a very strong effect on both French public opinion and the political class, despite the fact that France had been engaged in Afghanistan since 2001,[11] up to the point of calling into question France's very involvement in the post-9/11 war on terror. Eighteen years prior, France had committed to Operation *Desert Storm*, an operation which planned on a 4 percent attrition rate across its joint force, that is, up to 20,000 casualties. For the 12,500 French servicemembers involved in *Desert Storm*, the medical command had 3,000 body bags ready,[12] emphasizing just how high the potential expected attrition was. Having a response ready for this possible level of attrition also shows a will to commit at the strategic and political level. These examples highlight how the French political class and public opinion have shifted regarding attrition and how the question of a possible return of higher attrition needs to be addressed. Future commanding officers will indeed play a major role in the overall response to potentially high attrition rates.

We will address, in Personnel Development (below), how their leadership is key in preparing the force for this kind of scenario, thus ensuring forces' morale and will in carrying the fight all the way up to high-intensity conflict.

Regarding the role of officers within society, Bénédicte Chéron, in her book *Le soldat méconnu*,[13] explains the correlation between the distance from the homeland of a theater of operations and public acceptance of a conflict: The further away a country's war, the more accepting its public will be; yet, any resultant losses will be less easily understood and less readily accepted.

Future military leaders will have to be ready to take into account significant levels of attrition, either accepting them at the cost of sustaining a costly and not easily replaced defense tool or circumventing them through hybrid and multi-domain strategies. Their role will also be to participate in preparing forces, anticipating political and public opinion regarding possible rates of attrition to protect the will and determination to fight all the way up to a high-intensity scenario.

National Security: Total Defense. As mentioned above, competition between great powers

extends beyond the scope of the armed forces. The responses called for are, therefore, by nature interagency and context-dependent. The example of the Western response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, which, at the time of writing, is primarily based on economic sanctions, demonstrates the global nature of the potential response to a high-intensity conflict.

The example of the Total Defense concept implemented in Sweden in 2020 is also very interesting in this regard. In addition to military defense, Total Defense includes a civil defense component that places the population and the private sector at the heart of resiliency functions and seeks to ensure continuity of those essential functions necessary for the country's defense.

Here, again, is nothing new; however, specific plans like the Chinese global strategy to extend its influence and appropriate interests over time through soft power[14] highlight how, even at the first step of GPC, appropriation strategies may impinge on other nations' national interests.

Future military leaders will have to continue integrating national security efforts[15] to offer a coherent approach along the entire spectrum of the competition continuum. The role of the population and the private sector is also likely to increase, demanding even more open-mindedness. The ability to understand other agencies—and persuade at the political level—is key to success in this integrative, whole-of-society approach.

All in all we have seen that GPC leads to a continuum of multi-domain confrontation that could escalate to high-intensity war, requiring military leadership to have the skills to adapt to an ambiguous, high-technological, interconnected, data-centric environment and deploy integrated joint-combined interagency multi-domain solutions to compensate for the relatively small size of French forces, while still achieving strategic goals and preparing the force, the nation, and the political class for these potential wars in an integrated national security effort.

The challenge of future warfare, as described above, necessitates addressing four main issues:

- Integrating increasingly complex technologies into multi-domain operations
- Fostering strategic empathy to overcome ambiguity
- Adapting the leadership to full-force employment and higher attrition rates
- Developing interoperability in even larger coalitions involving the private sector, the political class and society.

Future Leaders' Personnel Development

As the first years of an officer's career are dedicated to developing tactical level skills and mastering high technological tools and weapons, this study will start from the point where officers begin working in joint-combined and potentially interagency environments to integrate their effects. In France, this pivot point is typically 15 years into a career. Therefore, our study focuses on officers born after 9/11 and who will attain this 15-year pivot point between 2030 and 2040.

Who Are These Leaders?

First, it is imperative to better define who these future superior officers are in order to explore ad hoc personnel development and career management possibilities. However, this requires our first addressing the concept of generation and its relevance to this study.

The gilded life of youth, a generation of child kings. We could very quickly fall into the caricatural trap of there being radical changes in attitude among different generations. While our elders were deeply respectful of ethics, we might say, younger

generations are lazy and entitled, thinking that everything is due to them, hence their demanding "personality."

When we put these kinds of observations in perspective, we quickly understand that they are less owing to empirically verifiable fact than the immemorial spring of generational conflict. And yes, this has been going on for 3,000 years—3,000 years of the "new" generation being deemed lazier and, in general, less commendable than the previous one.

It is, therefore, legitimate to ask the following question: Is "generation" just an invented, inherently biased concept free of any foundational, fact-based observations, or does it—and its related generational clash—indeed exist? The Anglo-Saxon take of the question is interesting in that it diverges somewhat from the French conception of a generational disconnect.

A recent article published in the *New York Times* entitled "Does It Make Sense to Categorize People by Generation?" cites a new book by Bobby Duffy, *The Generation Myth: Why When You're Born Matters Less Than You Think*, which questions generational stereotypes, like that of millennials being "self-absorbed snowflakes."

Duffy, a British social scientist, writes that "Much of what you've been told is generational is not." He goes on to question the validity of the very idea of dividing people into generations. Rather, he offers a careful dissection of this "generational thinking" that rejects lazy myths and superficial clichés in favor of a more nuanced analysis of the factors that shape long-term changes in attitudes and behaviors.

According to Duffy, three distinct mechanisms are responsible for these long-term changes. "Period effects" are experiences that affect everyone, regardless of age, such as the 2008 financial crisis or the coronavirus pandemic. "Life-cycle effects" are changes that occur as people age, or as a result of major events, such as moving out of the family home, getting married, or having children. Finally, "cohort effects" are the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors common to people of a particular generation. To summarize, the problem with purely generational categorization is that it focuses entirely on cohort effects and ignores the other two-thirds of the picture.

The French view differs somewhat from the U.S. view, as previously said. According to a study by the IRSEM (Institut de Recherche Stratégique de l'Ecole Militaire) entitled *Observatoire de la génération Z*,[16] the concept of generation does indeed exist; moreover, the study clearly draws a portrait and categorizes generations. The very title of this study assumes and acts on the notion of generations. The wealth and abundance of data collected in this study make it possible to specify some of the most characteristic attributes of Generation Z. The study highlights some of the most emblematic of these attributes, allowing us to better grasp the generation's way of understanding the social reality that surrounds them and of projecting themselves into the future, both personally and collectively. This vision differs from that of their parents' generation.

Even if we cannot affirm the veracity of the concept of generations, young people possess qualities and characteristics that are different from their parents owing to different period, life-cycle, or cohort effects, as explained by Duffy. As youth represent strong societal stakes, the question must be asked, "Who, exactly, are these youths?"

Thus, we will now focus on defining these characteristics among French youth so as to make the most of them regarding the personal development, training, and career progression of future leaders. Our research is based primarily on the analysis of two particularly relevant studies highlighting common trends that can help in designing training and career management solutions:

- *Observatoire de la generation Z*, IRSEM study

- "Sociological Analysis of French Youth," Superior Military Studies Institute 71st session (*Centre des hautes études militaires*).[17]

Despite the multi-crisis context in which they evolve (the current health crisis, for example), young people demonstrate a capacity to adapt to face a world governed by omnipresent and increasing uncertainty. The optimism for their personal future that predominates, and the resourcefulness they show, especially in having integrated the knowledge that they must rely on their own strengths, are proof of their resourceful and resilient dispositions.

These intrinsic characteristics are major assets to meet the challenges related to the four fundamental issues mentioned above (multi-domain integration of complex technologies, ambiguity, full-force employment, and interoperability). We can observe three additional main characteristics of these French youth.

A Fractured Whole. The first obvious reality is that there is not one youth, but several. Indeed, youth is divided geographically, culturally, and socially. Within these, an additional intra-generational divide has appeared, combining factors of inequality in terms of meritocracy, geography, and access to digital technology. The reasons for this fragmentation are the differences in social origin and level of education among young people. The place of residence and access to digital technology, which are intrinsically linked, further accentuate this fragmentation. Finally, young people now clearly prioritize quality of life at work, with a strong focus on a work/life balance allowing for social fulfillment. While this may seem surprising, the nature of the work itself is secondary.

This group, thus fractured, demonstrates advanced capabilities dues to their native exposure to high technology. Inclusive leadership focusing on smoothing out the fracture lines can bring out these strengths and put them to use in the context of 21st century warfare.

Multiple "Youths" but Shared Values. The sociological studies show that, despite these fragmentations, youth nevertheless manage to gather around several common values: loyalty, trust, sincerity or a quest for identity, and the feeling of belonging, to name several. First, the family is clearly a foundation on which they still rely. Second, young people show a strong desire to commit to major ecological and environmental causes. Moreover, a clear search for meaning and autonomy characterizes these young French people. Finally, and this concerns their relationship to constraint and hierarchy, there are tangible changes compared to previous generations. They do not reject them, but they consider them through the prism of an authority conceived first and foremost in a contractual manner, leaving room for reciprocal exchanges and recognition by the hierarchy of their personal capacities to take the initiative and bear responsibility. This demand for recognition is particularly marked in their commitment—a "win-win" concept—and their need of autonomy and independence.

Prioritizing purpose over duty can be a true asset in the context of high-intensity warfare, helping to boost morale and overcome attrition. Here again, purpose-centric leadership can act as a force multiplier in this context.

A Growing Mistrust of Institutions. The third essential characteristic that emerges is the growing distrust that most young people show toward established institutions, especially the national educational system. Of particular interest here is the fact that the armed forces presents a special case, as they retain a high degree of popularity among young people. In fact, 90 percent of French youth hold a good opinion of the French military while in the United States, the demographic most concerned with the military is those under 30, only 38 percent of whom have a great deal of confidence in it (representing a 15 percent drop from 2018).[18]

It should be noted that these young people are

particularly vulnerable to manipulation because of their hyper-connectivity and their culture of immediacy on top of this institutional mistrust. Finally, there is a crisis of political confidence associated with the temptation of a stronger (even extreme) political model, as well as a crisis of democracy, with the youth questioning the usefulness of their voice.

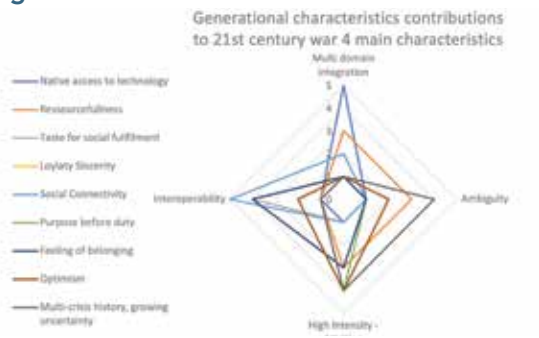
Across these three characteristics highlighted in multiple sociological studies, we can identify associated leadership challenges and turn them into strengths suited to responding to 21st century warfare and its challenges. While adapting leadership to an audience or demographic is nothing new, now, more than ever, it needs to be taken into account to better design future leaders' personal development and preparation.

Delving deeper into the details, these two sociological studies highlight 10 characteristics, each of them having been developed above:

- Native-type access to numerical/advanced technologies
- High-connectivity and a susceptibility to manipulation
- Resourcefulness
- Desire for social fulfillment
- Social connectivity
- Sense of purpose prioritized over duty
- The feeling of belonging as a motivational factor
- Optimism
- Multi-crisis history in environments marked by growing uncertainty
- Multiplicity of social fault lines.

A survey carried out among a sample of officers representing three branches and services of five nationalities compared these 10 characteristics against the four main issues of future warfare. Of all generational characteristics observed, only two

Figure 4.



do not contribute to solving at least one of the four issues and represent a potential weakness: susceptibility to manipulation and multiplicity of social fault lines. These two characteristics need to be addressed specifically across all aspects of leadership.

Figure 4 places each of the generational characteristics in relation to its potential participation in solving the four issues of future warfare.

Overall, the generation under consideration presents characteristics that seem to respond to the challenges of future conflict, with a tendency toward issues of high-intensity, attrition, and ambiguity. Therefore, the authors consider these characteristics as needing to be addressed through leadership, personnel development, and operational assignment, while the other two (interoperability and multi-domain integration) will be the subject of recommendations below in terms of training and career management.

Analysis of the groups to be called upon to take responsibility in the 2030–2040 decade allows us to take into account their aspirations and "operating modes" in order to make the most of these in maximizing their personal development and proposing improvement measures in order to better adapt their training and career progression.

Personnel Development and Preparation for Future Leaders

Based on the observations and findings discussing future leaders above, and according to U.S. and French specialists,[19] we can assume that the abilities and skills needed and expected to meet future challenges can be divided into seven essential categories, with three emerging as new and needing to be developed further (the underlined skills below) through personal development programs.

Leadership (leading people, personal leadership, and changing the leader's profile).[20] Leadership is a very broad concept. However, and as we have seen above, it is the keystone of military efficiency. A good and effective leader in the context described above is a person with a mix of skills, a team builder who develops cultural sensitivity and inspires others. They must develop strong communication skills, their own vision of the world, be a continuous learner, and demonstrate courage, initiative, honesty, integrity, selflessness, loyalty, energy, and enthusiasm.

In the future, a leader should take the initiative in every circumstance and lead with speed. They will have to develop a tolerance of others' views, adapt to managing the new generation, and creating meaningful change.

To adapt leadership to its sociological context, personnel development should focus on cohesion, a sense of purpose and subsidiarity to strengthen responsiveness to the four fundamental issues, as well as potential social weakness described above.

Innovation. Innovation must be at the heart of the personal development of future leaders, with a strong emphasis on both risk-taking and risk management. The entrepreneurial spirit must be drawn on to create knowledge and leverage new technologies. Innovation is a means to always adapt courses of actions to the challenge of multi-domain integration while taking into account risks, particularly those linked to attrition and losses across all domains.

Collaboration. As we have seen previously, collaborative coalition work will be the cornerstone of our elite preparation, namely: knowing how to build reliable coalitions and build consensus by relying on social networks; and collaborating with our partners while accepting risks related to moving beyond our own organization.

While there is little new pertaining to the following four skills (already incorporated into professional military education), they need to be developed further.

Problem-Solving. With the pace of technological breakthroughs accelerating, making mastery of them and their integration into multi-domain maneuvers increasingly complex, problem-solving skills must be accentuated to enable the development of innovative, adaptable solutions, even if this means disrupting the existing procedural framework.

Influence. The field of influence requires negotiating skills and political acumen.

Strategic Thinking. As is well-known, strategic thinking requires mental agility, analytical and critical thinking, synthesis, thinking across boundaries, situational awareness, and cognitive understanding.

Results-Driven. Leaders must have a strong sense of achievement, be achievement-oriented, and be accountable for all their actions.

Therefore, we can divide the training of tomorrow's leaders into two parts: self-development and institutional training/operational assignment. While this preparation has a cost in terms of human resources and time, it provides a decisive strategic advantage to nations willing and able to make this crucial investment in strengthening certain areas of preparation.

Self-Development and Mental Agility. The objective of self-development is to improve self-knowledge, thereby enhancing one's talents and potential, improving one's qualities, and achieving one's goals: in brief, knowing yourself better and, as

a result, understanding others better. The stake here in pursuing cognitive superiority is not only understanding a situation and its stakeholders but also better grasping the human dynamics and cognitive processes in play to more effectively develop information or influence operations, or be less subject to them. It also provides leadership skills of great value in future combined-joint interagency environments.

Self-knowledge can be difficult to attain, and truly knowing oneself requires relationships with others. "Know thyself," said Socrates; yet, "If you know neither your opponent nor yourself, you will be defeated in every battle," said Sun Tzu. Such teachings as these foster leadership qualities: first, by learning to know ourselves better, to better understand ourselves in order to progress; secondly, by trying to better understand others and how they function in order to create synergies. It is then necessary to encourage the development of self-knowledge: to know how to be and, finally, how to know. This way, leaders will understand their own cognitive processes better and will be less vulnerable to influence or information operations.

Knowledge of other cultures is also a prerequisite to a good understanding of multicultural coalitions, as understanding the particularities and mastering the codes of other cultures is central to creating synergies. This strategic empathy must be encouraged throughout future leaders' careers. Empathy is essential to understanding both our enemies and our allies.

Moreover, these synergies imply a thorough mastery of languages (English, in particular). Indeed, it is undeniable that convincing our allies of the validity of our ideas requires us to express ourselves well and communicate clearly. Mastery of language(s) and the art of oratory therefore play an important role in the development of leaders.

Tomorrow's leaders will have to be agile and resilient in order to be able to make quick decisions in a fluid environment and develop multi-domain approaches, even and perhaps especially when operating in unknown or little-known domains. This intellectual agility will be decisive in the future when using and mastering tools that do not yet exist. In addition, a true culture of creativity and innovation is necessary throughout officers' careers. The rapid and exponential development of new technologies requires real technological know-how and a mastery of the hard sciences. All officers will have to have sufficient education to understand, apprehend, and appropriate these new technologies. "Thinking differently" will thus guide the forward-facing thought of future leaders. This motto already guides the thinking and actions of the French special forces at the forefront of the technological and other commitments of the French armed forces. This innovative spirit must be instilled in all future military leaders. Also, personal development should focus on cognitive processes to reduce susceptibility to manipulation and strategic empathy. Self-development and mental agility, combining both hard and soft skills, have to be more developed in the future to adapt to the four main issues of 21st century warfare.

Institutional Training/Operational Assignment. Given that mission effectiveness requires the ability to "train as you fight," interagency training is indispensable throughout a career to foster cross-cultural understanding of global context and take advantage of multi-domain capabilities.

Another indispensable cornerstone in an officer's training is developing their autonomy, and their ability to anticipate, plan, and lead. At the French *Ecole de Guerre*, since 2018, a large part of professional military education is based on self-transformation, personal development, and strategy and operational-level planning exercises. A great deal of autonomy is given to students to manage their education through different cycles, encouraging them to set their own educational

objectives. On the other hand, planning exercises teach students to work in teams, to anticipate, plan, and conduct operations in an ambiguous, combined-joint, interagency context involving near-peer competition. These two training approaches, which may seem antinomic, are, on the contrary, complementary and enrich the background and the development of the officers' cognitive abilities.

Moreover, knowledge of international institutions and their mechanisms to influence political life is now an imperative need for military leaders. Indeed, a finer understanding of the political world allows us to advise our political authorities to precisely define political objectives in a hardened geopolitical context where international but also national relations are increasingly tense and require finesse. This presupposes efficiency of communications and cooperation between the political and military spheres at the strategic level.

Finally, military leaders must play a role in educating the society and political class regarding risk in the context of GPC, focusing on acceptance of a high ratio of attrition and overall resilience to national security threats.

Institutional training and operational assignments will serve to strengthen the future military leaders' abilities to network, influence, and convince both their subordinates and their leaders, policymakers, and society at large, to better answer the four main issues of 21st-century warfare.

Career Management and Training Modification Proposals

The emerging and traditional key competencies developed throughout the first part of the young generation of officers' careers will be emphasized along a career path that will have to adjust and adapt to contextual shifts. Therefore, the following proposals apply to the preparation and career paths of future leaders between 2030 and 2040.

In this section, we will examine how the French Department of Defense could create more flexible career paths both to foster and to develop the expertise and experience of leaders, while taking advantage of the above-mentioned generational characteristics.

First, in France, the curriculum for officers remains comparatively rigid, even though efforts have been made recently to introduce greater flexibility by modifying, for example, the conditions of access to the French *Ecole de Guerre* entrance exam, a difficult exam that selects the 25 percent of a given year's group who will reach high leadership positions. Positioned 15 years into a career, it is also the transition from the tactical level to the joint operational level.

However, we observe that in the most competitive fields, the passage through certain career stages involves implacable criteria, constituting real limitations for the armed forces. There is still a lot of work to be done to personalize human resources management and adapt curricula to personal choices while adding flexibility to the career path, all without compromising the institution. Adjusting access to certain positions based on age and prior experience and relying solely on the competence of the individual must be options for future leaders. Not only would this allow for optimized skills employment, it would also address one of the new generation's aspirations. Typical career paths, which can certainly serve as examples, must not be considered as immutable and must instead be agile. We must, therefore, implement policies individualizing careers and promoting agility.

To address the issues raised in this reflection, we offer two categories of proposals to:

- accelerate the pace of military training periods and their recurrence (addressing the issue of multi-domain integration)
- introduce new means of mobility to professional career paths that can be developed

throughout a military career (addressing issues of interoperability).

Suggestion 1: Flexible Career Paths. Allow and indeed make it compulsory for officers to leave the military for a certain period to enter the private sector in other areas or internationally. This will foster the acquisition of useful skills in other sectors, mutual knowledge, and the development of an open mind, all while allowing for a return to the forces.

How can this be achieved? Seeming difficult at first owing to budgetary, logistical, and human constraints, this proposal requires a rethinking of the logic of officers' careers. Moreover, it requires a clear contract between human resources managers and the officer to, on the one hand, aim for the chosen position upon leaving the army and, on the other hand, an assurance for the soldier and the individual that this path to enrichment is not to the detriment of either. A great deal of mutual trust must be established, with the assurance that commitments will be respected and that there will be no risk of delay in advancement in rank or career. It will also be necessary to make a major effort to target private companies that represent a real interest for the military and the development of officers. Moreover, this process will allow officers to get to know the youth better and experience working in a company, perhaps, as an example, grasping the spirit of the start-up by working in an incubator.

Suggestion 2: Inverted Reserve. In the same spirit as the first suggestion, this would entail sending young officers into the private sector several weeks per year, following the inverted model of current military reserve, thus highlighting military strengths while mapping private sector expertise.

This already existing arrangement should be reinforced and further developed in selected institutions (logistical and cyber defense training, for example). Indeed, this type of career path helps bridge the classic military-civilian divide while also taking advantage of certain ways of thinking or functioning adaptable to the military. Increased exchange would, therefore, be beneficial to both the civilian and military worlds. Additionally, this would allow both worlds to get to know each other better, to develop mutual trust, to be able to communicate effectively by understanding each other's difficulties, but also to seize opportunities. In the same way, this kind of arrangement could help officers become more aware of the strengths and weaknesses of our profession. Finally, this type of exchange would contribute to the national defense spirit with benefits for Total Defense.

Suggestion 3: Cross-Cultural Awareness. Promote cross-cultural experiences between specialties, forces, and services with an emphasis on interagency cooperation.

As we have seen, cross-cultural awareness is essential to multi-domain operations. The exchange of future leaders within the global military community already exists but just during a brief career period (as at the French *Ecole de Guerre*, for example). Furthering such exchanges should therefore be integrated as early as possible into the career curriculum of all commissioned officers. Mutual knowledge is a prerequisite for successful international and joint operations. As already highlighted above, mutual understanding between the different corps, directorates, and services is a major issue for the future. Finally, we could do more effective joint training in France and with our partners at each major stage of our careers.

Suggestion 4: Internships in the Political Arena. This would assist future leaders in better understanding political objectives, thus better translating them into strategic goals; and also help them learn how to more effectively persuade political authorities in ways relevant to a global national security approach.

This suggestion draws inspiration from American practices with fellowship programs. Indeed, high potential American officers are embedded for several years in the political structure,

close to the nerve centers of U.S. power. They are thus immersed in political issues as staff officers or editors and benefit from strong interactions with the political world. This knowledge of politics can be judiciously used when they are in key positions, at the crossroads of political and military domains. Our English partners also do this. In France, however, we do not avail ourselves of this possibility well enough. As a result, we can observe a real lack of military culture among our politicians. The end of compulsory military service and the last 30 years of relative peace have distanced French politicians from crucial military issues. We must therefore urgently create positions for future military leaders in the political arena.

Suggestion 5: Accelerate Military Training Periods and Their Recurrence. In addition, use more e-learning (during continuous training), buddy systems, mentoring and sponsorship.

Time is a precious commodity in the careers of commissioned officers. Shortening training periods would allow us to allocate this resource to recurrent training throughout a career (refresher courses focusing on current "best practices," for example) and would also reinforce the expertise of our young officers in their fields of competence. Further, this will foster a better understanding of trends and allow us to readapt our leadership as needed. However, this shortening of the training period will not be easy. We will have to invest in new equipment and new materials to be ready for major geopolitical shifts or conflicts.

As explained, the challenge of future warfare could be addressed through:

- Integrating increasingly complex technologies into multi-domain operations requiring shorter and more frequent training
- Increasing ambiguity in conflicts calls for dedicated personnel development
- Addressing full-force employment and higher attrition rates through personnel development and operational assignment
- Maximizing interoperability in even larger coalitions involving the private sector, the political class, and society at large through agile human resource management.

Conclusion

French armed forces are by nature designed for deployment. However, we observe a lack of mass and technology generating the military potential to respond to a high-intensity war waged only in the conventional three-dimensional approach. France, therefore, strives to apply multi-domain approaches to impose a favorable force ratio and foster international relationships to ensure its ability to operate within a coalition to overcome initial shortages and achieve its political objectives.

This observation leads us to reconsider the preparation of officers, future leaders of our institutions, officers who will hit Command and Staff College in the two decades to come, yet have only recently joined the military. Officers will then acquire agility, the ability to find new approaches, and solutions with limited resources. Success will depend on taking into account the inherent skills and behavior of today's youth to better prepare them to serve, and to lead.

To be able to work in coalition, we believe that future leaders must train multi-nationally, mastering the English language in order to be able to communicate convincingly; this further implies a deep knowledge of other cultures, which, in turn, builds an aptitude for strategic empathy. In addition, officers must expand their knowledge of the political world and international institutions such as the UN, NATO, or the EU in order to debate, maintain morale and influence public opinion. Finally, our future leaders must prepare for and anticipate attrition.

These new skills could be developed through

more agile career paths allowing for the full development of our elites, both professionally and personally, in ways that will not be at odds with the needs of the institution.

Thus, and in conclusion, our future leaders must be present in the spheres of power to influence strategic thinking, all while promoting innovation and the principle of "thinking outside the box," which must always prevail as we strive to adapt to and meet the many changes and challenges to come. PRISM

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Interview with Kevin Rudd

The Honorable Kevin Rudd served as Prime Minister of Australia from 2007 to 2010, and again in 2013.

What motivated you to write your recent book, *The Avoidable War: The Dangers of a Catastrophic Conflict between the U.S. and Xi Jinping's China*? What need did you wish to fulfill, and which questions did you want to answer?

My friend and colleague from Harvard University, Graham Allison, 4 or 5 years ago wrote a book called *Destined for War,* looking at what he called the "Thucydides trap" and its application to the future of U.S.-China relations. I have been a strong supporter of Dr. Allison's academic research. Where my book takes up in terms of the "avoidable war" is how do we construct a framework for what I call "managed strategic competition" between the United States and China, given where the relationship stands as of 2022.

My view is pretty simple. You either have unmanaged strategic competition with no strategic guardrails, no rules of the road, which always runs the risk of escalation, crisis, conflict, and war; or you have managed strategic competition, which means there are some minimum rules of the road mutually understood by the administrations both in Beijing and in Washington, which go to each side's granular understanding of strategic red lines. It goes to non-lethal areas of strategic competition—military growth, foreign policy influence, economic competition, trade, investment, technology, talent—as well as a great battle of ideas between authoritarian capitalism à la China and the liberal international order run by the United States. The third element of managed strategic competition is mutual acceptance in those defined areas where strategic collaboration is still in each country's national interest. For example, on the future of climate change, the next pandemic management (hopefully better than what we did the first time around), and even on global financial stability. So, these constitute the three elements of the argument that I advance called managed, strategic competition. And finally, the book also seeks to explore in some depth Xi Jinping's worldview and how he looks at reality today.

The interview was conducted by Michael Miklaucic on March 29, 2022.

Let's talk for a minute about President Xi's worldview. How would you characterize the difference between the so-called liberal world order and the emerging China-centered world order?

There is a fundamental difference. If you read carefully the Chinese ideological literature, which is widely circulated within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for the consumption of its 95 million members, it is pretty clear what is different about it.

Number one, the Chinese wish to supplant the United States as the dominant power in East Asia both militarily and economically. And not just with the view to securing China's unrealized territorial aspirations by recovering Taiwan to Chinese sovereignty, asserting and concluding the expansion of Chinese maritime interests in the South China Sea, securing the disputed territories it has with Japan in the East China Sea, as well as having a position in—let us call it—the Asian Hemisphere, where China is regarded as the principal economic and political power.

Beyond that, China has an interest in becoming the undisputed dominant global power. If you look carefully at the text around China's grand national rejuvenation dream for 2049, the centenary of the founding of the Peoples Republic of China (PRC), it is very much along those lines—that is, to become the dominant power globally—politically, economically, and, in my judgment, looking at the literature carefully, militarily, as well.

The final element is when it comes to the "world order" itself. The early sketching of the architecture of the international system that would have China at the center and providing strategic ballast for the order it would seek to create is one that is deeply mindful of China's national interests, one where China's own authoritarian values are incorporated into the institutions of the order. It would represent a significant rewriting of what the United Nations stands for, the global financial institutions created at the Bretton Woods Conference back in July 1944, and finally, newly created Chinese institutions which are unapologetically Sino-centric. So, for those three sets of reasons, it represents a big change.

Do you believe the Belt and Road Initiative is a fundamental part of this vision?

It is certainly part of the third category I just referred to in China's unfolding system in the world, in which Xi Jinping used the amorphous phrase, "the community of destiny for all humankind." China's influence grows in existing institutions and is supplemented by those it has rolled out over the last 5 years or so, including the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which is not a United Nations or Bretton Woods institution, and the New Development Bank. And if you read their literature carefully, now the Belt and Road Initiative. But the question, I think, will be much broader than the Belt and Road Initiative itself. It is essentially an expanded infrastructure program. On top of that, it sets up the infrastructure for the emergence of a China-centric digital economy, a digital commerce world, which feeds directly into China's giant tech platforms rather than being routed through Wall Street or the United States.

China's 5G company champion Huawei has been a central element of the global digital campaign. Do you think that the Western response to the Huawei challenge has been adequate?

As Prime Minister of Australia, some time ago we denied Huawei permission to even lay out hardware into the Australian National Broadband Network. We did so in close collaboration with our American and British allies. The British made a mistake early on by allowing that to occur in their own broadband system; then, when you come to the application of 5G, it becomes even more problematic. Therefore, we have to be deeply sensitive to our long-term national security needs, the robustness of our telecommunications infrastructure, and, frankly,

the possibility of it ever being shut off at a time of national security crisis. For those reasons we must have a robust approach. That is why I support the general conservative view on the part of your closest allies, including Australia under the current government, to oppose participation in Huawei's 5G global network.

And yet, the West does not have a viable alternative to offer countries that are, for example, within the Belt and Road Initiative and seeking 5G applications. What can we say other than "Say no to Huawei?"

You are absolutely right; this has been an extraordinary failure of what I describe as American industrial policy. How America could lead in the development of so many leading-edge technologies over several generations and then drop the ball on 5G is a failure of government, in my judgment. This is not a partisan comment about America's Republicans or Democrats. It is just a failure of government. Of course, one of the reasons that the United States produces the world's best, brightest, and sharpest technological innovations is that you seek to keep government's hand well out of it. But on key national security infrastructure, you do need a framework of industrial policy. You do see that emerging through the recent legislation in the U.S. Congress, the CHIPS for America Act, and other such enactments to ensure that there is national economic capacity to deliver the key technologies of the future. Catch-up will have to occur in relation to 5G technologies. There are, as it were, some candidates on offer, but there is going to be a time lag before they will become available at scale.

And bear in mind, the Chinese have been exceptionally patient at rolling out their overall 5G infrastructure. They have been planning this for a long time. If you look at China, which first established its 5G plan for its own country and for the rest of the world, the architecture of it was laid out in Chinese industrial policy probably 15 years ago. On these critical technology categories, the United States, mindful that it is a robust capitalist system, needs a parallel framework of industrial policy around critical technology systems for the future.

As you know, the idea of industrial policy is somewhat neuralgic in the United States. Yet, as you have observed, this issue is being raised in Congress and various other venues. When you look at China's full suite of policies—Made in China 2025, China Standards 2035, military-civil fusion, among others—it does raise the question, "How can liberal democratic countries compete in this global competition with autocratic, command-based economies in countries like China?"

So far, the competitive stakes have been pretty good because we allow entrepreneurs to innovate and we allow our technological innovators to go and do what they do best. We have a vibrant venture capital industry that gets a lot of these products to market early on. But that is not incompatible with what I describe as a sector-wide rather than firm-specific approach to industrial policy. Industrial policy sets frameworks and provides support mechanisms in critical sectors for the future without getting into the business of picking individual firms as winners. That is the key difference we see emerging in the United States and a number of its allies. This is opposed to China's version of industrial policy, which is much more like the return of Leviathan, with the state controlling anything and everything.

There is a further point as well. If you look at the level of financial waste in the Chinese system, as bucketloads of cash get rolled in one window of the state-owned enterprise and get chomped up with very marginal output on the other end of the enterprise in terms of new technology, if you were the Chinese ministry of finance you'd have to ask the question, "Is this a smart way to go?" I think the United States can meet the challenge; it has done it

before, and I think it is certainly within our collective gene pool to do it again.

How should we think about private sector companies that do not feel like playing along, that stand aside at arm's length from national or international security issues?

On core issues of national security there is not really an op-out factor. We are all members of a robust democratic capitalist system, whether it is in this country, my own, or other parts of the collective liberal democratic world—and not just the West, but also the liberal democracies of the East and elsewhere. Therefore, on critical questions of national security as it impacts intelligence, as it impacts security of critical research laboratories, as it impacts the security associated with key products—bearing in mind the central role in semiconductors right across the fabric of the 21st century economy from A to Z—the bottom line is that there is no option for a quiet opt-out by a firm that is engaged in these sectors.

Second, if there is a predisposition on the part of an individual firm not to cooperate, it raises a whole series of interesting questions for U.S. security agencies, and at a minimum level it would also perhaps preclude such firms from being able to provide products or services to government in any form within the country. You can sort this out on your own time and in your own way, but I think there is certainly a way to get through this, to get most firms on board.

Given the recent focus on space and cyber and the rapid pace of global tech advancement, do you foresee the United States keeping up with Chinese capabilities by mid-century?

If the question is about space, rather than cyberspace, the capacity of the U.S. space program to continue to reinvent itself has been demonstrated in the past. Ultimately, this is a question for the U.S. Congress and is less about capability than about the investment the Congress will choose to make in the revitalization of the space program for the future. The Chinese program has made large advances in recent times. If you look, for example, just to one classic illustration—the number of independent satellite launches undertaken by the Chinese in a given year—the Chinese are setting up their own satellite navigation system around the world with their own satellites, which provide 24-hour coverage across all the world's regions. This new BeiDou system has been quite an extraordinary achievement by the Chinese over the last 20 years. But the United States, again, has this enormous technological depth and flexibility and ability to innovate, which I still do not see alive in the Chinese system. However, if the Congress does not allocate sufficient funds to sustain this extraordinary piece of public research activity and maintain America's leading-edge, and support continued manned and unmanned programs into space, then, inevitably, the Chinese will catch up; but I don't see that as probable.

What are the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of the Chinese strategy that the West is exploiting well, and what weaknesses is the West failing to exploit at this time?

That is a critical question, and, obviously, a sensitive question as well. If you were to look at the world through Beijing's lens, and if you were sitting around the table of the Standing Committee of the Politburo this Tuesday morning in Beijing, it would be useful to ask yourself analytically what keeps them up at night and what causes them to worry. That is a very handy list to have in mind.

The key thing at the top of the list on the part of the CCP is instability within the Party itself. We are moving toward the Twentieth Party Congress and not all leadership questions have been resolved at this stage. There are considerable tensions and faultlines in the leadership over, for example, the future of economic policy, over being too forward-leaning

in support of Russia, and failures in the COVID-19 pandemic management.

If you were sitting in Beijing at the moment, your lens is very much focused on these internal policy and political tensions. I often think of one of the aggregate failings of U.S.-China strategy is its preoccupation with the external manifestations of Chinese power and pushing back against that in various theaters around the world, while missing the domestic and internal dynamics of Chinese power. U.S. strategic analysts should spend more time on these domestic and internal types of power to understand where those fault lines are and to what extent they can be worked on.

Am I correct in remembering that one of the predecessors of Xi Jinping said that what keeps him up at night is the challenge of creating millions of new jobs every year?

That is true. Multiple Chinese leaders have said that. But remember this: while the employment challenge in China remains real, they now have a shrinking labor market and probably the beginning of the decline in the aggregate size of the Chinese population as well. The essential economic challenge for the leadership now is to ensure that living standards do not drop, that per capita income continues to grow, that the Chinese middle class continues to have opportunities, and that if someone goes out and creates a new private sector firm they will have a lot of opportunities to play with and not be threatened by an impending government crackdown. That is all necessary in terms of keeping the economic growth momentum going, of which employment is a part, but not the exclusive part. And if you would again go to the list of the problems faced by the Chinese leadership at the present, beyond overreach on Ukraine and Russia, beyond the pandemic, it is also the question of Xi Jinping's adjustment to the Chinese domestic economic development model, which has resulted in a slowing of Chinese economic growth over the last couple of years.

What do you make of the recent crackdown by the Communist Party on certain sectors of Chinese industry; for example, on the education and real estate industries? What should we take from that?

I have spent a lot of time in the last couple of years researching Xi Jinping's ideological worldview and reading what Xi Jinping has said and written on the question of Marxism and Leninism, the galvanizing ideology of the CCP membership. There is always a temptation in the West to push all that to one side and simply say, "They pretend to be Communists, but really they're capitalists in disguise." The more I read, though, and see the direction in which Xi Jinping is taking the country, the more I reach the conclusion that the ideological leanings of the Party's membership are in fact hardening. I see this reflected in two or three quite specific ways. Xi Jinping in the last decade has pushed the center of gravity of Chinese politics further and further to the left. That is, there is more dependence on the central leader and the party itself over the professional institutions of the Chinese state, more restrictions on what individuals can do, and a crackdown on non-governmental organizations, among others.

In the economy—which goes to the core of your question—there has been a parallel shift to the left as well. A preference for state-owned enterprises over private firms. A crackdown on the private tech platforms. A new doctrine of common prosperity designed to bring about income redistribution and income equality in a country that has had the highest inequality rate of the last 30 years. And so, this change in China's economic policy settings, in my judgment, proceeds from an underlying ideological worldview on Xi Jinping's part that shows he does not want the private sector to become so powerful in China that it generates alternative role models and alternative centers of power in Chinese politics. Of

course, if he does that for ideological and political control reasons, then there is an economic policy cost as the economy ceases to be as productive as it was before and growth begins to slow; but that, I think, is precisely where we have landed at this point in China's history.

Do you think these internal political dynamics will predispose China toward a more aggressive foreign policy?

When I talk about Chinese ideology, the way I use and describe it in the piece I'm writing at the moment on Xi Jinping's worldview, I describe it as a worldview of Marxist nationalism. It is an odd term, but I think it most accurately describes what Xi Jinping has sought to do. I said before, because of his Leninist predisposition for party control, he has taken the Party and politics to the left. And because he is a Marxist on economic questions, he is taking the center of gravity and the economic policy debate and policy settings of China to the left—pro-state and anti-private. But there is a third element to the ideological shift. He has taken Chinese nationalism to the right. Therefore, he has provided the underpinnings for a much more assertive Chinese foreign security policy in the region and in the world. These three changes are unfolding simultaneously. And you might ask, what is the inherent connection between the three of them? The first two are logically explicable, moving to the left on economics and politics; that is a Marxist-Leninist frame. But on the right—remember this on nationalism—nationalism is a very handy additional tool for sustaining political legitimacy in a country like China when you risk losing some of that political legitimacy by removing people's individual political freedoms, or by beginning to reduce their economic freedoms as well. So, in my judgment, there is a synthesized view of this three-part dimension of Xi Jinping's ideological worldview of Marxist nationalism. That, in turn, is reflected in a more assertive Chinese policy in the world. One final point is, of course, that a more assertive Chinese foreign and security policy would not be possible unless China's material and military power is simultaneously increasing. And as this audience in particular would understand, that has been well underway for some decades.

How would you characterize China's vision for its long-term relationship with the United States? Is it one of dominance, first-among-equals, or a stable competitive balance of power?

My conclusions are based on what I read from the Chinese system internally. If I look carefully at the ideological language used by Xi Jinping about where he wants China to be by 2049—that is the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation—and where he wants China to be by the midpoint, 2035, what he wants to see is the completion of the Chinese military modernization by 2027. It is pretty clear from the Mandarin literature that Xi Jinping does not want to be co-equal with the United States; somewhere between 2035 and 2049 he actually wants China to become the dominant power both regionally and globally. And frankly, it is that understanding which makes explicable what China's current set of behaviors in the world are today. Therefore, whatever China says about the U.S.-China relationship, in my judgment it is a position of deep strategic competition with the United States. The Chinese prefer not to use that term, but since the National Security Strategy of 2017 was published the United States has used that term. I think it is a fair description of what is unfolding in both military and foreign policy terms, economic terms, and technological terms, but also in ideological terms, with competing views of the nation and of the rules-based system for the future.

So the question I keep coming back to as someone who has worked in politics and policy on China in multiple capacities over time— and I have now lived in the United States running a think tank the

last several years—is should we have strategic competition between the United States and China which is unmanaged, or should it be managed with some guardrails and rules of the road which prevent crisis, conflict, and war arising by accident?

In the United States we have a binary understanding of war; we are either at war or not at war. We like things to reach closure. Wars should end, competition should then become friendly competition; but from what you are describing, we might be in for a future of permanent aggressive competition—managed if we are lucky—but it is not something that is going to resolve happily. Is that correct?

I love the United States. I have lived here a long time, have a stack of American friends, even a lot of Chinese friends as well, and I speak Chinese. I have lived and worked in Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Taipei, and various points around the Chinese world. But I think that geopolitics is not simply a feature film which runs for an hour and forty minutes and has an innate conclusion at the end, happy or sad. That is not how geopolitics works. I would say to my American friends that, given a level of what I describe as political impatience, often the efficacy of national strategy is that you guys have done this before.

While it is not exactly a replicable model, the United States deduced that containment was the appropriate approach to the rise of the USSR, with George Kennan's seminal piece in 1947 during the Truman administration, and that this framework for dealing with the USSR remained in place for another 40 years across multiple Republican and Democratic administrations. Think about it. The ability of the strategic concept to survive through Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon (and Watergate), and through Ford, then Carter, Reagan, and George H.W. Bush, until the Berlin Wall came down. You prevailed. You actually stuck to it. There were ebbs and flows on the way through, and there was the near-death experience for us all during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, which I would argue provides a second lesson from history. After 1962, the Soviets and the Americans, in my analysis, reached very basic rules of the road about how not to blow each other's brains out by accident. So, you had a long-term strategy of containment as well as what I describe as a joint framework for managing the nuclear question with the Russians. Yes, it got very close from time to time, but the extraordinary thing is that by the time you got to 1989–1991, the Warsaw Pact and the USSR dissolved, as Kennan predicted it would back in 1947. So, as I have said, though containment, as such, is not a replicable model given the nature of China today, a sustainable, long-term and effective strategy for dealing with the China challenge over several U.S. administrations, I think, is possible if there is political will.

How would you assess Chinese-Russian relations given Putin's war in Ukraine? It seems that Xi would be much more cautious in tying China to someone willing to take such unwise risks.

I wrote about this a little while ago in the *Wall Street Journal* after Xi and Putin agreed on that extraordinary joint strategic framework signed in Beijing and released on the eve of the opening ceremony of the winter Olympics—only three weeks, therefore, before the launch of the invasion of Ukraine. My analysis is that the Chinese have enormous underpinning national interests in a benign, positive, productive relationship with the Russians. As a product of history, over three or four hundred years, this has been a pretty unhappy relationship. Tsarist expansion, slicing up bits of Chinese territory, the rise of the Bolshevik Party in 1917, the period of Sino-Soviet collaboration through 1959, then the Sino-Soviet split for 30 years when daggers were drawn, thereby providing the opening for Nixon and

Kissinger in the early 1970s, through to the present period.

But the overall Chinese state view and the Party view today is that it is far better to have a benign relationship with Moscow because it enables them to concentrate their military and their full strategic resources on dealing with the United States, the country they wish to supplant in the race toward both regional and global dominance.

Secondly, from Xi Jinping's perspective, the Russians provide an additional value added, which is that they can be permanent disruptors of the United States in other theaters of the world beyond the Indo-Pacific, whether it is the Middle East, North Africa, or, as we currently see, in Ukraine. However, by supporting Russia today, China has incurred huge reputational damage, particularly in Europe and other parts of the international community, by effectively tacitly condoning what Putin has done in Ukraine. So I think you are going to see some crab-walking in the Chinese system soon as they try to shuttle to a new position that is less embracing of Putin's military debacle, as it seems to be at present on the battlefields of Ukraine. But do not expect any fundamental realignment on the part of Beijing, particularly under Xi Jinping, for the underlying strategic reasons I referred to before.

As an astute observer and student of Chinese thinking, what lessons do you think the Chinese have learned from Russia's current experience in Ukraine?

I think there are two, but the Chinese system internally would say, "Yeah, we knew that anyway, and pity the Russians didn't think it through." The first is this: invading another country is a hard thing. It is not Poland in 1939 with a blitzkrieg from both directions when both Hitler and Stalin attacked Poland nearly simultaneously. Overcoming a country of 44 million people in a vast geography and with strong political leadership, as we have seen through the extraordinary talent of President Zelensky in Kyiv, is a very difficult thing. But Ukraine is a land operation across a common land border. Flip to Taiwan. If you think of the amphibious dimensions of what would be involved in a full-scale military operation against Taiwan—as our friends in the military would know far better than I—many degrees of additional logistical complexity arise from that. The D-Day landings in 1944 might look like a cakewalk compared with what the Chinese would face: a huge island, a long way off the Chinese coast, with a population of 25 million people, with a significant bastion of support in the international community because Taiwan is no longer a military dictatorship. It is a robust liberal democracy.

The second thing that the Chinese would have looked at and said is "We would never do that—roll out our military campaign against Taiwan—until we had undertaken fundamental financial insurance. That is, made our system no longer vulnerable to U.S. dollar–denominated sanctions. We would hope that by the time we move on Taiwan we will have ensured that the renminbi has been floated, that the Chinese capital account is opened, and that there is a much greater degree of resilience to the Chinese financial system than is currently the case, where as of 2022 China remains vulnerable to U.S. dollar denominated sanctions." I think those are the two main lessons.

Given that our threats of comprehensive financial sanctions against Russia did not deter Russia from invading Ukraine, what do you think of the wisdom of the current American policy of strategic ambiguity toward Taiwan?

I fully support it, and there is a reason for that. I have lived and worked in Taiwan and I studied there as a student, so I have a deep affection for the place. It is now a liberal democracy whose internal politics are beyond our control. And because of that, you are going to have political primaries and elections

in Taiwan that will throw up multiple candidates who in the future may start to say some politically irresponsible things, from Beijing's perspective, such as recommending a formal unilateral declaration of independence from China—that is a movement toward establishing an independent Republic of Taiwan. This fundamentally crosses a Chinese red line in terms of China's claim to sovereignty over the island. The danger with removing strategic ambiguity in the American position is that you would provide succour and support potentially to political actors within Taiwan itself to become more ambitious in what they say about the future status of the island. On the broader question of deterrence—that is, how do you best deal with the Taiwan challenge for the future—there are two core factors involved: what the United States does to restore the military balance across the Taiwan Strait and across the broader East Asia and West Pacific. I know people in U.S. Indo-Pacific Command are working on this together with the Pentagon. The second factor is this—and I know that the United States is working on this as well—making our friends in Taiwan understand that there is a huge lesson coming out of Ukraine about the resilience of your national defense and your national defense deterrence against a Chinese military, including all forms of asymmetric warfare. Had Ukraine fallen in 3 days as the Russians had planned, would we now be in a position where you see the successful marshaling of global military and political support for Ukraine? Probably not. So the lesson for the Taiwan administration, in my judgment, and the future of American and allied interests in Taiwan, is to maximize the deterrent factor—not just the United States, but in Taiwan domestically as well.

You recommend that we focus more on China's internal party dynamics, but how well can we really see through the opacity of party factionalism?

There is certainly opacity. Even if this were an internal discussion within the Chinese system, there would be opacity. We are a bunch of "foreign barbarians" having this conversation offshore about a system that is designed to be opaque for the likes of us. However, given that caveat, I believe we know enough about where the fault lines actually lie. The fault lines in the Chinese system are, number one, about the nature of the Chinese economic model. Xi Jinping's ideological preference for a more state-centric economy, a more party-led Chinese economy, has a massive fault line dividing it from another group that we might describe more broadly as liberal economic reformers. They are not all necessarily lovers of the United States, but they actually have a different view of an appropriate economic model and international economic structure and China's pattern of engagement with it. Therefore, that represents a fault line.

A second fault line lies under Xi Jinping's breach of the two-term limit for Party presidents, which comes up for final review and decision at the Party Congress this November. That is a clear fault line because many do not want to see the demise of what Deng Xiaoping put in place as a preventative mechanism to avoid a return, in the future, to a Mao-like figure.

If there is a third fault line, it is along these lines: the Deng Xiaoping school of foreign policy was to hide your strength, bide your time, and never take the lead. "Hide and bide" is the way we usually describe it. And that is not because Deng did not have a vision of China becoming a great power. If you read what Deng wrote, that was his vision for the distant future. What Xi Jinping has done, however, is accelerate the timetable. He has turbocharged the trajectory as a result, and has made China infinitely less adherent to Deng's cautious doctrine of foreign and security policy in favor of a more adventurous, more assertive one. This fault line divides Xi Jinping from those who are still Chinese nationalists but

believe that Xi has declared China's ambitions and become assertive far too early in the process.

This has attracted massive geopolitical reactions from around the world. Look at the recent Korean election, the election of a center-right president on a campaign platform of being tougher on China. Look at Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in Japan, now taking a more assertive posture in relation to Taiwan. Look more broadly at what is happening with India—the emergence of the Quad at summit level, and the emergence of AUKUS, involving my own country, Australia. There is a gradual hardening of European attitudes toward China. That is a third fault line in Chinese politics. That there are those who think Xi Jinping has gone out too far, too hard, too fast, and too early on China's assertiveness. These three areas provide rich fault lines within Chinese domestic politics, which the United States and others should be very mindful of as we respond to China.

What is interesting for those of us who study the tea leaves in the Chinese system is that, over the last 2 or 3 months, there have been a number of dissenting articles in the Chinese official media about China's current course. It is not a dominant presence in the central media, but Chinese scholars, researchers, and others are saying publicly and openly that Deng's posture of reform and opening is the only way to the future. That is not part of Xi Jinping's doctrine within the ideological framework of Xi Jinping thought. We have also seen scholars and researchers published in the official media saying that Deng put in term limits for good reasons. Now, this gets pretty close to the wire in what is permissible to say in Chinese politics.

There is already emerging in Chinese social media a much broader discussion about China's support for Russia in Ukraine—in part, critical of Xi Jinping's posture—which has remarkably been allowed to stay online. Not for very long. So what do we read from these tea leaves? That there is a range of views in the Chinese system rather than the monolithic worldview that I described before of Xi Jinping's China—and that is politics to the left, the economy to the left, and nationalism to the right. The more assertive posture in the world is not universally shared, but right now Xi Jinping is the master Machiavellian politician of Chinese domestic politics. He still controls the levers of internal power through the security apparatus, the intelligence apparatus, and, importantly for their system, the ideological apparatus.

Is Xi Jinping's drive to unseat the United States as the leading global power rooted in feelings of payback for the century of humiliation China suffered at the hands of Western powers?

It is difficult to discern precisely what the internal motivational structure is for what I have described clinically before as China's national aspiration to become the dominant power both regionally and globally and supplant the United States. But, having said that, you do not have to be a Rhodes Scholar to work it out reading the internal texts of the Chinese Communist Party since about 1921; the CCP is not a big fan of America as a political movement right through the 1920s and 1930s. You see this searing critique of the United States in Party literature, particularly by Mao himself, who always saw the body of ideas represented in American liberalism, liberal democracy, and liberal democratic capitalism as representing an ideational threat to Marxism and Leninism. This has always been the core of the Communist Party critique of the United States. It is, in my judgment, the fear of that body of ideas. Therefore, I think that it is a big motivating force for the Party at the level of Chinese nationalism. There is not just a view about the century of humiliation from the First Opium War through to the exit of the Japanese in 1945. That has also punched through in the propaganda system into the classrooms of every child who goes to a Chinese school, who gets shown

the images of the Chinese being treated badly by foreigners, particularly during the time when Shanghai was divided into quarters between various foreign occupying powers. There is a view, a deep nationalist view, that transcends the ideology of the CCP, that China has historically been a great nation, a great civilization, and that this period of temporary Western ascendancy, first with the British and then the Americans, is a historical aberration, and China is now returning to the historical norm. That is also part of the consciousness. I think, however, it is those two things—national consciousness of China's natural state as a regional and global great power, plus an underlying ideological reservation about the nature of American liberal democracy, which they still see as a threat internally to the CCP's hold on power.

To change the subject, some have called Chinese theft of intellectual property from the West the largest transfer of wealth in history. How do you recommend that the United States and its allies counter this practice?

It is an interesting question. I do not have the quantitative data to back it up, but I have seen scholarly work on another piece of intellectual property transference, and that is what the Soviet Union did for the Chinese from 1949 to 1959, which economic historians have described as the single greatest transfer of intellectual property and economic assets from one country to another in history. It led to all sorts of bad blood between Moscow and in Beijing about the historical nature of the China-Russia relationship. On the question of intellectual property theft, there is a body of literature in the United States that chronicles various efforts through espionage—commercial espionage or state-sponsored espionage—to secure the keys to the kingdom. In my judgment and assessment, the Chinese intelligence apparatus would be doing anything and everything to secure what can be secured in technologies that are critical to sustain or secure economic preponderance, but most particularly, given civil-military fusion within the People's Republic of China, those technologies which provide China with a leading military edge. This program will continue to expand, and, of course, the Chinese will be targeting not just the United States on this question but its principal allies as well, both in Asia and in Europe. What is to be done about it? Here is a complex challenge for American public policy. Here is the dilemma. On the one hand, America benefits and has benefited: Silicon Valley has benefited from the arrival of legions of Chinese students and other foreign students into American universities, graduate schools, research and development programs in critical laboratories, not just in information technology, but in the life sciences as well. Against this reality, there has been a sustained campaign led by the Chinese security apparatus to secure control of critical technologies. So how do you arrive at the public policy balance between those two competing tensions? My argument is that America would be undermining its own national economic and national security interests to shut the door on Chinese students and researchers. What the United States should be doing instead is providing a very large-scale continued increase in the resourcing for our security, intelligence, and vetting agencies, so that each of these institutions is properly surveilled by the United States authorities. I think that is far and away the better approach. It is also one that maximizes American economic and technological long-term interests. It is not terribly popular politically; it sounds much more hardline and draconian to just shut the door, but America's power in the world has drawn from this avalanche of people who have come from China, India, Korea, and elsewhere into American schools, and who have provided so much of the talent that is alive and breathing in Silicon Valley today.

During the Cold War, there were two camps. There was the United States and there was the Soviet Union, basically. It was largely a bipolar competition. Today, we have the United States, the People's Republic of China, and we also have Russia, which some people describe as a declining country—albeit possessing the largest nuclear stockpile in the world. So we have something like a three-body problem; if we take action against Russia it pushes them toward China. If we take action against China it pushes them closer to Russia. How do we navigate that three-body problem effectively?

There was a period, in my judgment, from about 2001 to, maybe, 2015, after the initial Russian invasion of Crimea and the Donbas in February 2014, when there was an opportunity for the United States to reach a better strategic modus vivendi with the Russian Federation. Most of the Russian specialists that I know in the United States would object that true rapprochment could not have happened because the Russians have always been bad. Look at Georgia, look at Ossetia, look at Russia domestically. But I know, having spent some time speaking to Russian think tankers from 2014 to 2015, that as of then, there was no automatic embrace of the People's Republic of China. As the first round of sanctions hit following the invasion of Crimea, then remained in place, Putin and the Kremlin moved at speed and scale to embrace China as their long-term strategic partner. This was reflected most graphically in the February 4, 2022; joint declaration in Beijing between the two leaders. I do not think that relationship is now redeemable from an American perspective. The wise course of action now is to regard the Russia-China relationship as a fixed strategic entity for the foreseeable future. The United States should have that as a clear analytical frame, and its long-term China strategy should take that as one of its assumptions. To pretend somehow that a China card could be played in order to isolate the Russians or a Russia card could be played to isolate the Chinese, I think now is the stuff of political fiction. We should assume that we are looking at the same entity that we looked at between 1949 and 1959. PRISM

Why Nation-Building Matters: Political Consolidation, Building Security Forces, and Economic Development in Failed and Fragile States

By Keith W. Mines
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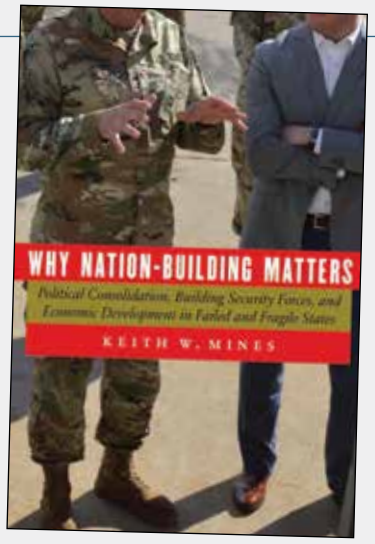

Lessons from a long career in expeditionary diplomacy

The recent fall of Kabul is a stark reminder that policymakers need to understand much more about the problems of nation-building. Some may try to swear off any further involvement with nation-building, but these problems cannot be ignored when failures of law and governance in weak states underlie a pressing migrant crisis on America's own borders. As the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction has noted, America's refusal to prepare for future stabilization missions after the collapse of South Vietnam did not prevent the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq but instead ensured that they would become quagmires.[1] To begin thinking more carefully about these vital problems, a good place to start is with Keith Mines's book *Why Nation-Building Matters*.

Keith Mines has participated in most of America's foreign nation-building missions since the 1980s. His first service was in the U.S. Army, where he served as a paratrooper in Granada and taught counterinsurgency in Central America. He then joined the U.S. Foreign Service in 1991. In this valuable book, he discusses experiences and lessons from his long career in expeditionary diplomacy, including missions to Colombia, El Salvador, Somalia, Haiti, Darfur, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

Mines has written this book as an experienced practitioner of nation-building, and I have read it as an economic theorist who shares his view that a deeper understanding of nation-building is greatly needed. In the quest for this understanding, I hope that he might agree with me that a combination of our practical and theoretical perspectives could be helpful. In particular, economists study agency theory to learn how the structure of an effective organization can depend on problems of coordinating agents who observe different information, and this theoretical perspective helps me to see broader principles in some of Mines's key insights. Mines has emphasized that a nation-building mission needs to rely on field officers who can closely observe the political challenges in different communities, and he has recommended that such officers should get more flexibility in spending funds to support local political development. I would argue that these are key points for understanding why a nation-building

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agency is needed and how it should be structured. But first, I should highlight and summarize some parts of Mines's book that I found especially insightful, in his chapters on El Salvador, Iraq, and Darfur.

Rediscovering Counterinsurgency in Central America After Vietnam

In 1984, as part of the American response to insurgency in El Salvador, Mines was assigned to help train soldiers for counterinsurgency in Central America. It was a time when memories of Vietnam made U.S. policymakers highly averse to nation-building, but Mines's assignment put him in the one place where Americans were still focused on the challenges of nation-building. Mines's chapter on El Salvador contains a magnificent section entitled "Counterinsurgency Rediscovered" which offers a distilled summary of what he learned then from masters of the previous generation, who had experienced counterinsurgency warfare in Vietnam, Cuba, and the Philippines during the 1950s and 1960s. His mentors while working on Central American counterinsurgency (including Lt. Col. Reynaldo Garcia and Col. John Waghelstein) warned against the dangers of relying on large American forces and heavy weapons to solve the political problems of another country. They taught that a nation-building intervention should involve a balanced mix of military and political support for its indigenous hosts, and America's contribution must be strictly limited so that the hosts should never forget that it is their country to win, and it is their responsibility to offer a better deal for people throughout their country.

In discussing the missions where he has served, Mines regularly reminds us that the results of any nation-building mission are likely to include a complex mixture of successes and failures. In El Salvador, the notable success in negotiating a political settlement to end the war in 1992 was followed by a profoundly disappointing failure to secure the subsequent peace, allowing criminal violence to grow in a region that has become today the source of a serious refugee crises confronting America. Conversely, although America's intervention in Somalia in 1994 conspicuously failed to forge a political settlement there, we should recognize that it did succeed in ending a massive famine in that country.

A Key Perspective on the Occupation of Iraq

Among the assignments that Mines has undertaken, one of the most important was his service as governance coordinator for Al Anbar province in 2003 during the occupation of Iraq. There he had primary local responsibility for responding to some of the toughest political challenges of the growing Sunni insurgency. His chapter on Iraq is the longest in the book, and it offers an insightful perspective on this mission.

The book's subtitle ("political consolidation, building security forces, and economic development") summarizes the mission's priorities as Mines assessed them after he arrived in Al Anbar late in the summer of 2003. He saw that job-creating economic development could offer people some hope for a better life, but economic development was impossible without basic security, and security would ultimately depend on political reconciliation of groups that could act as spoilers. So among the challenges of rebuilding Iraq, political consolidation had to come first.

The formation of a broadly representative provincial council was key to any hopes for political reconciliation. During the early months of the occupation, civil affairs officers had done what they could to recruit various local leaders and sheikhs into a provincial council, and Mines later organized a series of local caucuses to elect council members who could be more properly representative of communities throughout the province. The provincial council served as a regular channel for complaints from people in Al Anbar, but its effectiveness was frustrated by its lack of any ability to exercise

authority over a budget.

A group of sheikhs proposed to organize a Civil Defense Force to protect roads and power lines in the province, if the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) would provide regular funding and equipment for tribal security forces. They were offering to do essentially what was done through the Anbar Awakening three years later, but Mines was unable to get the funding that was needed to do this in 2003. Instead, the CPA put resources into national programs for recruiting and training security forces. However, in the absence of any national political consensus, such national security forces would be seen in Al Anbar as outsiders with no local accountability, and so it is not surprising that people turned to insurgent resistance.

In the fall of 2003, the CPA head Paul Bremer began a series of monthly one-day meetings with his provincial governance coordinators. Mines describes one such meeting where there was vigorous debate about Bremer's plans for economic austerity measures, where Mines and other provincial coordinators argued that government-funded jobs programs could play a vital role in winning support for the new regime. I would suggest that, in such debates, we can see the importance of bringing local political perspectives into central policy-making discussions. There has been much ex-post facto criticism of Bremer's early decisions about de-Baathification and disbanding the Iraqi army in May 2003, but what was needed was a broad debate that included locally informed officials when the decisions were made. Such policies, which would fundamentally affect political realities in every part of the occupied country, should have been formulated in consultation with provincial governance coordinators who were working to earn the trust of local political leaders throughout the country.

From this perspective, it seems severely problematic that Mines and other provincial governance coordinators were not even appointed until after these fundamental postwar policies were formulated. If America had established an effective agency for coordinating stabilization operations, this agency could have ensured that the interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan would have, from the start, a team of local stabilization officers ready to monitor local political challenges and provide vital guidance for the strategic direction of these interventions.

Lessons from the Mission to Darfur

The costly frustration of massive American-led interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq has prompted policymakers to seek different models for how a limited American involvement might effectively support an intervention that is led by countries in the region. The most promising model for such nation-building missions may be found in Mines's chapter on Darfur.

In 2007, Mines was sent to head a field office in Darfur, where he coordinated American support for peace-keeping forces from the African Union. If American policymakers could study just one chapter in this book, this is the one that I would recommend for them to see how a strictly limited American involvement can provide valuable support for peace-keeping missions led by countries in the region. But the chapter deserves careful study, to fully draw out the lessons from Mines's involvement in Darfur.

With authorization from a United Nations resolution, the African Union sent a peace-keeping force that was spread across Darfur in a series of outposts. Each outpost had a U.S.-contracted military observer to help with operational planning and intelligence, and so Mines was sent to oversee a team of field agents who were well placed to monitor and respond to events on the ground throughout Darfur.

One fundamental point that Mines emphasizes in the Darfur chapter is the vital importance of stationing officers in the field to get local information on the ground where the conflict is. Even before he got to Darfur, Mines was advised that, whatever uncertainties he might have, after ten days in Darfur he would know more about the situation there

than the rest of the U.S. Foreign Service, and so he should be prepared to offer decisive leadership there. Mines's basic observation about the essential value of field presence for building a peaceful national order may be worth quoting here:

> Making peace requires hard work that goes beyond a declaration or a conference. It includes the gritty detailed tasks on the ground: reassuring, reporting, and shaping the political environment. It often goes against the interests of numerous stakeholders, and on a higher level includes directed force, sanctions and international pressure, and negotiations. But it starts with people on the ground, and the closer they can get to reality, the more effective and well-calibrated the policies will be.[2]

Perhaps a simple peace conference could have been enough if the conflict had been between two highly disciplined organizations with clear, coherent leadership, but such conditions cannot be expected from a conflict in a failed or fragile state.

In fact, among the challenges confronting Mines in Darfur were problems of banditry by former separatist fighters, and the worst offenses were actually committed by troops from the one separatist faction that had signed a peace agreement with the government of Sudan. By agreeing to peace, the leader of this faction had lost the ability to send his fighters on profitable raids against government bases, so he no longer had the resources to pay and control his troops.

Mines observes that, in Darfur, the essential first step toward ending the conflict was inducing rebel groups to form a unified organization that could negotiate with the central government to forge a new political order in Sudan. The billions that America spent to support the Darfur intervention might have been more effective if even a fraction of that amount had been invested in compensation schemes as incentives for local leaders to back a peace deal.

Thus, a second fundamental point that Mines emphasizes in the Darfur chapter is the critical value of flexible finance (or "walking-around money") for field officers to support positive political development in a distant country. A U.S. officer in the field might readily see how the goals of peace-building could be effectively advanced by allocating money to pay and equip the forces of cooperative local leaders in Al Anbar or Darfur. But in Washington D.C., where these local leaders are unknown, such an expense could seem harder to justify than a much larger allocation for training and arming the forces of recognized national allies, even when those national forces are distrusted by people in the conflict zone.

Mines notes that the U.S. military observers formed the backbone of the peace-building force, and worked in difficult circumstances to stop a genocide, for which they received little public recognition. But there was no regular system for keeping American officers in the field for missions like Darfur, and so as Mines and his colleagues left Darfur, they were not replaced. Thus, the Darfur mission was limited by basic issues of funding and staffing.

Toward a Doctrine for Nation-building

Before discussing the conclusions that Mines summarizes in the book's Epilogue, let me say something about his basic decision to use the term *nation-building* instead of the term *state-building*, which many of us have used almost synonymously. If there is a difference between the two terms, it would be that nation-building should include not only developing the capacity of the government, but also encouraging people to identify with their nation as a whole. I was initially surprised by Mines's expressed preference for *nation-building* as the term to describe his work, since he never seemed to get involved in any kind of public relations drive to foster people's patriotic feelings. However, much of his professional service was devoted to helping to develop a trustworthy working relationship between local leaders and national leaders. I would suggest that perhaps a true basis for people's patriotic feelings could be found in their confidence that respected leaders of their communities can have a

positive role in the greater nation. If so, then popular enthusiasm for national unity would depend on a generally accepted distribution of powers and responsibilities between local leaders and national leaders.

So perhaps Mines is right to prefer the term *nation-building*, if it can help to remind us of this imperative to develop the essential local foundations for a strong national political system. Then a mission to develop the capabilities of Afghan government ministries and security forces could be properly called *state-building*, but it should not be called *nation-building* without some complementary effort to ensure that respected local leaders have a constructive role in the national political system.

Such a reminder is needed. When he attended a conference in Canada shortly after his service in Iraq, it seemed to Mines that the potential importance of federalism in nation-building was getting more discussion in Canada than in the United States. Mines observed that "U.S. thinkers and policymakers, with a thin understanding of the complexities and options in federalism, tended to miss many of the opportunities that might have been available in getting the country to the right political end-state."[3] This observation seems astonishing when we consider that the United States of America was actually established by a revolution to defend the powers of provincial assemblies, and the need to maintain an appropriately balanced distribution of powers between national and local governments has remained a vital concern in American politics since the U.S. Constitution was written. But somehow, when Americans try to support nation-building abroad, there has been a common tendency to ignore the lessons of America's own history and assume that foreigners could not have similar concerns about national centralization of power.

In the language of the American Revolution, the *people* who formed the fundamental basis for the new nation were understood to be the enfranchised inhabitants acting together in their local communities throughout the land. If this understanding had been applied in Afghanistan, the first principle of a nation-building project there should have been respect for the autonomous authority of traditional village institutions; instead, the American intervention focused on building a centralized national government that implicitly threatened them.

So we need a doctrine that lists key points to bear in mind when approaching complex missions like nation-building, and Mines's book includes a valuable Epilogue in which he summarizes lessons that he would include in a doctrine for nation-building. Mines emphasizes that the first priority for nation-builders must be to support the development of a political compact that can bring people together in the nation. This settlement should address the local concerns of people in all parts of the nation, and economic reforms should not be pushed before the political compact is consolidated.

Mines also lists the development of effective security forces as an essential priority. But I would suggest that perhaps there should be more emphasis on the question of to whom these forces will be accountable. Without clear accountability, even newly trained security forces can be as abusive as in any authoritarian regime, as Mines saw in Haiti. However, accountability for security forces can be defined only in the context of a political settlement. So again we should recognize the priority of the political compact, but with a broader understanding that it should include decisions about the allocation of control over police and military forces. Where local groups do not fully trust the national authorities, some locally accountable police forces might be needed. This point may have sufficiently general applicability to belong also in a basic doctrine for nation-builders.

Finally, Mines discusses the need for an agency to provide standby capability for future nation-building missions, with a cadre of trained and experienced local stabilization officers who would be prepared for the challenges of helping a failed state to consolidate a new political compact and reconstruct effective

government. Compared to what America invests in maintaining large, magnificently-equipped military forces which are prepared for conflict anywhere in the world, preparations for the challenges of post-conflict political reconstruction have been negligible.

We should emphasize here that the critical importance of flexible finance for local officers in a nation-building mission has fundamental implications for how a nation-building agency should be structured. To induce positive political change, its field officers must identify key local leaders and offer them appropriate incentives to cooperate in forging a national political compact. For this purpose, the effectiveness of foreign assistance depends on its local political conditionality, so that local leaders should understand that they and their supporters can benefit from foreign assistance only if they cooperate with a wider program of national political reconstruction. In a typical project for international economic development, we might measure results by counting the number of people who have observably benefited from our assistance. But when the goal is political development, it is essential to understand which local groups are benefiting and what they and their leaders have done to support national reconciliation, and such local political conditions are very hard for anyone outside the country to assess.

So there are fundamental reasons why a nation-building agency may need to operate under different kinds of fiscal controls from other agencies of the U.S. Federal Government. A basic principle for structuring operations in most Federal agencies is that American tax-payers' money should be spent only with regular controls that can assure meaningful accountability to the American people through their elected political representatives. But in foreign nation-building missions, the ultimate goal is to support the development of a government that is accountable to its people, not to America. For American assistance to support this development, the criteria for distributing assistance must depend on conditions that can be understood by the local recipients, even if not necessarily by people in America. Thus, when America's political leaders have decided that a mission to help rebuild a failed state would be in America's interest, the budgeted resources for the nation-building mission should be managed by a team of field officers and supervisors who, by their selection and training, can be trusted to spend the money appropriately according to local conditions in remote communities of the failed state, where normal controls of the U.S. Federal Government would be very difficult to apply.

The possibility of future nation-building missions is not just an abstraction. Even today, the United States is challenged by a continuing flood of refugees from Central America who are desperate to escape from crime and oppression in their home countries. The problem of reducing this migration is a first-order political issue for the current U.S. Administration, but the problem is unlikely to abate until these countries develop legal and political institutions that can protect their citizens. Governance reforms have been resisted by small but powerful local groups that have a stake in the oppressive status quo. Increased economic assistance to these countries will not induce the reforms that are needed unless the assistance is supervised by field officers who can direct the aid to benefit key local leaders when they support these reforms. So the migrant crisis today should be seen as a nation-building problem, and this reviewer would be more confident of an effective mission to address it if experts like Keith Mines were directing the mission. PRISM

Notes

[1] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *What we need to learn: lessons from Afghanistan Reconstruction* (August 2021), xii, 96, available at <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/SIGAR-21-46-LL.pdf>.

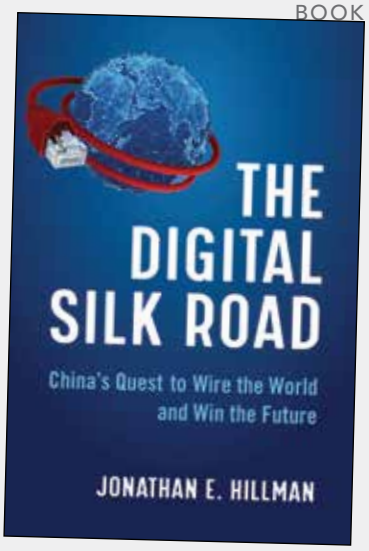
[2] Mines, 152.

[3] Mines, 282.

The Digital Silk Road: China's Quest to Wire the World and Win the Future

By Jonathan E. Hillman
Harper Business, 2021
352 pp. $29.95
ISBN: 9780063046283

Reviewed by Walter M. Hudson



The Digital Silk Road is Jonathan Hillman's hi-tech companion to his book *The Emperor's New Road: China and the Project of the Century*, published in 2020, which dealt with the vast Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the largest developmental project of our time. The Digital Silk Road (DSR) is the BRI's high-tech portion, its transoceanic fiber-optic cables and its space-based satellite chains every bit as much a part of the BRI as a railroad project in Africa or port construction in South Asia. And like the BRI, the DSR's goal is global and hegemonic: in establishing it, China intends to be the world's "indispensable hub and gatekeeper" of the digital space.

The first part of Hillman's book deals with the sad and sorry tale of how China used digital technology to secure control within its own borders. He refers again and again to a key conceit that, until very recently, was prevalent among American policymakers and foreign affairs specialists—that technology is an "enabler" to democratic norms, and that there is a direct correlation between the expansion of technology and the expansion of human freedom. But this is a dubious trope that has passed for insight, an example of what the economist and social scientist Albert Hirschman calls the "all good things go together" rhetorical conceit, especially prevalent among political liberals (conservatives have their own stock of conceits). The notion that technology enhancement leads to the establishment of democratic norms, that technology and democracy "go together" *feels* right. There is a version of history that lends weight to this. But human history is, after all, a sequence of dependent variables: the notion that technology enables democracy cannot be axiomatically true. Rather, better and more safely put, technology is politically neutral.

Hillman writes, as the digital age dawned in the 1990s, "Techno-optimism approached techno-evangelism." Technology brought to China would liberate China. That China happened to be the most lucrative untapped market on earth was a happy coincidence. Sweeping pronouncements were made: "[The internet] cannot be controlled… [it] will help connect the Chinese people to the rest of the world like never before." Anyone with an even glancing familiarity with the history of autocracies should have challenged such foolish utopianism. Few of any consequence apparently did. After

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March 31, 1994, the export controls that prevented high tech exports of telecommunications equipment to China vanished and "[t]he race to connect the world's most populous country was on." Respected private and public sector elites on both sides shared in this technocratic fantasy. Nortel executives in the 1990s thought that China's rise, the planet's well-being, and (of course) Nortel's profits were linked together. True believers included not just Clinton-era liberals, but people such as Frank Carlucci, a former Reagan Defense Secretary and National Security Advisor.

Surely at a certain point—say by around 2000—it should have been apparent what was going on: namely that U.S. tech companies were helping the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) build a massive surveillance state within its borders. What makes the story amazing is that the CCP did not hide its intentions. In *2000*—not 2010 or 2015—Chinese officials clearly indicated they were creating a digital "Golden Shield," a massive surveillance and data collection network for the ultimate panopticon state. Technology did not bring freedom to China: the advantages did not go to pro-democracy dissenters but to the state, which established social credit systems, censored, and overwatched virtually all aspects of its citizens' lives.

Did U.S. tech companies balk at this? Hardly. As Hillman puts it, "They scrambled for a piece of the action." Corporate lobbyists deluged U.S. lawmakers to open China further. Nortel and Motorola senior executives waxed on about how China's possible accession into the World Trade Organization would benefit the United States, as well as their companies' profits, their workers, and democracy worldwide. (NB: these companies no longer exist, bankrupted in no small part due to the Chinese companies they helped bring to prominence.) Western companies poured into China and helped give China access to the latest high technologies that would allow it to establish the largest and most elaborate social monitoring network ever devised. And these were not simply technology transfers: Chinese firms spent huge sums learning the latest in Western management methods. Huawei, for example, spent well over $1.5 billion between 1997 and 2012 acquiring best business practices from U.S. consulting firms.

China subsequently turned to spreading its digital influence globally. Hillman shows how U.S. policies aided Huawei's move into worldwide markets in the early 2000s. Perhaps most troubling is that in Iraq American blood and treasure helped facilitate it: the U.S.'s destruction of Iraqi telecommunications during the 2003 invasion left a void that Huawei readily filled. In 2007, while Western companies eyed Iraq with circumspection, Huawei secured a $275 million contract for wireless services in the country, and later did something similar in Afghanistan. As Jon Alterman, a Middle East scholar whom Hillman references, painfully points out, the United States was fighting but not winning in the Middle East; the Chinese were winning but not fighting.

China's rise in digital expertise and in the digital business ecosystem is astonishing. China is not only the technological "biggest of big brothers," it is also now the biggest provider of digital technology in the world. Huawei operates in 170 countries. It has created 70 percent of the current 4G network in Africa. Beidou provides more satellite coverage over the world's capitals than American GPS. Hikvision and Dahua provide almost 40 percent of all the world's surveillance cameras. Hikvision, which largely set up the surveillance camera system in China, has a considerable chunk (12 percent) of the North American market as well, which until Congress imposed restrictions in 2018, included Peterson Air Force Base. And just like the British Empire did with its "All Red Routes" of undersea telegraph lines, Chinese companies are laying vast amounts of subsea fiber-optic cables, with over a

hundred ongoing projects. Technological blunders, cost overruns, and mismanagement abound, yet the projects continue and expand.

Hillman has done commendable work in tracking China's global digital infrastructure project, not just in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, but in places such as Glasgow, Montana, an isolated East Montana town where Huawei equipment takes its calls. Glasgow is as patriotic as one would expect an American small town would be, but many residents are simply unaware that their phone calls and internet connections have been provided by a Chinese company. And frankly, as in many other places, people want reasonable bills and ready connectivity, regardless of a provider's national origin. Hillman very capably analyzes this American rural/urban "digital divide." Rural communities are separated by wide distances and need reliable and affordable digital connectivity, especially for emergency situations, more often than urban ones. Yet quite often these more isolated and less affluent communities are the ones most readily forgotten. Chinese firms have been available to meet their needs.

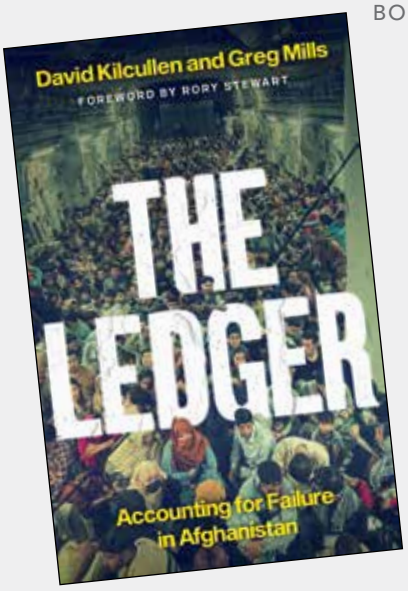
Yet, while Hillman is clear-eyed about the competition and the threat posed by China's DSR, he recognizes that China is not invincible. The DSR is filled with vulnerabilities. For instance, there are real problems with the DSR's space component. This is significant—at least nine countries are in the process of buying communications satellites from Chinese firms. But these nations have suffered major disappointments such as heavy costs and associated engineering, marketing, and service problems. Advanced rocketry and satellites are daunting technological tasks for developing countries, and many of them are experiencing major economic challenges as China's promises are somewhat less than fulfilled. Nigeria, for example, is attempting a space program underwritten by China, but as failures mount, the country seems to be somewhat dubiously doubling down on its space program and plunging into massive debt as a result. In other areas, China is far from a giant. In cloud computing for instance, Amazon, Microsoft, and Google own half the world's market; Chinese firms such as Alibaba have a much smaller imprint. And U.S. companies still possess the vast overall majority (70 percent) of the world's high-tech wealth. America is not necessarily holding a losing hand.

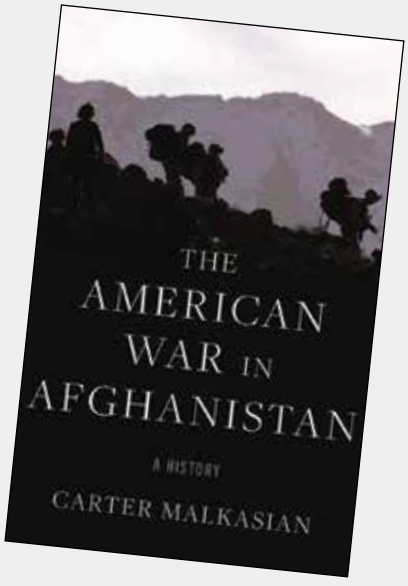
When it comes to recommendations to counter the DSR, Hillman proposes an alliance—he terms it CORE (standing for a "Coalition of Open and Resilient Economies"), a flexible coalition of technologically advanced and emerging nations. CORE would take the lead on setting digital standard worldwide, provide digital security to prevent Chinese-led tech depredations, and engage and support rising tech hubs "on the periphery." Certainly, there is nothing wrong with taking the lead in setting standards and forming alliances, though alliance formation, in of itself, can have little more than mere talismanic appeal: as Hillman points out, the tech rivalry is turning out to be remarkably bipolar. As mentioned, the United States has nearly 70 percent of the world's digital market capitalization; China has 22 percent, and Europe not even 4 percent. Europe, in other words, may lack the clout to make an alliance a surefire tech silver bullet. And of course, multinational tech corporations themselves wield enormous autonomous power that can cut across international alliance structures.

What about America itself countering the DSR with its own digital development project? Clearly there should be ramped up efforts. However, an all-out U.S. version of the DSR is highly unlikely. Hillman notes that the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) and the U.S. Export-Import Bank (EXIM), the two most important U.S. agencies involved in development, are capped at $195 billion, well shy of the trillions a true "counter DSR" would require. A digital Marshall Plan is not in the political offing.

Nonetheless, there is both vast productivity and potential within the American enterprise system. The problem is that, given our highly complex federalized system, we often don't know what we have at the local, state, and much less the federal levels. A sectoralized, specific underwriting, if not outright championing, of certain efforts could offset, and possibly even undermine the DSR and China's goal for global dominance. What is further needed is a fuller understanding of the respective U.S. and China asymmetries in the hi-tech, digital competition, the kind a thorough net assessment of comparative U.S. and China tech strengths and weaknesses could establish.

Hillman's book is an essential first step in understanding China's DSR challenge. What must follow next is a complete accounting and assessment of our own digital technology capacities—in wireless networks, connected devices, global positioning satellites, cloud computing, in that vast array of cutting-edge innovations that are transforming our nation and the world. Only then can China's challenge be fittingly met. PRISM





The Ledger: Accounting for Failure in Afghanistan

By David Kilcullen and Greg Mills
Hurst, 2021
352 pp. $19.95
ISBN: 9781787386952

The American War in Afghanistan: A History

By Carter Malkasian
Oxford University Press, 2021
561 pp. $34.95
ISBN: 9780197550779

Reviewed by Dov S. Zakheim

The American war in Afghanistan has finally come to an ignominious end, but the inevitable post-mortems have only just begun to trickle in. No doubt soon they will become a flood, adding to the mountains of studies, analyses, and full-length volumes that have appeared virtually since the onset of the war two decades ago. In no small part because of the chaos that surrounded America's final withdrawal from that embattled country, many analysts and observers have been quick to draw parallels with its equally chaotic departure from Vietnam nearly a half century earlier.

For David Kilcullen and Greg Mills, co-authors of *The Ledger: Accounting for Failure in Afghanistan*, Vietnam is as much a part of their story as is Afghanistan itself. Kilcullen, a former Australian army officer who practiced counter-insurgency in East Timor, earned a doctorate in political anthropology after which he served in a variety of posts both in the Pentagon and at the State Department before moving on to become a senior advisor to General David Petraeus, initially in Iraq and then in Afghanistan. He is credited with translating "theoretical insights into practical tactics soldiers could apply in the field" and with being among the first to advocate "conducting a

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'population-centric' rather than 'enemy-centric' counterinsurgency,"[1] an approach that Petraeus adopted with significant success in Iraq. Mills, who directs a South African foundation that assists African economic performance, has advised a number of African governments, and also was on four deployments to Afghanistan where he advised the Commander of the International Security Assistance Force.

Described as "outspoken and cheery,"[2] and highly thought of by senior military colleagues who worked with him in both Iraq and Afghanistan, the book certainly reflects Kilcullen's outspoken nature. It is hardly cheery, however, perhaps because what worked for him and Petraeus in Iraq was not enough to turn the increasingly successful Taliban tide in Afghanistan. He and Mills engage in an array of finger-pointing, blaming presidents, prime ministers, generals, and successive Afghan governments. They also state in passing that they too are to blame, but in contrast to their other exercises in "j'accuse," they offer no specifics about themselves.

The authors were involved in the rescue of some Afghans during the chaotic final days of America's war. They therefore can offer a first-hand account of the tragic efforts of so many Afghan friends of the United States who could not escape to safety, as well as the challenges that faced those who did manage to leave the country. The experience has clearly embittered the authors. They repeatedly and harshly criticize the Biden administration both for deciding to withdraw all American forces from Afghanistan and then making a complete and tragic mess of the actual withdrawal. Perhaps it was their experience in the war's final days that led them to question the methods and objectives of both the United States and the West throughout much of the course of the war.

Kilcullen and Mills argue that America never really learned the lessons of Vietnam, namely "the importance of establishing a political and social order." There is considerable validity to their argument, though part of Washington's problem was precisely that it tried to establish such an order on the basis of Western models that simply were not appropriate for a country whose population's loyalties were first and foremost to tribes, and then to sub-tribes, and finally to their ethnic confreres rather than to a central government.

The authors also allege that neither "NATO [n] or the international community offer the resources or sustained attention needed to enable a politically sustainable peace in Afghanistan." The latter assertion is certainly true. Once Iraq became the prime focus on Washington's attention, Afghanistan was relegated to a secondary concern.[3] By the time America awoke to the reality that peace in Afghanistan was not yet a settled matter, the Taliban had regrouped in Pakistan and had begun to capture ever larger slices of the Pashtu countryside.

On the other hand, the West poured billions of dollars into the country. Indeed, given the levels of corruption that Kilcullen and Mills themselves identify as one of the major reasons for the Kabul government's downfall, it is arguable that too much money flooded into the country too quickly and without sufficient oversight. Far too much development activity was left in the hands of U.S. Government contractors whose primary concern was their own bottom line and who appeared to have little interest in overseeing the activities of their local sub-contractors, who themselves were all too happy to siphon off as much American money as they could get their hands on.

Kilcullen and Mills also argue that Washington should have extended a hand to the Taliban as early as the December 2001 Bonn Conference, which laid the groundwork for the establishment of a new Afghan constitution and government. In making that argument they are not alone. Carter Malkasian makes the same point in his magisterial account, *The American War in Afghanistan: A History*. So too

did Lakhdar Brahimi, the United Nations envoy to Afghanistan and convenor of the conference.

Not everyone agrees, however. As Mark Fields and Ramsha Ahmed point out, following 9/11 the American people would never have accepted direct negotiations with al-Qaeda's sponsors in Afghanistan since it would have been seen as reward for an act of "horrific terror with political concessions." Moreover, given the nature of the campaign, it was not unreasonable to conclude that "the Taliban was on its last legs." Finally, even Brahimi himself acknowledged that the Bonn Conference "would not have been possible had the Taliban been at the table because of 9/11 and because other Afghan factions would not have allowed it."[4]

Kilcullen and Mills ridicule those who have argued that:

- Afghanistan is not… a nation that people within its borders identify with. Rather it is a collection of warring tribes and clans to which sub-national groups its citizens first and foremost owe their loyalty.
- It is a narco-state without a proper economy.
- A corrupt and incompetent government was never likely to win the support of a majority of its people.
- The military mission represented classic mission creep.

"None of these statements," assert Kilcullen and Mills, "holds up to the slightest scrutiny. Almost all of them are made by pundits who have never visited Afghanistan, never opened a book on Afghan history or culture, speak no regional languages, have no Afghan friends, have never spoken to a member of the Taliban, who know no actual Afghans (who they often refer to as 'Afghanis'…) and discovered themselves in 2021 to be instant experts on a war they had forgotten or ignored for years."

In addition to insulting the likes of Carter Malkasian, who spent considerable time in the country, met with Taliban officials, and has Afghan friends (it is not clear what differences there are between "Afghan friends" and "actual Afghans"), the authors are throwing dirt at many others, myself included, who not only spent time in country, did indeed have Afghan friends (as well as knowing "actual Afghans"), and remained involved with the country from 2001 until the present. Indeed, as Malkasian's carefully detailed volume demonstrates, many of these assertions are flat wrong.

Like Kilcullen, Malkasian, a brilliant analyst, spent considerable time in Afghanistan as an advisor to several commanding generals, including General Joseph Dunford; he moved back to Washington with Dunford when the latter became Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Unlike Kilcullen and Mills, however, Malkasian's critique and recommendations are both low key and carry far more substance.

For example, Malkasian goes to great lengths to identify individuals and groups by tribe and sub-tribe. He demonstrates that tribal loyalties and not merely ethnicities or variants of Islam have always played a critical role in the functioning of the Afghan state. Moreover, he offers that poppy growing in the countryside has long been a major pillar of the Afghan economy. Rather than generalize about corruption, he identifies in considerable detail how it demoralized and undermined not only the cohesion of the Afghan armed forces and police, but also the civilian population as well.

Kilcullen and Mills assert, without any basis or citations, that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld "misunderstood the Taliban as exporters of extremism. Rumsfeld's misunderstanding led him to pursue the military annihilation of the Taliban until, bored by the gritty demands of stabilization and reconstruction and distracted by the shiny object of Saddam Hussein, he wandered off to Iraq." This is all "rubbish" as the authors' many British interlocutors might say. To begin with, Rumsfeld,

and virtually all in the Bush administration and the Congress, reacted not to the Taliban's internal policies, which had been ongoing for several years, but to the group's support for and sheltering of al-Qaeda and its refusal to give up Bin Laden and his henchmen after 9/11.

Moreover, as Rumsfeld's civilian coordinator for Afghanistan, I can attest that he never became "bored" with the place. And it was not Rumsfeld but Vice President Dick Cheney, supported by Rumsfeld's deputy Paul Wolfowitz, who were most outspoken about the need to rid Iraq of Saddam Hussein. Finally, it was not in Rumsfeld's nature to "wander off." It is not clear whether either of the authors ever met the man; what is certainly clear is that they had no idea about how he functioned. Sadly, it is this sort of snide and gratuitous commentary that surfaces far too often throughout *The Ledger*.

What is most ironic about Kilcullen and Mills' assertions is that the authors contradict themselves. Indeed, on the very next page after they belittle "pundits" for pointing to the importance of tribal loyalties, they write, "turning Afghanistan around was never going to be easy; this much is true for any country where there is extreme instability with underlying tribal and other divisions." They actually castigate the "West" because it "did not appreciate the personal and tribal" nature of Afghan politics, an assertion that they repeat more than once. Similarly, after arguing that the United States did not put enough money behind its efforts in Afghanistan, the authors point out that "$137 billion was earmarked for reconstruction and development," hardly a miniscule sum.

Similarly, although the authors mock "pundits" for pointing to corruption as a major reason the Kabul government was doomed to failure, they say exactly the same thing several times themselves, in one instance citing the parallel with Vietnam: "Phantom soldiers on the personnel rolls in Vietnam bloated pay packets the surplus then collected by commanders, just as positions were sold in Afghanistan and rents then collected." As it happens, these latter assertions, though unsupported by any documented research, are nevertheless quite correct, as Malkasian documents in considerable detail.

In contrast to Malkasian's careful amassing of primary and secondary sources, buttressed by interviews with Afghans from a variety of tribes, ethnicities, and political persuasions, Kilcullen and Mills populate their volume with a host of allegations and unsupported assertions, some of which, like their characterization of Rumsfeld, are true howlers. For example, they assert that "the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979 was in support of an existing and relatively well functioning regime." Actually, the country was coming apart because of the rift between the increasingly bitter divide between Nur Mohammed Taraki, the communist head of state, and Hafizulla Amin, leader of a rival communist faction. Amin had Taraki assassinated; the country was hardly "well-functioning" when the Soviets invaded two months later. Indeed, the authors quickly reverse themselves and write of Soviet "fears of [the country's] complete collapse."

Kilcullen and Mills do make some valuable observations that offer lessons learned for the future, although, typical of their hyperbole, they assert that "there are literally a million things the international community, and the U.S.-led coalition forces, could have done differently if they cared enough to avoid the catastrophic endgame of 2021." They rightly point out that "there was a lack of civilian expertise, reluctance of aid organizations to integrate efforts with the military, endlessly rapid rotations, and civilian risk-exacerbated by the underwhelming quality of some, though by no means all, the agencies involved." The last caveat is important: among the bravest and most capable civilians in Afghanistan were individual contractors, who for

bureaucratic reasons AID would not hire, but who interfaced "outside the wire" with the Afghan populace at the risk of their own lives. They deserve more than a brief subordinate clause.

They correctly point out that the invasion of Iraq diverted attention from the unfinished business in Afghanistan and that the techniques that made the counterinsurgency campaign in Iraq successful, at least for a time, did not translate to the Afghan environment.

They also argue, with considerable justification, that Western aid would have proved more effective if it had been directed toward areas that were under government control rather than toward the most violent parts of the country. Had they done so, they could have built on their successes and offered a model to those Afghans that up till then had resisted them. In addition, the allies should have focused on local governments, where loyalties tended to lie; Malkasian also argues that such a focus would have had a better chance for success.

Kilcullen and Mills argue for "a coherent strategic plan," for "strategic patience," for "unity and continuity of effort," for "seeking a political solution from military strength," for "reduc[ing] costs to market," and for "ensur[ing] regional actors are pushing the parties to a negotiated inclusive solution." These and a host of similar observations all make good sense in the abstract. The difficulty is implementing them in a real-world context, which, as Malkasian demonstrates, is far more complex, demanding, and indeed surprising to those unfamiliar with its cultural byways.

Ultimately, despite their in-country experience and some astute observations, the book fails to convince because it is essentially a polemic. Moreover, too much of its material derives from the first ten years of the war, and it is focused far more heavily on the British experience than on the American. It also is highly repetitive and could have been at least 50 pages shorter.

The contrast with Malkasian's effort could not be more stark. He systematically examines the country's history, culture, and politics, and both details and evaluates the American and Taliban conduct of the war. The volume's 62 pages of footnotes indicate the extent of his research. And he does so with considerable modesty and respect for a people and country that, despite his ties to both, he acknowledges are in many ways still beyond his ken.

Malkasian's sense for the subtleties of Afghan culture leads him to offer a far more nuanced picture of President Hamid Karzai than that portrayed in the media, and for that matter, in American government circles. Karzai has always been first and foremost an Afghan patriot. Despite the corruption that he tolerated, and in some cases fostered, Malkasian demonstrates that Karzai nevertheless had a far better understanding of tribal and ethnic dynamics than either Ashraf Ghani, his successor, or the majority of American officials with whom he interacted.

Indeed, Karzai never actually closed the door to the Taliban, recognizing the loyalty that they could command from large swaths of the Afghan population. Moreover, he too commanded considerable loyalty, due not only—indeed not primarily—to his election to the presidency. As Malkasian notes, after Karzai was returned to office in 2009 in an election marked by massive fraud, "I was in Helmand at the time. I recall no Afghans complaining about Hamid Karzai, Popalzai descendent of Ahmed Shah Durrani, founder of the Afghan state. Karzai's legitimacy rested on much more than a fraudulent election."

That election marked a turning point in Karzai's relations with Washington. During the campaign Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, President Obama's arrogant and self-centered coordinator for Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as Karl Eikenberry, who had retired from the military and returned as Ambassador to Kabul, both actively

encouraged other potential candidates to run against Karzai. Malkasian understands Eikenberry's motives as deriving from his desire to "help the average Afghan," which he believed was best done through competitive elections. Holbrooke's motives were another matter, however. His "role can be chalked up to hubris," observes Malkasian. He then adds "if Holbrooke truly sought to oust Karzai, he both failed to remove him and through open campaigning embittered him toward the United States."

Malkasian describes in great detail the changing nature of American military operations and outlines why they ultimately failed. He has high praise for only a few of the generals who commanded American forces during the twenty years' war. Among these are the last American commander, General Scott Miller, who he considers to be "the most skilled commander of the Afghan war." General Stanley McChrystal also comes in for high praise. In the one year that he served in Afghanistan before Obama fired him for reportedly disparaging remarks about the White House in general and Vice President Joe Biden specifically, McChrystal "authored the surge that brought the United States back into the war [and]… with his care for improving the Afghan government and reducing civilian casualties…endowed operations with a moral compass."

Just as he presents the American side of events in great detail, Malkasian walks his readers through the creation and organization of the Taliban and introduces many Taliban leaders who are nowhere nearly as well known as Mullah Omar and Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the Taliban's deputy leader. These include Mullah Akhtar Mohammed Mansour, who served as Mullah Omar's deputy while Baradar was spending three years in a Pakistani prison and Mullah Dadullah Lang, the brilliant but brutal Taliban commander who led the 2006 Taliban offensive that led to major territorial gains, including half of Kandahar province, and was killed by the British in Helmand the following year.

Baradar's case is a prime example of Washington's changing attitude to the war, especially once Donald Trump became President. Under pressure from the CIA, the Pakistanis had imprisoned Baradar. Yet it was the Americans who pressed for his release from the house arrest to which he had been transferred at Hamid Karzai's request. The reason for the seeming American volte-face was that Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and negotiator Zalmay Khalilzad judged that with Baradar as lead Taliban negotiator, not only would the group take the ongoing talks seriously, but so would President Donald Trump, who was pressing for an agreement.

Malkasian's most important conclusion about the war is that the Taliban won because "it stood for what it meant to be Afghan." The movement prevailed for two main reasons. First, because their "form of traditional Islam weathered the storm better than the tribes, new warlords, state, or educated Islamism. Such strength portended the movement's perseverance on the political stage." Second, the Taliban represented resistance to occupation. Both were "values that ran thick in Afghan history and defined an Afghan's worth."

In this regard Malkasian appears to differ from Kilcullen and Mills, when they argue that "perhaps the most critical thing that could have been done differently was to build an Afghan military that mirrored its parent society and reflected how Afghans prefer to fight, rather than mimicking western organization and methods." There is an element of truth to their assertion, but as Malkasian powerfully demonstrates, the fundamental challenge for the Kabul government was that the Taliban fought both as a nationalist and an Islamic cause, while the government's forces merely saw themselves as supporting the United States and its allies.

Moreover, Malkasian points out that the competition among tribes undermined the unity of the forces fighting the Taliban. He adds that "this

discord can also…be attributed to the structure of the government itself, which was designed to prevent any leader from actually being in charge in any region…. Whatever their own set of rivalries, compared to the tribes and the government, the Taliban were cohesive." It is surprising, that Kilcullen, an anthropologist by education, did not reach the same set of conclusions.

Like Kilcullen and Mills, Malkasian observes that "the government and its warlord allies treated Afghans poorly, instinctively stealing in order to help themselves and their communities in the unending competition for survival." He likewise points to Pakistan's complicity in preventing the United States from defeating the Taliban. He agrees that the Bush Administration erred in not bringing the Taliban to the Bonn negotiating table, though he understands why it did not do so. He notes that the Bush Administration was far too slow in building up the Afghan army and police. He shares the other authors' views that failure was not inevitable. And, of course, he too recognizes that the war in Iraq sapped much of the energy that the Bush Administration had initially committed to stabilizing Afghanistan.

Though Malkasian's volume is far more detailed and subtle, it falls short of Kilcullen and Mills' focus in one major regard: it does not analyze to anything like the same depth the successes and failures of the Western efforts to "reconstruct" Afghanistan; that is, to create a modern society out of one that was still rooted in the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, on balance Malkasian offers a nonpareil history of a war that initially was viewed as one of necessity but increasingly became one of choice. His book sets the standard for all future works that will examine the causes and nature of yet another unhappy American military adventure on the mainland of Asia. PRISM

Notes

[1] Linda Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008), 99.

[2] *Ibid*.

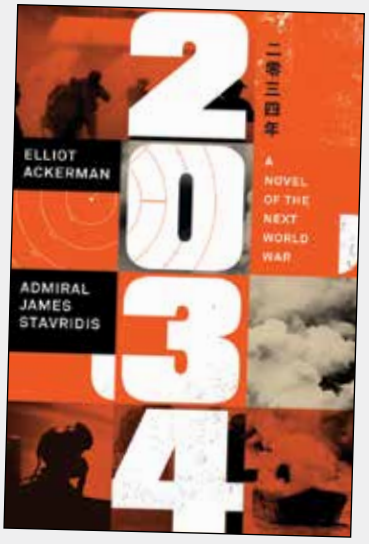
[3] On this point see my *A Vulcan's Tale: How the Bush Administration Mismanaged the Reconstruction of Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2011).

[4] Mark Fields and Ramsha Ahmed, *A Review of the Bonn Conference and Application to the Road Ahead in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2011), 19.

2034: A Novel of the Next World War

By Elliot Ackerman and James Stavridis
Penguin Books, 2022
320 pp. $17.00
ISBN: 9781984881274

Reviewed by James P. Farwell



This is a thriller that carries a cautionary note for those interested in national security who worry about the risks of human miscalculation. The point that the book makes is that in the emerging threat environment, when state players rely heavily upon technology to improve military capabilities, the human factor remains central.

The tale is not new. World War I ignited arguably because Germany's military feared that it must act or lose what it viewed as military superiority, and then the key players misread the intentions of one another and miscalculated what everyone else would do. The point is important and Ackerman and Stavridis merit a lot of credit for packaging their caution in an exciting thriller that keeps the pages turning. As impressive, the story unfolds through the eyes and actions of well-articulated characters.

Knowing Admiral Stavridis and being familiar with his world view, the book does not predict that World War III will break out. Their aim is to impress upon readers the risks in current trends and the failure for all sides to comprehend how one another view their equities and their capabilities. In an era in which major competitors are rushing headlong into building up capabilities for armed conflict, one must recognize that while we cannot afford to let a nation like China trump our capabilities, better capabilities carry heightened risks.

Since the book is a thriller, it's not fair to give away too much of the story. That spoils the fun. One thing I admire is that they were careful to avoid attaching angels' wings or forked tails to the main characters. This is not Rambo-On-The-High-Seas. In the book, China's defense attache in Washington, Admiral Lin Bao is half American and studied at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport. He is depicted objectively. He is neither good nor evil. He is a Chinese nationalist who admires the U.S. and harbors ambitions of living here.

But he doesn't flinch from carrying out his duty as he sees it: to forge a strategy that exploits a manufactured crisis in the South China Sea to advance national security interests.

In the book's characterization, Beijing's top strata of decisionmakers play hardball. The winners live like royalty. But their existence reminds me of the crack someone made about whether to impose term limits on members of the U.S. Congress: combine term limits and the death penalty. Officials can run for re-election, but if they lose, they die. Lin Bao

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grasps the stakes and he is no fool. He plays to win.

The central characters on the U.S. side include cigar-smoking Commodore, Sarah Hunt, an American, the first to confront China's strategy that roots itself in its recognized warfighting doctrine of stealth and surprise, backed up by its notion of lawfare. Lawfare—justifying action through China's own, often strained, interpretation of governing law in order to ensure that Chinese actions occupy the moral high ground. Mischief Reef, an islet twelve nautical miles off the mainland's coast, is well named for what happens.

In the meantime, the U.S. President—here is where you know this is fiction, not docu-drama—has been freshly elected an Independent. In the real world, good luck on that. But she is a great character, and how the authors handle the dilemma that confronts her is artful and moves the story along. Air Force Major Chris "Wedge" Mitchell is aptly named for the role he plays, in piloting an F-35 whose flight path opens up an opportunity for Iran. And there is a pivotal character I will not mention, as that character's appearance is a surprise and represents the kind of unconventional thinking that mark an original novel.

This book does not fit into the Tom Clancy techno-thriller genre. It is a political thriller, more in the vein of P.W. Singer and August Cole's Ghost Fleet and General Sir Richard Shirreff's 2017: War with Russia. In all three books, the authors explore the strategic implications of potential dystopian military scenarios rooted in a failure to understand what opponents intend or their worldview. Shirreff's book focuses on Russia, and argues that the path to deterrence or prevailing in armed conflict lies in striking a balance between robust conventional and nuclear arms. Singer and Cole take a more global view in which Russia teams up with a post-Communist China to launch a technologically sophisticated attack against the United States in the Pacific.

Ghost Fleet and 2034 somewhat echo each other in their examination of how modern technology can have a substantial impact on the warfighting capacity of the United States. But while Ghost Fleet struck me as ultimately a thriller with somewhat implausible plot points that comprise its matrix, 2034 presents a plausible scenario rooted in what we know and how a new competitor for global influence might shape outcomes.

I enjoyed the scenarios that the authors envisioned and how they allowed events to unfold. An important point the book makes is that both China and the United States should think again before allowing ambition and the flaws that make us human to dominate political or military strategy. In the minds of those who initiated World War I, matters would move swiftly and smoothly to a harmonious conclusion. Warfare qualifies as none of those things. It is messy and unpredictable, with knock-on consequences that vindicate the views of those who agree that "give war a chance" sounds fine when spewed from a political soapbox, while in reality it can potentially lead to catastrophe.

Much of the discourse about U.S.-China competition revolves around whether we should characterize China as a competitor or rival, or an opponent or adversary. The click-bait stories highlight technological changes, such as what Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley described to Congress as a "Sputnik" event in China's launching of a hypersonic speed missile that could circle the earth. The revelation that the hypersonic nuclear weapon fired a second missile while traveling five times the speed of sound reportedly caught the Pentagon off-guard.

China's current warfare approach, aimed at achieving military dominance by 2049 to support China's ambition of establishing global economic supremacy by that date—the so-called China Dream—roots itself in efforts to seize global leadership by developing new military technology. China sees taking the lead in developing artificial

intelligence as key to achieving its strategic goals. In the United States Nicolas Chaillan—the first Chief Software Officer for the Air Force—resigned after claiming that ill-judged U.S. priorities had given China an unsurmountable lead in Artificial Intelligence and U.S. failure to give cyber security proper focus.

Others have challenged that conclusion, but the point is, our military and political leaders get hung up on the absolute importance of technology in determining outcomes in engagements and conflicts. The debate reminds one of proclamations that the "revolution in military affairs," a military theory of warfare connected to technological and organizational recommendations for military reform, had somehow changed the nature of warfare, rather than merely affecting the ways and means for executing strategy.

Ways and means are important, and building our warfighting capabilities is essential in keeping pace with Chinese competition. But technology has not changed the nature of warfare, so well described by Count Carl von Clausewitz's "holy trinity" of will, chance, and cause, and their interaction with the frictions of warfare. What Ackerman and Stavridis want us to do is remember that wars are fought between humans, and technology serves as tools—as ways and means—for the conduct of warfare and achievement of strategy.

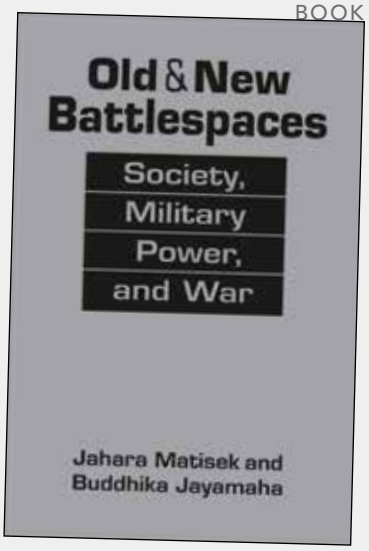
In that view, it is the judgments—or miscalculations—of humans that propel us into war, not machines. Thucydides observed that three factors motivate nations to go to war: fear, pride, and national interest. His views have ignited long debates, but it seems evident enough that pride—or national honor, or nationalism, take you pick—can touch off armed conflict. Indeed, a key theme for Thucydides was how Athenian pride fueled its own nationalist imperialism and shaped the way they thought about the Athenian empire. Hubris produced devastation.

Chinese nationalism is driving that nation's threat to attack Taiwan and driving the China Dream. Pride can give rise to anger and hubris and fuel arrogance as well as blind players into overconfidence. Technology can be so spectacular that it blinds a military to its strategic limitations. Ackerman and Stavridis recognize that, and the cautionary notes they strike insightfully express those views. Technology matters, but the exercise by leaders of sound judgment and avoiding strategic miscalculation matter more. This a fine book, as fiction and as a clear lesson offered without preaching. Highly recommended. PRISM

Old and New Battlespaces: Society, Military Power, and War

By Jahara Matisek and Buddhika Jayamaha
Lynne Rienner Publishers, March 2022
197 pp. $87.50
ISBN: 9781626379961

Reviewed by Sean McFate



How and why warfare is changing has become its own genre of late. Enter Jahara "Franky" Matisek and Buddhika "Jay" Jayamaha. Both have military backgrounds and are on faculty at the U.S. Air Force Academy. *Old and New Battlespaces* builds on their previous scholarship regarding "social media warriors." Like their articles, readers will find the book either astonishingly naïve or extraordinarily prescient, depending on what war they inhabit.

The book examines where wars are won—the battlespace—and how it is shifting from a physical reality to a cognitive one. Wars are now won in the hearts and minds of whole populations, and the weapons do not fire bullets but rather disinformation, social media messaging, and information operations (in the broadest sense of the term). They correctly warn that autocracies can easily exploit this way of war, but democracies cannot. They conclude with some middling solutions and a few important questions we should all take seriously.

Much of the book is dedicated to historical evidence demonstrating that battlespaces always evolve with the changing character of war. It will be familiar ground to most readers. In fact, the middle section of the book is superfluous. Anyone who picks up the book probably understands that warfare and battlespace have changed significantly over the past 100 years: two World Wars, Cold War nuclear era, post-Berlin Wall, the 9/11 wars, and Great Power Competition. Skip to the end.

The authors' strategic analysis of modern cognitive warfare is admirable and well written. They contrast how autocracies and democracies fight in this new battlespace, the role of emerging technologies, and impacts on international relations, with an eye towards Great Power Competition. They conclude that the primary battlespace today is civil society itself, and disinformation superpowers such as Russia deliberately target populations with cognitive weapons of war. It is a path to victory, infer the authors, although they never explain what "victory" looks like in the new battlespace.

Curiously, their argument leans heavily on Clausewitz, who was famously suspicious of intelligence, deception, or anything approaching the "cognitive battlespace." The Prussian preferred a strong volley of ball and shot, compared to military ruses. Today, information war skeptics echo the same hesitancy, noting you cannot tweet someone to death—at least, not literally. Sun Tzu would have been a better choice for the authors' way of war. After all, it was the ancient Chinese general who

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described all war as deception, and the acme of skill was to win before the first shot was fired. In other words, fake out your enemy. It's how Russia took the Crimea, not by blitzkrieg but by deception.

The authors are a little sloppy with the distinction between war and warfare. Upfront, they elegantly parse the difference between the two, using Clausewitzian logic, then subsequently use the words interchangeably. Sometimes it seems they do so deliberately, almost suggesting the new battlespace will change not only warfare but the nature of war itself. However, this is like claiming a new kind of clock will change the nature of time.

The analysis is purely state-centric, an oddity given the topic. The power of this new warfare lies in the private sector, as we have seen play out on Capitol Hill. CEOs of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram routinely square off with Senators over who controls the internet—the new battlespace. There is no "social media" lever in the Oval Office that the president can pull for strategic advantage. Autocrats have more power to exploit this space, but even they have limitations. When Chinese star tennis player Peng Shuai disappeared after accusing a former Vice Premier of sexual assault, Beijing could not control the outrage despite heavily censoring social media. Lastly, the Fortune 500 and superwealthy individuals already indulge in the dark arts of this new battlespace. Could they draw the United States into war with China, if it suited their interests? Could they do it to each other, creating unintended consequences for global peace and security? Additionally, if the United States wants to compete in this battlespace, it will need the cooperation of the private sector. A purely state-centric approach to the problem makes little sense.

In terms of solutions, Matisek and Jayamaha commit mistakes common to defense intellectuals. Like counterinsurgency theorists a decade ago, they call for a whole of government or society response but deliver an analysis that is remarkably military and often moored at the operational art level of war. It will persuade few in the interagency or beyond. While they identify central gaps in American response, their recommendations are simplistic and unfeasible. They call for nothing short of a new grand strategy akin to NSC-68 accompanied by landmark legislation comparable to Goldwater-Nichols, but they do not provide details. This is not a solution.

Despite these challenges, the book is important. Matisek and Jayamaha are not the first to raise alarm over the changing character of war and how the United States is unprepared. They join a growing intellectual insurgency that views Great Power Competition as more than major combat operations. They implicitly ask whether powers like China and Russia can "win" yet avoid big battles. How should democracies fight back without becoming undemocratic in the process? The authors conclude with a list of provocative questions that every American should consider, such as the limits of free speech and the lack of strategic thought over the past 30 years. In a time of deep division within our country, Matisek and Jayamaha remind us that our adversaries can exploit this turmoil using cognitive weapons of war, and this is not a problem aircraft carriers can fix. PRISM

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