## DA – Heg Bad

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#### Possibility of another isolationist president puts US credibility on edge – allies will bandwagon with power, not promises

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This is why even though Donald Trump has become a member of a rather exclusive club—one-term U.S. presidents—the Trump presidency will have enduring consequences for U.S. power and influence in the world. Leo Tolstoy warned that “there are no conditions to which a man may not become accustomed, particularly if he sees that they are accepted by those around him,” and it is easy, especially for most insular Americans, to implicitly normalize what was in fact a norm-shattering approach to foreign policy. Level whatever criticisms you may about the often bloodstained hands of the American colossus on the world stage, but Trump’s foreign policy was different: shortsighted, transactional, mercurial, untrustworthy, boorish, personalist, and profoundly illiberal in rhetoric, disposition, and creed. ∂ Some applauded this transformation, but most foreign policy experts, practitioners, and professionals are breathing a sigh of relief that a deeply regrettable, and in many ways embarrassing, interlude has passed. (It is exceedingly unlikely that any future president will exchange “beautiful letters” with and express their “love” for the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.) But such palpable relief must be tempered by a dispiriting truth, rooted in that notion of anarchy: the world cannot unsee the Trump presidency. (Nor, for that matter, can it unsee the way members of the U.S. Congress behaved in the final weeks of the Trump administration, voting opportunistically to overturn an election and helping incite violence at the Capitol.) From this point forward, countries around the globe will have to calculate their interests and expectations with the understanding that the Trump administration is the sort of thing that the U.S. political system can plausibly produce. ∂ Such reassessments will not be to the United States’ advantage. For 75 years, the general presumption that the United States was committed to the relationships and institutions it forged and the norms it articulated shaped the world in ways that privileged U.S. interests. If it is increasingly perceived to be feckless and self-serving, the United States will find the world a more hazardous and less welcoming place. ∂ POWER AND PURPOSE∂ One country tries to anticipate the foreign policy behavior of another by making assessments about two factors: power and purpose. Measuring the former seems straightforward, although it is often not. (France seemed to boast a formidable military in 1939, and the Soviet Union was considered a superpower a half century later, yet both countries suddenly and unexpectedly collapsed under pressure.) Measuring the latter—purpose—requires more guesswork in practice but is even more important. Is a country a friend or a foe, and in either case, for how long? Is a country’s word its bond, or are its commitments ephemeral and its pronouncements little more than shallow, opportunistic posturing? Ultimately, these are questions of trust and confidence that require judgment calls. And for better or worse, it is easier to partner with a country whose underlying foreign policy orientation is rooted in purposes that are reasonably consistent over time. ∂ For U.S. partners in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, however, Washington’s priorities on the world stage must now be interrogated, and any conclusions reached must be held with qualifications rather than confidence. And there is nothing that President Joe Biden and his team of immaculate professionals can do to stop that. From now on, all countries, everywhere, must hedge their bets about the United States—something that will unnerve allies more than adversaries. Whatever promises are made and best behaviors followed over the next few years, a resurgence of knuckle-dragging America firstism will loom menacingly in the shadows. That possibility will inevitably shape other states’ conclusions about their relations with the United States, even as nearly every world leader rushes to shake the hand of the new U.S. president. ∂ Thus, even with the election of Biden—a traditional, centrist liberal internationalist, cut from the same basic foreign policy cloth of every U.S. president (save one) across nine decades—countries will now have to hedge against the prospect of an indifferent, disengaged, and clumsily myopic U.S. foreign policy. After all, anarchy also demands that states see the world as it is, not as they wish it might be. And the warning signs that the United States is perhaps not the country it once was could not be flashing more brightly.∂ Although the margin of victory in the 2020 U.S. presidential election was wide (the two candidates were [separated](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/12/11/bidens-victory-another-example-of-how-electoral-college-wins-are-bigger-than-popular-vote-ones/) by seven million votes, a 4.5 percent edge in the popular vote, and 74 electoral votes), it was not, by any stretch of the imagination, a renunciation of Trump. In 2016, some argued that Trump’s election was a fluke. This was always whistling past the graveyard, but the case could be made. After all, the election hinged on only about 80,000 votes, spread across three swing states. Even with that, but for the historically contingent geographic quirks of Michigan (the Upper Peninsula) and Florida (the Panhandle), those states would have gone blue. And the Democratic nominee, Hillary Clinton (who did walk away with the popular vote by a large margin), was, for some key constituencies, a suspect candidate. ∂ The 2020 election put to rest the comforting fable that Trump’s election was a fluke. Trump is the United States—or at least a very large part of it. Many Americans will choke on that sentiment, but other countries don’t have the luxury of clinging to some idealized version of the United States’ national character. Trump presided over dozens of ethical scandals, egregious procedural lapses, and startling indiscretions, most of which would have ended the political career of any other national political figure of the past half century. But the trampling of norms barely registered with most of the American public. Nor did the sheer, horrifying incompetence of the administration’s handling of the gravest public health crisis in a century chase Trump from the political scene in disgrace. (Imagine what would have happened to Jimmy Carter, a decent man dealt a difficult hand by an oil shock and the Iranian hostage crisis. Those events were enough to have his approval rating plummet into the 20s and soon send him packing after his landslide defeat in 1980.) Rather, Trump characteristically treated a pandemic that killed well more than a quarter of a million of the people under his charge as a personal inconvenience, to be managed exclusively for perceived political advantage. Even so, 74 million people voted for him—nine million more than did in 2016 and the most votes ever cast for a U.S. candidate for president, with the exception of Biden, who garnered 81 million. ∂ One cannot paint a picture of the American polity and the country’s future foreign policy without including the significant possibility of a large role for Trumpism, with or without Trump himself in the Oval Office. Looking ahead four years, America watchers must anticipate that the next U.S. presidential election could turn out quite differently. This does not bode well for U.S. interests and influence in world politics. As Mark Leonard, the director of the European Council on Foreign Relations, [observed](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/22/world/europe/europe-biden-trump-diplomacy.html), “If you know that whatever you’re doing will at most last until the next election, you look at everything in a more contingent way.” ∂ Indeed, the story of the 2016 election wasn’t just about Trump’s victory over Clinton; from the perspective of other countries trying to guess the future of U.S. foreign policy, what happened in that year’s primaries was even more informative and chilling. In the GOP’s contest, a political novice, reality TV star, boastful businessman of questionable repute, and indifferent, only occasional member of the party itself managed to steamroll a strong field of established competitors by disparaging the party’s heroes and trampling on its long-held core policy beliefs about global engagement. Because it took place within the Republican Party, this astonishing, unanticipated upheaval cannot be attributed to the possible flaws of Clinton or liberal overreach in the culture wars, explanations subsequently trotted out after the shock of the general election. And a similar story was seen in the Democratic Party’s nomination process. Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont—another long-shot outsider, an old socialist from a tiny state—came very close to wresting the prize from a powerful political machine fully backed by the party apparatus. ∂ What did Trump and Sanders have in common? Almost nothing—except for their rejection of internationalism. The 2016 campaign revealed that the bipartisan postwar internationalist consensus, cracks in which had been visible and growing for decades, had been shattered. A telling casualty marking the end of American internationalism was the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a far-reaching trade agreement among a dozen Pacific Rim countries, including the United States. The agreement was at the center of the Obama administration’s “pivot” to Asia. Clinton, as secretary of state, had orchestrated the painstaking negotiations that produced the treaty and crowed that the pact set “the gold standard in trade agreements to open free, transparent, fair trade.” Yet during the pitched battle for the Democratic nomination, she was forced to renounce the TPP, which many in her party had been wary of. (Sanders led the charge against what he described as “another trade deal disaster.”) In fact, the agreement enjoyed widespread Republican support in both houses of Congress. Trump withdrew from the pact on his first Monday in office.∂ IT GETS WORSE∂ Carrying through to the Biden administration, then, is the observation that the center of political gravity in the United States has shifted away from the engaged internationalism that characterized the previous 75 years before Trump and toward something closer to isolationism, of which there is a long tradition in U.S. history. In assessing the future trajectory of U.S. foreign policy, outside observers will have to make assessments about each political party. Even with Trump out of office, the Republican Party will likely decline to distance itself from Trumpism, given how much elected officials live in fear that Trump will turn his large and loyal following against those who criticize him. Rhetorically at least, the party will likely remain nativistic and nationalist in its attitude toward the rest of the world. The Democratic Party’s foreign policies, even though they may be less overtly malevolent, will not offer much reassurance. Biden can be expected to flood the field with an impressive foreign policy team and give every reassuring impression that the United States will behave as a responsible great power, one that is engaged with the world, respects rules, and follows norms. But his mandate is limited.∂ Biden, elected mostly on a platform of being everything Trump isn’t, has precious little political capital, and he is unlikely to deploy it for the purpose of fighting for his foreign policy priorities. The Democrats, united in their horror at the Trump presidency, are divided on much else. Visible fissures run through the party, often on generational lines, between the party’s centrist and left-leaning wings. And its median constituent, although neither nativistic nor nationalist, might be described as globalism-wary and even isolationism-curious. The conflicts within the Democratic Party will be exacerbated by the salience of Biden’s age at the time of his inauguration (78). Given that Biden himself has repeatedly [hinted](https://www.politico.com/news/2019/12/11/biden-single-term-082129) that his might very well be a one-term, transitional presidency, his fellow Democrats will quickly begin jockeying for position in the anticipated battle for party leadership. Thus, predicting U.S. behavior will again require looking down the road at the likely range of political outcomes four years into the future.∂ Worse, foreign assessments of the United States must consider the possibility that it will soon simply be out of the great-power game altogether. Looked at objectively, the country boasts a colossal economy and commands the world’s most impressive military. But as the old saying about sports teams goes, they don’t play the games on paper, and there are reasons to question whether Washington has the wherewithal to behave as a purposeful actor on the world stage and pursue its long-term interests. The problem is not just that with politics no longer stopping at the water’s edge, U.S. foreign policy could veer unpredictably from administration to administration. It is that the United States is taking on water itself. The country has entered what can only be characterized as an age of unreason, with large swaths of its population embracing wild conspiracy theories. The United States today looks like Athens in the final years of the Peloponnesian War or France in the 1930s: a once strong democracy that has become ragged and vulnerable. France, descending into appeasement, would soon well illustrate that a country consumed by domestic social conflict is not one that will likely be capable of practicing a productive, predictable, or trustworthy foreign policy. ∂ NO MORE BLANK CHECKS∂ This dystopian scenario may not come to pass. It might not even be the most likely American future. But the logic of anarchy requires that all countries must at least process the United States’ polarization and domestic dysfunction, think through the implications of that scenario in which all bets are off, and imagine a world in which Washington, for all its raw power, is less relevant in world politics. This prospect will invite major reassessments of U.S. behavior.∂ Some of the impending revisions will be benign and even beneficial from a U.S. perspective. On the positive side of the ledger, Middle Eastern countries may finally begin to imagine life without strong U.S. military commitments in the region. In 1990, it was understandable that U.S. allies welcomed the U.S.-led war to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation. Had that invasion gone unchecked, Iraq would likely have achieved political domination over the vast oil reserves of the entire Persian Gulf region. Thus, in the absence of a peer military competitor or a pressing security threat, the United States was well positioned to repel that aggression. ∂ But much has changed in the intervening three decades. The United States is now the world’s largest producer of oil and natural gas; China is currently the biggest export market for Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia; and if anything, given climate change, the United States should be looking to discourage, not subsidize, the burning of fossil fuels. If one were designing U.S. foreign policy from scratch today, it would be quite difficult to justify a U.S. security commitment in the Gulf. The U.S. relationship with Saudi Arabia, in particular, has always been more a marriage of convenience than a deeply rooted friendship. That was especially evident in the Trump era, which featured the shady princeling-to-princeling connection between the president’s son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and Mohammed bin Salman, the Saudi crown prince. But personal ties are the most fleeting. They account for the Trump administration’s near silence over the assassination of the Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi (allegedly ordered by the crown prince himself) and its tacit approval of the humanitarian nightmare that is the Saudi war in Yemen. In contrast, as a candidate, Biden [said](https://www.cfr.org/article/presidential-candidates-saudi-arabia) that should he be elected, Saudi Arabia would no longer enjoy a “dangerous blank check.” It is always possible that campaign-trail rhetoric will yield to the realities of power politics, but in assessing their own national security in the coming years, Saudi Arabia and its fellow Gulf kingdoms have no choice but to at least anticipate the withdrawal of U.S. power from the region. ∂ Israel must confront similar calculations. During the Obama administration and after, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made the radical decision, rare and risky in the annals of diplomacy, to throw in his lot with a foreign political party rather than a country. By sidestepping President Barack Obama to work directly with congressional Republicans and then by embracing Trump with a bear hug, Netanyahu hitched his strategic wagon to the star of a U.S. president who did not see past the perceived domestic political advantages to be gained from his Middle East policy. Trump reciprocated by dashing off another political blank check, recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, withholding criticism of any of that country’s transgressions (and thus abandoning the notion that the United States might be an honest broker in peace negotiations with the Palestinians), and essentially bribing some countries to normalize their diplomatic relations with Israel—all without receiving anything in return from the perspective of U.S. national interests. It remains to be seen whether bilateral relations between Israel and the United States will emerge unscathed now that U.S. diplomacy in the Middle East has passed from the hands of Trump’s small coterie of Middle East advisers. ∂ AFTER AMERICA∂ If the post-Trump perceptions of the United States in the Middle East may be good news for U.S. power and interests, the same cannot be said for the rethinking that will take place in the rest of the world. And in contrast to in the Gulf region and the Middle East more generally, in Europe and Asia, the United States has enormous geostrategic, political, and economic interests—as it has for a century. What happens in Europe and East Asia, which are among the world’s vital centers of economic activity, matters for the United States. Reduced engagement with and commitment to partners in these regions will create opportunities for others—actors who will be indifferent or even hostile to what the United States wants in the world. These challenges defy easy reassurance. Biden will surely (and wisely) reaffirm the U.S. commitment to NATO. It is unlikely that the alliance would have survived a second Trump administration, given Trump’s ambivalence about democratic allies in general and participation in what he oddly perceived to be a dues-paying organization in particular. Will the alliance survive much past 2025? There are reasons to be doubtful.∂ In 1993, the realist international relations scholar Kenneth Waltz argued that with the Soviet Union gone, NATO had outlived its usefulness, and he [predicted](https://www.jstor.org/stable/2539097), “NATO’s days are not numbered, but its years are.” The alliance turned out to have decades of life left, of course. What Waltz missed was that NATO has always been more than a narrow military alliance; it is also a broader security community of like-minded states and a stabilizing force on a historically war-prone continent. As such, the alliance has advanced what another realist scholar, Arnold Wolfers, called “milieu goals”—measures designed to make the international environment more benign. NATO has managed to achieve these goals at very little cost, considering that it has always been unlikely that the United States would cut its overall spending on defense and thus save money if it withdrew from NATO.∂ But now, NATO faces existential threats on both sides of the Atlantic. In Europe, authoritarian backsliding in Hungary, Poland, and Turkey is endangering the notion of the alliance as a like-minded security community. (It was this notion that caused Spain to join the alliance in 1982, after it transitioned to democracy.) A NATO that contains authoritarian members will rot from within. In the United States, meanwhile, growing skepticism of internationalism may mean that the country no longer has any interest in pursuing milieu goals. Washington might simply pick up its marbles and go home. Europe would be compelled to test the theory that the alliance is a force for comity and stability. But the implications of American abandonment would go far beyond the continent. It could also presage a post-American world that is darker, more authoritarian, and less able to address collective challenges.∂ There is no region of the world where revised assessments about the United States will be more consequential than Asia. Many observers fret over the prospect of a ruinous shooting war between China and the United States, as Beijing looks to assert what it considers to be its rightful place as the dominant power in the region. Emerging great powers with revisionist aspirations are nothing new and are commonly destabilizing, as they invariably step on the toes of the contented guardians of the status quo. That said, the future of Asia will be determined more by political calculations than military confrontations. Regional actors, once again, will have to make guesses about the future international disposition and reliability of the United States.∂ The main geopolitical assessment that regional powers will have to make is not whether the United States would win a war against China; it is whether the United States will stay involved. Will Washington retain its alliance commitments? Will it demonstrate enough political engagement and recognizable military capacity to give regional powers the confidence to balance against China? If countries figure that the United States is out, or indifferent, then many will decide they have little choice but to bandwagon with China, given its overwhelming power. If it becomes apparent that China’s power and influence will be left unchecked, countries in the region will increasingly accede to more of China’s demands in bilateral disputes and show greater deference for its preferences more generally. ∂ The ground in Asia is clearly shifting. Washington renounced its own grand trade agreement, the TPP, and a TPP that includes the United States is not likely coming back. As international trade agreements will almost certainly remain a lightning rod and perhaps even a litmus test for powerful constituencies in both political parties, trying to breathe life back into the TPP by joining its successor pact is unlikely to be successful—nor deemed worth the anticipated political blowback. China, in contrast, has picked up that dropped ball and recently signed on to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Less ambitious than the TPP, that agreement nevertheless boasts countries that intended to join the U.S.-led pact: Australia, Japan, Malaysia, Vietnam, and South Korea, among others. And international politics and economics are not easily disentangled. Trump commonly disparaged military allies as freeloaders and viewed American troops stationed abroad, including in South Korea, as a for-profit, mercenary force. China is now South Korea’s largest export market, and South Korea sells almost twice as much to that country as it does to the United States. Should Seoul assess that a future U.S. president might cut the cord of the U.S. alliance with South Korea, South Korea might increasingly fall into the orbit of China’s influence.∂ SCARRED FOR LIFE∂ The future of U.S. influence—in Europe, Asia, and everywhere else—depends a great deal on what the United States says it will do and whether it follows through with consistent actions. Biden is capable of following through. But in an anarchic world, U.S. influence will depend at least as much on something else: how other states measure long-term American purpose. By producing a Trump presidency and calling attention to the underlying domestic dysfunctions that allowed a previously inconceivable development to occur, the United States is now looked at far differently than it once was. These new and consequential perceptions will endure, and for some time. ∂ A second Trump administration would have done irretrievable damage to the United States as an actor in world politics. But even with Trump’s defeat, the rest of the world cannot ignore the country’s deep and disfiguring scars. They will not soon heal.

#### US military spending high now but Chinese LAW development has the capability to overturn American hard power dominance

[John Brock (4-13-2017), Major in the US Army, MS in Advance Military Studies from the US Army Command and General Staff College, "Why the United States Must Adopt Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems," United States Army, [https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/1038884.pdf]//CHS](https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/1038884.pdf%5D//CHS) PK

Currently, United States military spending dwarfs the rest of the world. The United States spends over one-third of the world's military budget and more than the next 14 countries combined. Regardless, the US military is still the smallest since the Interwar Period and will continue to shrink as soldier costs grow. While the United States’ military spending continues to remain high, its technological superiority continues to shrink. The United States’ rising personnel costs are not giving an improved capability, but instead are reducing funding available for the research and development of new technologies. In contrast, countries such as Russia and China are using artificial intelligence and robotics modernization strategies to level the military playing field at a fraction of the cost. Russia’s modernization strategy prioritizes the adoption of autonomous weapon systems and artificial intelligence. Russia has committed to developing a technologically superior robotic military force capable of fighting in the 21st century. Russia’s Chief of the Generals Staff stated, “In the near future, it is possible that a complete robotic unit will be capable of independently conducting military operations.”107 Demonstrating this belief, Russia announced plans to deploy armed autonomous sentry robots to protect five strategic missile installations.108 These sentry robots will use artificial intelligence to make decisions on their own and require no human operators. Russia recognizes that artificial intelligence and robots are resulting in a third military revolution and fundamentally changing warfare. Russia’s modernization strategy is now moving away from crewed vehicles and is transitioning to fully autonomous vehicles. Their defense industry plans to release an autonomous T14 tank prototype within the next two years.109 To accelerate these changes, Russia’s Army Chief of Staff announced that they plan to robotize onethird of their military by the year 2020.110 Though Russia will probably not achieve this automation goal, it signals Russia's vision of modern warfare and how future wars will likely be won.111 China has also prioritized the development of Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems. The US Deputy Secretary of Defense, Bob Work recognizes that China views Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems differently than the United States. Work stated “We know that China is already investing heavily in robotics and autonomy.”112 China has invested in artificial intelligence because it wants a military capable of winning future wars against the United States. Chinese General Chi Haitian asserts "War with the United States is inevitable; we cannot avoid it.”113 To win this war, China will use ‘unrestricted warfare’ with no rules, no boundaries, and no moral concerns in the use of Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems. The People’s Liberation Army insists “War is still the ground of death and life, the path of survival and destruction and even the slightest innocence is not tolerated.”114 China believes that the United States’ current technological advantage will become nonexistent as time goes on. The primary reason for this belief stems from the US military's “ultimate concern” of protecting innocent civilian lives and the environment. These concerns result in the United States continually developing weapons to become "kinder" not "stronger." China also contends that the United States only considers the short-term uses of new technology and fails to adopt novel technologies into future weapon systems. China concludes that the consequences of the United States’ technology shortsightedness will result in the US military being forced to fight yesterday’s war with outdated technologies. In contrast, China examines all emerging and novel technologies to determine how they could be used to develop new weapon systems. They seek new technologies that could be a prelude to a revolution in military affairs giving them an advantage over the United States. China believes yesterday's "high technology" likely represents today's "low technology," while today's "new technology" will turn into tomorrow's "old technology."115Throughout history, there are numerous examples of militaries refusing to acknowledge that a new technology had completely transformed war. Jean De Bloch, a Polish banker and railway financier, authored Is War Now Impossible? in 1898. In his book, Bloch argued that advancements in weapons technology during the industrial revolution made previous Napoleonic open warfare impossible. Bloch concluded that for armies to survive in the 20th century, they must resort to trench warfare. Bloch was an outspoken voice who predicted the carnage that would occur in Europe during World War I. He anticipated the change in the operational environment, but could not convince the world’s leaders that the current methods of warfare were no longer feasible.116 As a result of this failure to adapt, 17 million soldiers and civilians died during World War I.117 Innumerable lives could have been saved if leaders had been quicker to accept the new realities in warfare. Johnson & Johnson CEO Alex Gorsky summarized it best: “You must understand when the environment you are in changes, because you must change also, and if you don’t, you will die.”118 During World War I, the ‘cult of the bayonet' dominated military thinking for the way to fight wars. The European ‘cult of the bayonet’ represents one of history’s prime examples illustrating the flawed belief that a soldier with enough determination will always prevail regardless of warfare’s technological advancements. The European military professionals believed a passionate soldier wielding a bayonet had proven an undefeatable terror weapon during the wars of the 18th and 19th -century.119 However, by the 20th century, the development of machine guns, artillery fire, and poison gas had rendered bayonets only useful for chopping wood, opening tin cans, and hanging up clothing.120 During World War I, senior officers refused to accept that these new technologies made mass infantry bayonet charges irrelevant. Officers with no comprehension of the fundamental changes in warfare continued to send their soldiers on heroic charges, only to die in the thousands.121 The Battle of the Somme illustrates this point where British commanders foolishly ordered a bayonet charge at the machine gun defended German lines, resulting in 60,000 casualties.122 The French operated on a similar tactical doctrine believing infantry morale was superior to firepower. This misconception resulted in over 500,000 French casualties in August 1914.123 Following World War I, even with these staggering European casualties, some US officers still argued that spirited bayonet-wielding soldiers and horses should remain the US military’s decisive capability.124 During World War II, the Japanese believed the human aspect of their Bushido warrior culture could defeat the United States’ superior military technology and firepower. The successful Japanese use of ‘banzai’ bayonet charges against the numerically superior Chinese reinforced these beliefs of the ‘invincible’ Japanese human spirit. Tragically, similar to World War I, these spirited attacks resulted in horrific losses for the Japanese army, which could not overcome the superior American technology and firepower.125 During the Battle of Guadalcanal, the Japanese conducted banzai charges towards the American lines protecting Henderson Field. These charges resulted in the horrific losses of Japanese soldiers. Japan’s Admiral Raizo Tanaka commented "This tragedy should have taught us the hopelessness of ‘bamboo spear’ tactics."126 These historical examples should serve as a dire warning to the United States. Similar to Jean de Bloch’s World War I predictions, a third military revolution will render modern warfare no longer feasible without tremendous United States’ casualties. General Patton once asserted “Many, who should know better, think that wars can be decided by soulless machines, rather than by the blood and anguish of brave men.”127 However, the US military’s people, institutions, and culture are no longer enough to overcome the technological advantages provided by Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems. The United States must acknowledge that warfare’s environment has changed and begin to adapt. The United States’ Third Offset Strategy currently doubles down on Patton’s military of the past. Over the past 5,000 years of war, the tempo of warfare has grown with the development of new technologies. Soldiers transitioned from walking, to riding horses, to riding in rail cars, to driving in trucks, to flying in aircraft. The speed with which wars are now won or lost depends directly on these new technologies.128 During the 1870-1871 Franco-Prussian War, Prussian Prince Otto von Bismarck required over nine months to force the French surrender.129 In contrast, during World War II, Adolf Hitler only needed forty-six days to force the French capitulation.130 Current technology already allows militaries to fight wars across vast distances, during the nighttime, in adverse weather, and in extreme temperatures. The only limiting factor to increasing the speed of future warfare are the human soldiers fighting it. Due to biology, people require rest and can only maintain a high tempo for short periods of time. These biological human constraints will no longer remain relevant with the development of Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems. Future lethal autonomous armies will be capable of fighting continuously, at tremendous speeds, and require no breaks or rest.

#### That’s good because Heg is bad –

#### 1 – Adversary prolif

Fettweis 18 Christopher J. Fettweis, an American political scientist and the Associate Professor of Political Science at Tulane University, “Chapter 2: Unipolarity and Nuclear Weapons,” *Psychology of a Superpower: Security and Dominance in U.S. Foreign Policy,* Columbia University Press, 2018, accessed through Georgetown Libraries

First and most obviously, the second nuclear age is likely to be marked by a great deal more proliferation than the first. According to Bracken, the “overarching theme” of the age will be the “breakdown of the major power monopoly over the bomb.”6 Unipolarity provides strong incentives for smaller states, who have no hope of balancing the United States, to pursue nuclear weapons. No matter how much effort the United States puts into non- and counterproliferation, “nuclear weapons will nevertheless spread, with a new member occasionally joining the club,” predicted Kenneth Waltz. 7 “The most likely scenario in the wake of the Cold War,” argued John Mearsheimer, “is further nuclear proliferation in Europe,” and “it is not likely the proliferation will be well managed.”8 Instability and insecurity would spread, as would nuclear weapons, throughout the global South.9 Since new nuclear states were almost inevitable, both Waltz and Mearsheimer felt that it was in the interest of the West to attempt to manage, and indeed even to encourage, gradual proliferation to help stabilize the system.

These chains of proliferation will lead to new, potentially unstable nuclear rivalries. Were North Korea to be accepted as the ninth nuclearweapons state, Graham Allison warned in 2004, South Korea and Japan would build their own arsenals “by the end of the decade.”10 The second nuclear age will be “much more decentralized,” with “many independent nuclear decision centers.”11 A “multipolar nuclear order” is on the horizon, if it has not already arrived.12

The new nuclear powers are not likely to resemble the old. The second major assumption of the SNA literature is that proliferation will reach less enlightened parts of the globe, those led by unpredictable, semirational tyrants. The old rules of deterrence may not apply, since the motivations of these actors are not only less knowable but often ruled by passions and nationalism. “The idea of budding defense intellectuals sitting around computer models and debating strategy in Iran or Pakistan defies credulity,” or at least Bracken’s estimation, since in these states “hysterical nationalism” overrules rationality.13 The “overdetermined” cascades of proliferation across Asia will bring a host of new, less trustworthy actors into the nuclear camp, from rogue states to nonstate actors, all of whom will be essentially undeterrable by traditional means.14 Their motivations will be less rational or simply less transparent to the outside world.

In the second nuclear age, not just an accidental but the intentional use of nuclear weapons by new nuclear actors cannot be ruled out.15 Rogue states do not seek nuclear weapons for the reasons that motivated earlier proliferants. While all U.S. observers believe that Washington’s arsenal exists for defensive purposes, to deter any attack that our enemies would otherwise contemplate, the primary use of new nuclear weapons will be offensive. The possibility for irrationality in new nuclear powers inspired the United States to scrap the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and begin thinking about how to “tailor” deterrence to target smaller actors.16 A nuclear Iran will use its weapons to bully or even attack, not deter. In 2017, experts warned that North Korean intercontinental ballistic missiles would be coercive, to extract concessions from U.S. allies. “North Korea’s contempt for its neighbors suggests that it would hold them hostage with its nuclear weapons,” wrote the widely respected ambassador Chris Hill. “Would proliferation stop with South Korea and Japan? What about Taiwan?”17 As a result, the basic assumptions of deterrence need to be rethought.

#### 2 – Alliances create commitment traps and incentivize probing – that causes entanglement and war

O’Hanlon 19 Michael E. O’Hanlon, a senior fellow, and director of research, in Foreign Policy at the Brookings Institution, where he specializes in U.S. defense strategy, the use of military force, and American national security policy, “The Senkaku paradox: Preparing for conflict with the great powers,” Brookings Institute, May 2, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/05/02/the-senkaku-paradox-preparing-for-conflict-with-the-great-powers/>

However, what about smaller efforts to nibble away at the existing world order that Beijing and Moscow often find objectionable? What if China decided to land forces on one of the eight Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in the East China Sea?∂ These remote rocks are claimed by both Japan and China, uninhabited and effectively worthless except for surrounding fishing waters, but they are covered by the U.S.-Japan security treaty, as President Obama and Secretary Mattis have both publicly reaffirmed in recent years.∂ Or, what if Russia decided to fabricate a “threat” to native Russian speakers in a small town in eastern Estonia or Latvia to create a pretext for “little green men” to swoop in (perhaps bloodlessly) to save the day? Scenarios involving the Philippines or other countries can be imagined, too.∂ Why would Moscow or Beijing consider such actions? China or Russia might like the idea of sowing their hegemonic oats and getting back at neighbors they have not forgiven for past events.∂ But Moscow’s or Beijing’s real purpose might be to weaken American alliance systems, and with them the U.S.-led global order, so as to increase its own power and dominance, especially in regions near its borders.∂ For example, a Russian grab of just one small Baltic town could be expected to throw the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance into existential crisis.∂ Some member nations would likely seek nonmilitary solutions to the threat, whereas others might favor a prompt military response—with the ensuing debate casting into doubt the whole purpose of the alliance. ∂ The state of military technology and expected trends in future innovation compound the problem. Deployment of large U.S.-led military force packages into the lion’s den near China’s coasts or into the Baltic regions of Europe near Russia is becoming a harder proposition to entertain.T∂ The spread of the type of precision technology that the United States once effectively monopolized accounts for much of the reason why. The problem is exacerbated by other new or imminent weapons:∂ miniaturized robotics that function as sensors or even weapons, individually or in swarms;∂ small satellites that could function as clandestine space mines against larger satellites;∂ homing anti-ship missiles and various types of superfast hypersonic missiles in general; and∂ threats to computer systems from both traditional human-generated hacking and artificial intelligence (AI)-generated algorithms.∂ No mid-sized U.S. defense buildup can likely reverse these dynamics.∂ A scenario of the type sketched above would create a huge dilemma for the United States and allies—a situation I call the “Senkaku Paradox.” Mutual-defense treaty commitments under Article V of both the NATO and U.S.-Japan treaties would appear to commit Washington to defend or liberate such allied territory.∂ Yet, that could lead to direct war with a nuclear-armed great power over rather insignificant stakes. A large-scale U.S. and allied response could seem massively disproportionate. But a non-response would be unacceptable and invite further aggression.

#### 3 – The only comprehensive study proves retrenchment is comparatively more peaceful

MacDonald & Parent 11—Professor of Political Science at Williams College & Professor of Political Science at University of Miami [Paul K. MacDonald & Joseph M. Parent, “Graceful Decline? The Surprising Success of Great Power Retrenchment,” International Security, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Spring 2011), pp. 7–44]

Our findings are directly relevant to what appears to be an impending great power transition between China and the United States. Estimates of economic performance vary, but most observers expect Chinese GDP to surpass U.S. GDP sometime in the next decade or two.91 This prospect has generated considerable concern. Many scholars foresee major conflict during a Sino-U.S. ordinal transition. Echoing Gilpin and Copeland, John Mearsheimer sees the crux of the issue as irreconcilable goals: China wants to be America's superior and the United States wants no peer competitors. In his words, "[N]o amount [End Page 40] of goodwill can ameliorate the intense security competition that sets in when an aspiring hegemon appears in Eurasia."92

Contrary to these predictions, our analysis suggests some grounds for optimism. Based on the historical track record of great powers facing acute relative decline, the United States should be able to retrench in the coming decades. In the next few years, the United States is ripe to overhaul its military, shift burdens to its allies, and work to decrease costly international commitments. It is likely to initiate and become embroiled in fewer militarized disputes than the average great power and to settle these disputes more amicably. Some might view this prospect with apprehension, fearing the steady erosion of U.S. credibility. Yet our analysis suggests that retrenchment need not signal weakness. Holding on to exposed and expensive commitments simply for the sake of one's reputation is a greater geopolitical gamble than withdrawing to cheaper, more defensible frontiers.

Some observers might dispute our conclusions, arguing that hegemonic transitions are more conflict prone than other moments of acute relative decline. We counter that there are deductive and empirical reasons to doubt this argument. Theoretically, hegemonic powers should actually find it easier to manage acute relative decline. Fallen hegemons still have formidable capability, which threatens grave harm to any state that tries to cross them. Further, they are no longer the top target for balancing coalitions, and recovering hegemons may be influential because they can play a pivotal role in alliance formation. In addition, hegemonic powers, almost by definition, possess more extensive overseas commitments; they should be able to more readily identify and eliminate extraneous burdens without exposing vulnerabilities or exciting domestic populations. We believe the empirical record supports these conclusions. In particular, periods of hegemonic transition do not appear more conflict prone than those of acute decline. The last reversal at the pinnacle of power was the Anglo-American transition, which took place around 1872 and was resolved without armed confrontation. The tenor of that transition may have been influenced by a number of factors: both states were democratic maritime empires, the United States was slowly emerging from the Civil War, and Great Britain could likely coast on a large lead in domestic capital stock. Although China and the United [End Page 41] States differ in regime type, similar factors may work to cushion the impending Sino-American transition. Both are large, relatively secure continental great powers, a fact that mitigates potential geopolitical competition.93 China faces a variety of domestic political challenges, including strains among rival regions, which may complicate its ability to sustain its economic performance or engage in foreign policy adventurism.94

Most important, the United States is not in free fall. Extrapolating the data into the future, we anticipate the United States will experience a "moderate" decline, losing from 2 to 4 percent of its share of great power GDP in the five years after being surpassed by China sometime in the next decade or two.95 Given the relatively gradual rate of U.S. decline relative to China, the incentives for either side to run risks by courting conflict are minimal. The United States would still possess upwards of a third of the share of great power GDP, and would have little to gain from provoking a crisis over a peripheral issue. Conversely, China has few incentives to exploit U.S. weakness.96 Given the importance of the U.S. market to the Chinese economy, in addition to the critical role played by the dollar as a global reserve currency, it is unclear how Beijing could hope to consolidate or expand its increasingly advantageous position through direct confrontation.

In short, the United States should be able to reduce its foreign policy commitments in East Asia in the coming decades without inviting Chinese expansionism. Indeed, there is evidence that a policy of retrenchment could reap potential benefits. The drawdown and repositioning of U.S. troops in South Korea, for example, rather than fostering instability, has resulted in an improvement in the occasionally strained relationship between Washington and Seoul. 97 U.S. moderation on Taiwan, rather than encouraging hard-liners in Beijing, resulted in an improvement in cross-strait relations and reassured U.S. allies that Washington would not inadvertently drag them into a Sino-U.S. conflict. 98 Moreover, Washington’s support for the development of multilateral security institutions, rather than harming bilateral alliances, could work to enhance U.S. prestige while embedding China within a more transparent regional order. 99

### 2NR

#### Biden’s put heg back on the table but Chinese law development overturns current and historical US hard power dominance through technological superiority

#### That’s good because Heg is bad

#### 1 – Prolif – adversaries like Iran and North Korea fear a unipolar power projecting themselves which means they develop nuclear weapons to deter that great power – causes action-reaction cycles where allies like Japan South Korea and Brazil proliferate their own nuclear weapons to hedge against the new proliferators

#### Outweighs great power war – new proliferators lack a second strike capability which means nationalism and miscalc incentivize them to strike first to gain the upper hand but the US and China posses secure second strike capabilities meaning mutually assured destruction checks,

#### 2 – Alliances – Ties with allies embolden them to be aggressive because they have a great backer behind them – US gets drawn in to maintain credibility causing great power wars

#### Even if they win transition wars, no reason they would draw in the US – the only scenario where the US gets drawn in is if they have alliances which means we control their internal link

#### 3 – Retrenchment solves great power war – withdrawing spheres of influence prevent catastrophic clashes that escalate – independently, Parent and Macdonald says that when the US is declining now and China won’t step up and go to war because the US would still incredible offensive and defensive capabilities to prevent invasion and strikes of the homeland – backed up by the only empirical study of instances unipolar retrenchment

#### Turns the case – US forward projection means china will be looped into the security dilemma and fear the US causing even more destabilizing actions

### 2NR – Covid

#### COVID makes abandonment of the international order impossible, but electoral accountability is key to revitalize it

Brands et al. 20 [Hal Brands is the Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. Peter Feaver is the director of the Duke Program in American Grand Strategy and professor of political science and public policy at Duke University. William Inboden is the William Powers, Jr. Executive Director of the Clements Center for National Security and associate professor at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin. 2020, “16. Maybe It Won’t Be So Bad: A Modestly Optimistic Take on COVID and World Order,” COVID-19 and World Order: The Future of Conflict, Competition, and Cooperation, Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 297-315, https://muse.jhu.edu/chapter/2696571//lhs-ap]

The World after COVID, Take 2∂ This pessimistic scenario is plausible, especially if one simply extrapolates from early responses to and effects of the crisis. But it is not foreordained. That American dominance, the liberal order, and other aspects of the pre-COVID status quo have continued for decades suggests that they possess a higher degree of resilience than many observers appreciate. Just as important, a closer look at some of the dynamics unleashed or highlighted by the crisis points to a more optimistic scenario that includes several opportunities for Washington and its allies. That scenario is, in many ways, the mirror image of the one previously described. We outline it here not because we believe it is certain to materialize but because we believe its plausibility indicates that the outlines of the post-COVID world are still very much up for grabs. In this scenario:∂ 1. The pandemic leads not to de-globalization but to re-globalization along geopolitical lines. While trade, finance, and people flows all dropped markedly at the height of the pandemic, the fundamental drivers of long-term globalization—technology that shrinks distances, the quest for economic growth that spurs trade, and the recognition that global problems do not recognize borders—have not been undone. If anything, they are underscored. For example, the need for growth to reduce the crushing debt burden created by the pandemic-generated depression will, we believe, eventually produce a resurgence in global trade.∂ In some ways, the crisis may create opportunities for deeper globalization. As individual nations and leaders wrestle with the next phases of the COVID response, particularly antiviral therapies, vaccine development, contact tracing, and mass immunity, it will become clear that no one nation-state will be able to develop those alone. The resulting networks, some that evolve organically and others reinforced by institutional mandates and incentives, will create connective tissue binding nation-states together rather than furthering their distance. Similarly, the continuing decline in birth rates among industrialized nations, coupled with aging populations and increasing entitlement payments, will confront governments with unpalatable choices, the least unattractive of which will likely be increasing immigration to replenish the workforce.∂ The medium-term outlook could well be managed globalization, along two discernible directions. First, supply chains will likely diversify, with the risk premium justifying the inefficiencies of redundancy. In most cases, even with the advances of additive manufacturing, the costs of entirely onshoring production back to the United States will be prohibitive. But savvy firms should be able to generate more resilient production chains without complete onshoring, and those firms will have a competitive edge over others chasing the unicorn of autarky.∂ Second, globalization will increasingly occur within rather than across geopolitical lines. The quest for diversification and modest US-China decoupling will likely result in a diversion of trade and investment flows to other countries, particularly historic allies like Europe and Japan and other regions, such as South America and Southeast Asia, where the states have their own incentives to minimize their vulnerabilities to Chinese coercion. Geopolitical logic will reinforce and accelerate this trend since such deeper trade and economic integration could strengthen the “free world” economy for a competition with Beijing.21 And globalization driven by the fourth industrial revolution plays against China’s advantage in low-cost labor and in favor of the advantages enjoyed by the United States and its geopolitical allies—relatively highly educated work force and wealthy consumers.∂ 2. The pandemic does not result in dramatic, adverse shifts in the balance of power. Even optimists would concede that America’s geopolitical position has worsened somewhat as a result of the crisis. That China seemed to gain the upper hand in its fight against the spread of COVID-19 just as the United States and its major allies were slogging through the toughest phase of the lockdown reinforced the impression of waning Western, and especially American, power and created a perception that Beijing now enjoyed a window of opportunity to pursue its aims while Washington and its democratic allies were laid low.∂ If the psychological balance shifted rapidly, however, the material balance did not shift in a decisive or enduring way. The pandemic adversely affected every major economy and market: almost every geopolitical unit that has been touted at one time or another as a possible emerging disrupter of US primacy—the European Union, Russia, India, or Brazil—suffered a grievous economic wound. If anything, the flight of international investors toward the United States in the middle of the crisis underscored the fundamental sources of US structural strength.∂ The pandemic also underscores some fundamental Chinese problems. In contrast to the Great Recession of 2008–9, which largely exposed American financial weakness while foregrounding Chinese rising economic power, COVID has drawn attention to Chinese economic and political fragility.22 “Wolf warriors” have not been able to obscure the reality that China botched its initial response to the spread of the virus and then botched its attempt to cover up this fact with crude propaganda and gifts of defective PPE.23∂ From the Chinese Communist Party’s point of view, the most promising indicator is the fact that the pandemic shook global and American domestic confidence in the United States. Over the medium and long term, however, it is not clear that even this issue will redound to China’s advantage. While American soft power and diplomatic prestige often attach in the short term to the successes and failures of a particular leader, they tend to reset quickly after the next electoral cycle. Previous declines in American soft power—under George W. Bush, for instance—were followed by sharp bounce backs, in some cases caused by nothing more than a change in the White House. If, a year from now, the United States is seen to be acting more competently at home and abroad, the deeper sources of American soft power and prestige may reassert themselves. And if the United States leads in developing and distributing a working vaccine—a big “if,” but an area in which it is well positioned for success—then the soft-power bounce back could be substantial.∂

For China, by contrast, the long-term diplomatic trends seem more troubling. The fact that dozens of countries called for an international inquiry into the pandemic’s origins, that international anger at China rose considerably on multiple continents, and that a number of countries that had previously accommodated China swung toward a harder line all indicated that Beijing may confront a more formidable balancing coalition in the years to come. Admittedly, forging an effective balancing coalition will require more skillful US diplomacy than of late. But it is quite possible that this pandemic will scathe China more than the United States.∂ 3. The liberal order holds and is revitalized. As poorly as the institutions of the liberal order performed during the initial stages of the pandemic, they still command more legitimacy in the rest of the world than any plausible alternative. And unless the United States reacts to the crisis by simply abandoning the institutions and relationships it created—a prospect that does not seem as outlandish as it once might have—the more likely scenario could be reform and innovative new institutions rather than collapse.∂ Lamentations over the weaknesses of international institutions often go in tandem with expressions of nostalgia for a past golden era of multilateral cooperation. But such an era never existed. International institutions have always faced geopolitical challenges and criticism for their failings. Yet they adapted and endured, and that could happen again. What may emerge is a shift to a two-tiered order: one level involves the world’s democracies and has a higher level of cohesion and ambition, and the second level is a broader order that involves a larger number of countries and a lower level of cohesion and ambition, reserved only for transnational issues such as pandemics and climate change.24∂ For example, the G7 could evolve into a D10 that includes the leading democracies committed to developing alternatives to technological dependence on China; the United Kingdom has already proposed such a reform. The EU is considering plans to deepen fiscal integration by making additional funds available to COVID-stricken economies. US military alliances are likely to prove even more relevant in the more competitive world that is now emerging; the imperative of decreasing economic dependence on autocracies could lead, over time, to trade and investment agreements that focus on deepening ties between America and like-minded democracies. And if the United States commits to fighting harder for influence in obscure but important institutions that China has sought to corrupt, the result could be (over time) to increase the effectiveness of those institutions.∂ Admittedly, the US suspension of participation in the WHO does not fit well with this assessment. Neither does the Trump administration’s withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, nor its penchant for trade wars with democratic allies. So, the crucial caveat here, and across all dimensions of the more optimistic scenario, is that this depends on whether the United States plays the role of leader or spoiler in the years ahead.∂ 4. The pandemic proves deadlier for autocrats and populists than for democrats. Authoritarians and populists have short-term advantages in confronting a pandemic—for example, in implementing draconian public health measures and exploiting the demagoguery that accompanies suffering. But several months into the pandemic, there does not seem to be a lasting dictator’s dividend. The nations that displayed the most effective responses are liberal democracies, including South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Denmark, New Zealand, and Germany. Singapore, a soft-authoritarian city-state, is the main example of a non-democracy that marshaled an effective response and is almost the exception that proves the rule.∂ The performance of the world’s foremost authoritarian regimes was somewhere between mediocre and catastrophic. China’s delayed response to the coronavirus outbreak, once galvanized, drew on the advantages that authoritarianism offers, including mass lockdowns and mass surveillance.25 Yet that response was necessary because the authoritarian system had prevented a more effective earlier response, and the pandemic almost certainly caused much higher numbers of infections and deaths than its government has admitted.26 Iran, Russia, Turkmenistan, and North Korea also seem to have been hit very hard, with the damage obscured only by their lack of transparency. As mentioned earlier, many democratic nations have also underperformed. But the point is that neither type of political system has a monopoly on ineptitude of initial response, and democracies are still well positioned to win the governance challenge over the long term.∂ From a free press, to an independent judiciary, to opposition parties, to decentralized governance, to elections, democracies possess an ecosystem of self-correction that provide warnings when policies are not working, information channels for suggesting new approaches, policy laboratories for experimenting with different responses, and accountability channels for citizens to either reward or punish their elected leaders and the administrators who serve under them. Authoritarian systems, in contrast, eschew these mechanisms, any of which could threaten the autocrat’s monopoly on power. In the near term, admittedly, such crises can provide political cover for leaders to consolidate control; they can also create the anger and resentment on which populist leaders thrive.27 But authoritarians cannot indefinitely hide from the convergent pressures of disaffected citizens, dysfunctional health systems, eroding control, and economic stresses accentuated by the crisis, and their political systems tend to be more brittle than democracies when confronted by such challenges.∂ The greater challenge for democracies may be in shaping the global narrative about which system is performing better. That authoritarian information campaigns are often unconstrained by truth also creates propaganda advantages for autocratic regimes, at least in the short term. But one of the lessons of the Cold War is that authoritarian information campaigns trade short-run effectiveness for long-run persuasiveness, because they rely on a gap between truth and propaganda that becomes hard to sustain over time.28 Shaping the global narrative will require better policy efforts than the democracies have shown thus far, but there is no reason they cannot compete.∂ Conclusion: From Crisis to Opportunity∂ The future is not binary; the world may well end up somewhere between these two scenarios. Or these two futures could unfold sequentially: in the near term, when the disruptions are greatest, the darker trends are most pronounced, but in the longer term, as the crisis eases, more favorable forces reassert themselves. Still, it is useful to frame the future against these two scenarios because they illustrate the range of likely outcomes. It is also possible that the alternatives for the future could be somewhat starker than we think. If the same factors that lead to a good (or bad) outcome on one dimension lead to a similar outcome on other dimensions, then the likelihood of the overall outcome leaning sharply one way or the other becomes higher. This raises what may be the most important factor in determining which way the future breaks: American policy.∂ If both the pessimistic and the optimistic scenarios are realistic enough to be plausible, only one is attractive from the vantage of a US policy maker. Most of the national interest goals that have driven American foreign policy since World War II would be harder to secure if the pessimistic vision proves true. Even critics from the so-called “restraint” school who criticize those goals as overly ambitious would likely prefer retrenchment from within the optimistic world rather than have such changes imposed by the harsh realities of the pessimistic world. The real debate among analysts is not whether the optimistic scenario is desirable but whether it is achievable.∂ If the pessimistic scenario is inevitable, US grand strategy must change profoundly. If globalization, the liberal order, and democracy itself are in inexorable decline, the United States must retreat. If the balance of power has shifted permanently, concessions to allies and rivals alike are unavoidable. If pandemics are the greatest threats facing the United States, “hard security” issues must be downgraded.29∂ No doubt global public health will receive more attention as a geopolitical security problem going forward than it did in the past several decades. For the foreseeable future, warnings about the next pandemic will have greater traction, and policy measures designed to better prepare for and head off the next pandemic will be taken more seriously—and funded more generously—than they were over the last decade. America will presumably invest more in stockpiling essential medical equipment and pharmaceuticals, constructing early warning mechanisms, strengthening bureaucratic response capabilities, and creating an infrastructure for the rapid development of vaccines. It should invest more in fortifying the international mechanisms needed for a global response to the next pandemic. If more Americans have already died from COVID-19 than all of America’s wars since World War II, then national security priorities should be adjusted accordingly.∂ It does not follow, however, that there should be a fundamental reorienting of national security away from traditional state-based issues and toward the human security concerns of development and public health. When 9/11 vaulted terrorism to the top of America’s national security agenda it did not, in fact, make the other concerns—what might be called the September 10 agenda—moot. The most trenchant critique of America’s response to 9/11 is that it focused excessively on the novel threat, to the point that the country eventually lost ground in dealing with other threats. In the same way, the pandemic, and the social disruption it threatens, will interact with pre-existing national security concerns in ways that make them even more pressing, not less. Put simply, there are few if any significant national security challenges that have abated as a result of COVID. Rather than tempering existing patterns of conflict, or making irrelevant the clashes of interest and ideology that provoke them, in many cases the pandemic seems to be making these issues—from US-Russia tensions to the threat of an ISIS resurgence in the Middle East—worse.30∂ Most notably, if the Sino-American rivalry helped make the pandemic, then the pandemic is making a sharper Sino-American rivalry. As one of us has written elsewhere, COVID-19 appears to have convinced a large number of Americans what a long series of Chinese provocations in the South China Sea and other areas could not—that the regime in Beijing represents a significant threat to their physical well-being and livelihood. The crisis has also produced greater support in the United States for deepened ties with Taiwan, while tempting China to exploit the world’s distraction by expanding its control in Hong Kong and its territorial claims from South Asia to the South China Sea.31 Not least, the pandemic has revealed the stakes in the Sino-American competition for influence in international organizations and countries around the world.32∂ In short, the pandemic has made great-power competition more important, not less. COVID has surely proved that Americans are as likely to die as a result of the “soft” threats of the human security agenda as they are from the “hard” threats of the traditional security agenda. Yet it has also created near-term windows of opportunity for actors posing hard threats that will require the traditional tool kit and deep engagement to suppress.∂ The case for adapting US grand strategy on the margins, rather than radically restructuring it, is even more compelling if the optimistic scenario is within reach. And here the role for US policy is even more critical. COVID is interacting powerfully with pre-existing structural forces. But if structural trends constrain policy choices, then policy choices can also shape structural trends—particularly when the policies in question are those of the world’s mightiest state. And on every dimension, the question of whether the pessimistic or the optimistic scenario materializes hinges to a great extent on US choices.∂ If the United States commits its vast power and prestige to deepening cooperation and economic integration with the democracies, to promoting a geopolitically informed globalization rather than a wholesale retreat from globalization, to reforming and competing for influence within the institutions of the liberal order that underperformed or were corrupted by authoritarian influence, and to developing the policies—not simply the rhetoric—of responsible competition with China, then the fluidity that the crisis has created may well redound to the advantage of America and the “free world.” If the United States returns to a pattern of greater competency and responsibility in its statecraft, its soft power and prestige will probably once again prove resilient. Yet if the United States chooses a course of narrow economic nationalism, gratuitous provocation of its closest allies, retreat from institutions in which it does not get its way, and continued downgrading of efforts to promote democracy and human rights, and indefinite floundering in discharging its responsibilities at home and abroad, then the balance of possibilities may well tip in favor of the darker scenario.∂ The quality of US global leadership is inextricably a function of the quality of US political leaders—above all, the caliber of the president. And here the United States has been hamstrung. At almost every turn in the COVID crisis, the Trump administration has stumbled after choices that would make the pessimistic scenario more likely.∂ When China was hiding the true nature of the pandemic, the Trump administration was praising Beijing. By the time the pandemic was an undeniable global crisis demanding a coordinated response, the Trump administration acted alone through contradictory edicts rather than in close coordination with others. When the inherent unknowns of the science and public health response demanded caution, President Donald Trump offered reckless nostrums and inane conspiracies. When a more aggressive response might have better prepared us, the Trump administration did less; when a more cautious response might have eased the pain, the Trump administration did more. Throughout, the common thread was not what would best enable the country to overcome the crisis but what would best position the president to overcome a negative headline. And when trouble did materialize, the president’s instinct in this crisis and throughout his presidency was to lash out—sometimes against allies, sometimes against rivals, but in ways more often destructive than helpful.∂ Bringing about the better scenario will require better American leadership in myriad ways. These include using the power to convene other nations for common goals; setting the agenda for what issues to focus on and how; providing economic, personnel, and technological resources toward international challenges; leading the gathering, analysis, and sharing of information on global problems; pioneering innovation and creative solutions; deploying leverage to induce or persuade those otherwise reluctant to make responsible choices; serving as a moral exemplar; demonstrating competence in policy design and implementation; and being willing to sacrifice narrow self-interest in favor of the enlightened self-interest that comes from pursuing a larger global good. This list is an implicit indictment of all that was lacking in American statecraft as the pandemic spread and a reminder of just how dramatically US performance will have to change to tip the balance from a dark future to a brighter one.

### 2NR – AT: Brooks and Wohlforth

#### It’s incomplete and retrenchment solves

Gholz 17 [Eugene Gholz, Cato adjunct scholar Eugene Gholz of the University of Texas, 6-1-2017, "Should America Shape the World?," Cato Institute, https://www.cato.org/policy-report/mayjune-2017/should-america-shape-world, accessed 9-21-2020]LHSBC

This book is a very meaningful contribution, but it presents no theory of the causes of war or the causes of threat. The chapter that outlines the book’s intellectual underpinnings talks about the role of deterrence and the role of assurance, which are important concepts. But proponents of restraint believe in deterrence, too. So the authors are not doing a good job of creating an underpinning architecture of what makes their sense of what causes conflict in the world different from what I think. And I think that, implicitly, their argument rests on what academics call hegemonic stability theory — that you can overwhelm the rise of potential challengers by making a strong commitment to providing global security. We’ll tell people what to do, but we’re nice guys so they won’t be too upset about it, and that will resolve the causes of war or threat. That’s what their argument really builds on, but they don’t actually say that, and it’s telling.∂ The trouble is, that overall argument that says the world is a more peaceful place when there is one powerful country that keeps security competition down is actually quite weak in academia. You can’t do a systematic, careful, theoretical review of the academic evidence in favor of hegemonic stability theory, because it just sort of petered out in the late 1980s or 1990s, because people couldn’t figure out how to make the case for it. It’s a weak intellectual case, and they really need to fix that to make their argument believable. If we want to prevent the causes of war, why do we think having one strong power actively engage with the world addresses the problem of rising threats?∂ As they bolster the case for deterrence, since what they believe they’re doing with deep engagement is deterring threats around the world, they actually make a case which is very helpful to the restraint case. They argue that deterrence is easier than compellence — that if the United States is helping deter threats to Japan, that’s an easier job than coming back later and trying to chase away dangers. But, of course, if deterrence is relatively easy, countries can deter on their own behalf — they don’t need the United States.

#### US policy changes – their ev meshes decades together

Gholz 17 [Eugene Gholz, Cato adjunct scholar Eugene Gholz of the University of Texas, 6-1-2017, "Should America Shape the World?," Cato Institute, https://www.cato.org/policy-report/mayjune-2017/should-america-shape-world, accessed 9-21-2020]LHSBC

I think that they’ve developed a very important argument, but I think they downplay the real costs and risks, and they fail to adjust to the way the world has changed. They contort their description of the Cold War grand strategy of the United States in various ways to make it seem like deep engagement is just a continuation of fighting the Cold War, which was justified. And that’s not right. The Cold War was about resisting a particular enemy that was powerful and threatening. This is about shaping and changing the international environment and picking fights around the world. Tempting the United States to intervene over and over again.

#### Beckley nitpicks definitions

Friedman 17 [Benjamin H. Friedman was a research fellow in defense and homeland security studies. He writes about U.S. defense politics, focusing on strategy, budgeting, and war. He has co‐​edited two books and has published in International Security, Political Science Quarterly, Foreign Affairs, the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, the Atlantic, the Philadelphia Inquirer, USA Today, the Hill, Politico, the Christian Science Monitor, and various other journals. Ben is a graduate of Dartmouth College, a PhD candidate in political science at the MIT, and an adjunct lecturer at George Washington University’s Elliott School of International Affairs, 6-1-2017, "Should America Shape the World?," Cato Institute, https://www.cato.org/policy-report/mayjune-2017/should-america-shape-world, accessed 9-21-2020]LHSBC

Also, again relying on Beckley, the book largely defines entanglements away. Alliances meld our sense of our interest with that of our allies. That’s what George Washington was concerned about in his farewell address. That kind of entanglement doesn’t count in Beckley’s analysis, which accounts for its really low incidence. A better definition of entanglement might include the Korean War and Libya, along with Vietnam, which would show that the problem is more substantial than Brooks and Wohlforth admit.

#### They even admit restraint good

Friedman 17 [Benjamin H. Friedman was a research fellow in defense and homeland security studies. He writes about U.S. defense politics, focusing on strategy, budgeting, and war. He has co‐​edited two books and has published in International Security, Political Science Quarterly, Foreign Affairs, the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, the Atlantic, the Philadelphia Inquirer, USA Today, the Hill, Politico, the Christian Science Monitor, and various other journals. Ben is a graduate of Dartmouth College, a PhD candidate in political science at the MIT, and an adjunct lecturer at George Washington University’s Elliott School of International Affairs, 6-1-2017, "Should America Shape the World?," Cato Institute, https://www.cato.org/policy-report/mayjune-2017/should-america-shape-world, accessed 9-21-2020]LHSBC

On temptation, I appreciate the book’s admission that restraint would lessen the risks of fighting needless wars. But I’m not reassured by their alternative antidote, which includes “the emergence of prudent leadership” and the resurrection of “domestic institutional constraints on the president’s authority” to make war. I prefer the old‐​fashioned view that we should take seriously the possibility that the president could be a schmuck. One potential “domestic institutional constraint” on the president’s ability to start wars is the strategy of restraint and the smaller military establishment it encourages.

### 2NR – Prolif

#### Security guarantees don’t prevent prolif.

Philipp C. **Bleek &** Eric B. **Lorber 18**. Bleek is a Fellow at CNS and an Associate Professor in the Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies Program at the Graduate School of International Policy and Management; Lorber is an adjunct Fellow at the Center for a New American Security, a Senior Associate at the Financial Integrity Network, and a senior adviser at the Center for Sanctions and Illicit Finance at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. 02/22/2018. “Security Guarantees and Allied Nuclear Proliferation.” The Logic of American Nuclear Strategy: Why Strategic Superiority Matters, Oxford University Press.

Conventional wisdom among policymakers, less support from scholars The literature on extended nuclear guarantees broadly divides into policy-focused work—arguing that such guarantees, if properly calibrated, can prevent allied nuclear proliferation, and prescribing mechanisms for increasing their credibility (Congressional Commission 2008)—and academically-oriented research, examining whether guarantees can be credible in the first place. Although the policy literature considers which factors may affect credibility (Murdock 2009), its primary limitation is assuming guarantees can be effective in stemming allied proliferation. The literature presents a toolbox of options for how to increase credibility, but gives short shrift to the prior question of whether security guarantees can prevent allied proliferation. The academic literature on guarantees also has shortcomings. Some argue that guarantees do not stem allied proliferation because they are incredible (Goldstein 2000), but base the conclusion on analysis of a few cases in which allies chose to proliferate. Other scholars in the qualitative tradition dispute these results, noting that such guarantees can prevent allied proliferation activity (Knopf 2012). A modest but growing quantitative literature addresses the question of why states do and do not proliferate, but reaches contradictory conclusions on security guarantees (see Table 4.1). And none of these studies focused narrowly on guarantees—they were either “garbage can” approaches that sought to test a host of potentially relevant variables, or focused on other independent variables—and therefore did not subject their security guarantee findings to robustness checks. [[TABLE 4.1 OMITTED]] Two recent studies catalyzed a resurgence of interest in applying sophisticated quantitative tools to the proliferation puzzle. 5 Employing hazard analysis, Singh and Way (2004) found that states with nuclear-armed allies were neither less nor more likely to explore nuclear weapons options, launch weapons programs, or acquire weapons. Multinomial logit analysis, reported as a robustness check, similarly found no relationship between guarantees and states’ likelihood of launching weapons programs, but did find a robust negative relationship to both exploration and acquisition. Jo and Gartzke (2007) employed probit regression analysis, and concluded that states receiving security guarantees were no less likely to have active nuclear weapons programs, though they were less likely to possess nuclear weapons. Finally, two scholars tweaked Singh and Way’s earlier work. Kroenig (2009) reported that two out of three hazard models found a negative relationship between guarantees and acquisition, while one found no relationship. In a subsequent 2010 book that conducted analysis along similar lines yet came to the opposite conclusion, Kroenig (2010) reported that all four models that controlled for guarantees found no relationship to acquisition. Fuhrmann (2009)— employing probit regression analysis but, unusually, structured like Singh and Way’s hazard analysis to drop countries from the data set once they reach a given threshold—reported that all of his models found no relationship between guarantees and nuclear weapons program initiation or acquisition.

### 2NR – Inevitable

#### Not eternal – Public support erodes faith

Joe **Barnes 15**, Bonner Means Baker Fellow, Rice University’s Baker Institute For Public Policy; and Andrew Bowen, Ph.D., Senior Fellow and Director of Middle East Studies, Center for the National Interest, 2015, “Rethinking U.S. Strategy in the Middle East,” https://bakerinstitute.org/media/files/files/0b23aade/CME-Pub-StrategyMiddleEast-061915.pdf

We may argue about the wisdom of invading Iraq in the first place. We can enter into what is now an extensive debate upon the success or failure of the 2007 “surge” or the advisability of withdrawing U.S. troops from Iraq in 2010. But the **bottom line** remains: the experience of the Iraq invasion is a cautionary tale about the limits of U.S. power— however immense—to remake fractured polities. Afghanistan, where the U.S. has been fighting for 13 years without a conclusive victory over the Taliban, is another case in point. One might contend that the U.S. response to such failures should be to increase the human and financial resources it commits to “victory,” however defined: more troops, more budgetary outlays, permanent stationing of significant numbers of U.S. troops in places like Iraq and Afghanistan. Putting aside the question of whether such a response would merely mire the U.S. even more deeply in never-ending conflict, there is **little evidence** that **the American public would support such a policy**. U.S. power is not just limited by its ability to shape developments on the ground; it is also limited by the necessity of creating and, more importantly, **sustaining domestic support** for costly foreign military ventures. Finally, there are **real financial limits to U.S. freedom of action**. After all, the U.S. already spends immense sums on defense; a major new military intervention would further increase the cost. The public might accept substantially higher taxes, sharply reduced expenditures, or the acquisition of even greater debt in a true national emergency. But there is **little taste to do so**, for the sake of yet another large-scale intervention in Iraq.

### 2NR – AT: Brands

#### C**onflict of interest – Brands is funded by the military**

Johnson 19 ([Adam Johnson is a contributing analyst for FAIR.org.] “Bloomberg’s Armsmaker-Funded Columnist Wants You to Know: Military Spending Is Woke.” Mar. 19, 2019, <https://fair.org/home/bloombergs-armsmaker-funded-columnist-wants-you-to-know-military-spending-is-woke/>) LHSLA LH

Bloomberg identifies Brands as the “Henry Kissinger Distinguished Professor at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies, and senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments.” “Kissinger” is [ominous enough](https://fair.org/home/and-now-a-word-from-henry-kissinger/), but surely Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments is some innocuous, wonky academic institution, no?∂ In a piece explicitly defending bloated military budgets, however, perhaps it would be useful to know what exactly the “Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments” is. We can start by reading this [section](https://csbaonline.org/about/contributors) taken directly from their website (unabridged):∂ Below is a list of organizations that have contributed to our efforts over the past three years.∂ Aerojet Rocketdyne∂ Army Strategic Studies Group∂ Army War College∂ Austal USA∂ Australian Department of Defence∂ BAE Systems Inc.∂ Carnegie Corporation of New York∂ Chemring Group∂ Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA)∂ Department of the Navy∂ Embassy of Japan∂ Fincantieri/Marinette∂ Free University Brussels∂ General Atomics∂ General Dynamics—National Steel and Shipbuilding Company (NASSCO)∂ Harris Corporation∂ Huntington Ingalls Industries∂ Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies∂ Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force∂ Kongsberg Defense Systems, Inc.∂ L3 Technologies, Inc.∂ Lockheed Martin Corporation∂ Maersk Line, Limited∂ Metron∂ National Defense University∂ Navy League of the United States∂ Northrop Grumman Corporation∂ Office of the Secretary of Defense/Office of Net Assessment (ONA)∂ Office of the Secretary of Defense/Office of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE)∂ Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (AT&L)∂ Polski Instytut Spraw Miedzynarodowych (PISM)∂ Raven Industries∂ Raytheon Company∂ Sasakawa Peace Foundation∂ Sarah Scaife Foundation∂ SEACOR Holdings∂ Secretary of Defense Corporate Fellows Program∂ Smith Richardson Foundation∂ Submarine Industrial Base Council∂ Taiwan Ministry of National Defense∂ Textron Systems∂ The Boeing Company∂ The Doris & Stanley Tananbaum Foundation∂ The Lynde & Harry Bradley Foundation∂ United Kingdom Royal Air Force∂ Brands is a senior fellow at an organization funded almost entirely by those with a clear interest in the upcoming $750 billion defense budget Brands is pushing for. While we don’t have a tax filings for CSBA since Brand was hired there, and thus we do not know his specific income, the average senior fellow at the organization, as of its last tax filing, makes just under $300,000 a year. They can call it whatever they wish—”think tank,” “nonprofit,” “Center”—but by any objective metric, this organization is just a lobbying entity for the weapons industry and Western militaries. A cursory glance at their policy briefs reveals they, unsurprisingly, always support more spending on weapons systems. Unlike other weapons-funded lobbying groups such as Center for Strategic and International Studies (FAIR.org, 8/12/16), they don’t even bother throwing some banks or soda companies in there to give the appearance of being anything other than a weapons industry trade group. (Don’t be fooled by the “Sasakawa Peace Foundation”—that’s an organization founded by far-right Japanese business executive Ryoichi Sasakawa, who was jailed as a war crimes suspect after World War II, and who once described himself as the “world’s richest fascist”—Time, 8/26/74.) Setting aside its disqualifying conflicts of interest, Brands’ piece is an assortment of sophistry about how weapons systems create middle-class jobs for Americans. Given that any meaningful definition of “progressive” must take into account the 95 percent of the world who are not Americans—e.g., those on the other end of these weapons systems and military occupations—the column rests its premise on a massive category error. One passage in particular displays a rather goofy notion of what “progressive” means (emphasis added):∂ The progressive critique misses the fact that military spending already serves progressive ends. Yes, defense spending benefits the executives who run major defense contractors, just as infrastructure spending benefits the executives of companies that build highways and airports and schools. But the Pentagon budget also serves as a huge jobs program and source of economic security for the middle class. This includes the roughly 2 million people who serve either on active duty or in the reserves and 730,000 civilian employees. The vast majority of them qualify as middle class and enjoy precisely the sort of healthcare and other benefits progressives seek to provide for the population as a whole.∂ See, if only all 330 million Americans could work in the military industry, building bombs and F-35s, no one would die due to preventable disease or an inability to afford chemotherapy. To Brands, the most “progressive” vision for society is the Klingon Empire—a perpetual war state where service to large-scale mechanized violence is the cost of survival. The idea that healthcare could, maybe, not be tethered to exporting weapons, occupation, hundreds of military bases, CIA dirty tricks and bombings is simply not an option. Progressives’ only hope: piggyback off US imperialism which evidently, to Brands, is simply a law of nature like ocean tides or entropy.∂ Brands also suggests that you can’t have trade except at gunpoint:∂ Defense spending produces massive positive spillovers in the form of national security and the ability to protect access to the global commons – critical to promoting U.S. trade and improving living standards at home.∂ And he says that what progressives should be worrying about as a “long-term threat to America’s ability to invest in infrastructure, education and other progressive priorities is not the Pentagon,” but “runaway entitlement spending.”∂ New York’s Eric Levitz ([3/18/19](http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2019/03/the-left-is-right-to-hate-the-military-industrial-complex.html)) does a good job debunking Brands’ argument, such as it is, and his piece is well worth reading. But it’s not totally clear how useful it is to assume good faith from someone with such deep, undisclosed conflicts. We learned years ago to dismiss out of hand experts funded by the tobacco industry commenting on the effects of smoking, or climate scientists funded by big oil; why, exactly, do we take at all seriously organizations like CSBA when they comment on military budgets, and broader questions of US militarism, while receiving the vast bulk of their funding from those with a vested interest in bloating the US military machine?∂ The reason is, compared to the fossil fuel industry and tobacco, the military-think tank complex’s mercenary experts are 100-fold more intertwined into the US bipartisan consensus. It’s a product of ubiquity and professional courtesy borne from having influence with both Democrats and Republicans, rather than just the increasingly fringe and anti-science GOP. From an ontological standpoint, there’s little difference between experts on the take pushing cigarettes and those on the take pushing weapons; it’s simply a matter of scope and sophistication.∂ In addition, Brands’ Bloomberg bio omits Brands is also a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, which also receives sizable funds from the weapons industry. While its funders are not posted on its website, Rightwing Web, a website that monitors the influence of right-wing funding, does [report](https://rightweb.irc-online.org/profile/foreign_policy_research_institute/) that major supporters listed in the group’s 2012 annual report include Boeing, Piasecki Aircraft… Historically, FPRI has also benefited from the largesse of conservative foundations. Between 1985 and 2005, FPRI received nearly $5 million from the Lynde and Harry Bradley, John M. Olin, Earhart, Smith Richardson and Sarah Scaife Foundations, among others.

### 2NR – Other cards

#### Possibility of another isolationist president puts US credibility on edge – allies will bandwagon with power, not promises

Kirshner 21 [Jonathan Kirshner, JONATHAN KIRSHNER is Professor of Political Science and International Studies at Boston College and the author of the forthcoming book An Unwritten Future: Realism and Uncertainty in World Politics., March/April 2021, "Gone But Not Forgotten," Foreign Affairs, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-01-29/trump-gone-not-forgotten, accessed 3-2-2021]LHSBC

This is why even though Donald Trump has become a member of a rather exclusive club—one-term U.S. presidents—the Trump presidency will have enduring consequences for U.S. power and influence in the world. Leo Tolstoy warned that “there are no conditions to which a man may not become accustomed, particularly if he sees that they are accepted by those around him,” and it is easy, especially for most insular Americans, to implicitly normalize what was in fact a norm-shattering approach to foreign policy. Level whatever criticisms you may about the often bloodstained hands of the American colossus on the world stage, but Trump’s foreign policy was different: shortsighted, transactional, mercurial, untrustworthy, boorish, personalist, and profoundly illiberal in rhetoric, disposition, and creed. ∂ Some applauded this transformation, but most foreign policy experts, practitioners, and professionals are breathing a sigh of relief that a deeply regrettable, and in many ways embarrassing, interlude has passed. (It is exceedingly unlikely that any future president will exchange “beautiful letters” with and express their “love” for the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.) But such palpable relief must be tempered by a dispiriting truth, rooted in that notion of anarchy: the world cannot unsee the Trump presidency. (Nor, for that matter, can it unsee the way members of the U.S. Congress behaved in the final weeks of the Trump administration, voting opportunistically to overturn an election and helping incite violence at the Capitol.) From this point forward, countries around the globe will have to calculate their interests and expectations with the understanding that the Trump administration is the sort of thing that the U.S. political system can plausibly produce. ∂ Such reassessments will not be to the United States’ advantage. For 75 years, the general presumption that the United States was committed to the relationships and institutions it forged and the norms it articulated shaped the world in ways that privileged U.S. interests. If it is increasingly perceived to be feckless and self-serving, the United States will find the world a more hazardous and less welcoming place. ∂ POWER AND PURPOSE∂ One country tries to anticipate the foreign policy behavior of another by making assessments about two factors: power and purpose. Measuring the former seems straightforward, although it is often not. (France seemed to boast a formidable military in 1939, and the Soviet Union was considered a superpower a half century later, yet both countries suddenly and unexpectedly collapsed under pressure.) Measuring the latter—purpose—requires more guesswork in practice but is even more important. Is a country a friend or a foe, and in either case, for how long? Is a country’s word its bond, or are its commitments ephemeral and its pronouncements little more than shallow, opportunistic posturing? Ultimately, these are questions of trust and confidence that require judgment calls. And for better or worse, it is easier to partner with a country whose underlying foreign policy orientation is rooted in purposes that are reasonably consistent over time. ∂ For U.S. partners in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, however, Washington’s priorities on the world stage must now be interrogated, and any conclusions reached must be held with qualifications rather than confidence. And there is nothing that President Joe Biden and his team of immaculate professionals can do to stop that. From now on, all countries, everywhere, must hedge their bets about the United States—something that will unnerve allies more than adversaries. Whatever promises are made and best behaviors followed over the next few years, a resurgence of knuckle-dragging America firstism will loom menacingly in the shadows. That possibility will inevitably shape other states’ conclusions about their relations with the United States, even as nearly every world leader rushes to shake the hand of the new U.S. president. ∂ Thus, even with the election of Biden—a traditional, centrist liberal internationalist, cut from the same basic foreign policy cloth of every U.S. president (save one) across nine decades—countries will now have to hedge against the prospect of an indifferent, disengaged, and clumsily myopic U.S. foreign policy. After all, anarchy also demands that states see the world as it is, not as they wish it might be. And the warning signs that the United States is perhaps not the country it once was could not be flashing more brightly.∂ Although the margin of victory in the 2020 U.S. presidential election was wide (the two candidates were [separated](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/12/11/bidens-victory-another-example-of-how-electoral-college-wins-are-bigger-than-popular-vote-ones/) by seven million votes, a 4.5 percent edge in the popular vote, and 74 electoral votes), it was not, by any stretch of the imagination, a renunciation of Trump. In 2016, some argued that Trump’s election was a fluke. This was always whistling past the graveyard, but the case could be made. After all, the election hinged on only about 80,000 votes, spread across three swing states. Even with that, but for the historically contingent geographic quirks of Michigan (the Upper Peninsula) and Florida (the Panhandle), those states would have gone blue. And the Democratic nominee, Hillary Clinton (who did walk away with the popular vote by a large margin), was, for some key constituencies, a suspect candidate. ∂ The 2020 election put to rest the comforting fable that Trump’s election was a fluke. Trump is the United States—or at least a very large part of it. Many Americans will choke on that sentiment, but other countries don’t have the luxury of clinging to some idealized version of the United States’ national character. Trump presided over dozens of ethical scandals, egregious procedural lapses, and startling indiscretions, most of which would have ended the political career of any other national political figure of the past half century. But the trampling of norms barely registered with most of the American public. Nor did the sheer, horrifying incompetence of the administration’s handling of the gravest public health crisis in a century chase Trump from the political scene in disgrace. (Imagine what would have happened to Jimmy Carter, a decent man dealt a difficult hand by an oil shock and the Iranian hostage crisis. Those events were enough to have his approval rating plummet into the 20s and soon send him packing after his landslide defeat in 1980.) Rather, Trump characteristically treated a pandemic that killed well more than a quarter of a million of the people under his charge as a personal inconvenience, to be managed exclusively for perceived political advantage. Even so, 74 million people voted for him—nine million more than did in 2016 and the most votes ever cast for a U.S. candidate for president, with the exception of Biden, who garnered 81 million. ∂ One cannot paint a picture of the American polity and the country’s future foreign policy without including the significant possibility of a large role for Trumpism, with or without Trump himself in the Oval Office. Looking ahead four years, America watchers must anticipate that the next U.S. presidential election could turn out quite differently. This does not bode well for U.S. interests and influence in world politics. As Mark Leonard, the director of the European Council on Foreign Relations, [observed](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/22/world/europe/europe-biden-trump-diplomacy.html), “If you know that whatever you’re doing will at most last until the next election, you look at everything in a more contingent way.” ∂ Indeed, the story of the 2016 election wasn’t just about Trump’s victory over Clinton; from the perspective of other countries trying to guess the future of U.S. foreign policy, what happened in that year’s primaries was even more informative and chilling. In the GOP’s contest, a political novice, reality TV star, boastful businessman of questionable repute, and indifferent, only occasional member of the party itself managed to steamroll a strong field of established competitors by disparaging the party’s heroes and trampling on its long-held core policy beliefs about global engagement. Because it took place within the Republican Party, this astonishing, unanticipated upheaval cannot be attributed to the possible flaws of Clinton or liberal overreach in the culture wars, explanations subsequently trotted out after the shock of the general election. And a similar story was seen in the Democratic Party’s nomination process. Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont—another long-shot outsider, an old socialist from a tiny state—came very close to wresting the prize from a powerful political machine fully backed by the party apparatus. ∂ What did Trump and Sanders have in common? Almost nothing—except for their rejection of internationalism. The 2016 campaign revealed that the bipartisan postwar internationalist consensus, cracks in which had been visible and growing for decades, had been shattered. A telling casualty marking the end of American internationalism was the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a far-reaching trade agreement among a dozen Pacific Rim countries, including the United States. The agreement was at the center of the Obama administration’s “pivot” to Asia. Clinton, as secretary of state, had orchestrated the painstaking negotiations that produced the treaty and crowed that the pact set “the gold standard in trade agreements to open free, transparent, fair trade.” Yet during the pitched battle for the Democratic nomination, she was forced to renounce the TPP, which many in her party had been wary of. (Sanders led the charge against what he described as “another trade deal disaster.”) In fact, the agreement enjoyed widespread Republican support in both houses of Congress. Trump withdrew from the pact on his first Monday in office.∂ IT GETS WORSE∂ Carrying through to the Biden administration, then, is the observation that the center of political gravity in the United States has shifted away from the engaged internationalism that characterized the previous 75 years before Trump and toward something closer to isolationism, of which there is a long tradition in U.S. history. In assessing the future trajectory of U.S. foreign policy, outside observers will have to make assessments about each political party. Even with Trump out of office, the Republican Party will likely decline to distance itself from Trumpism, given how much elected officials live in fear that Trump will turn his large and loyal following against those who criticize him. Rhetorically at least, the party will likely remain nativistic and nationalist in its attitude toward the rest of the world. The Democratic Party’s foreign policies, even though they may be less overtly malevolent, will not offer much reassurance. Biden can be expected to flood the field with an impressive foreign policy team and give every reassuring impression that the United States will behave as a responsible great power, one that is engaged with the world, respects rules, and follows norms. But his mandate is limited.∂ Biden, elected mostly on a platform of being everything Trump isn’t, has precious little political capital, and he is unlikely to deploy it for the purpose of fighting for his foreign policy priorities. The Democrats, united in their horror at the Trump presidency, are divided on much else. Visible fissures run through the party, often on generational lines, between the party’s centrist and left-leaning wings. And its median constituent, although neither nativistic nor nationalist, might be described as globalism-wary and even isolationism-curious. The conflicts within the Democratic Party will be exacerbated by the salience of Biden’s age at the time of his inauguration (78). Given that Biden himself has repeatedly [hinted](https://www.politico.com/news/2019/12/11/biden-single-term-082129) that his might very well be a one-term, transitional presidency, his fellow Democrats will quickly begin jockeying for position in the anticipated battle for party leadership. Thus, predicting U.S. behavior will again require looking down the road at the likely range of political outcomes four years into the future.∂ Worse, foreign assessments of the United States must consider the possibility that it will soon simply be out of the great-power game altogether. Looked at objectively, the country boasts a colossal economy and commands the world’s most impressive military. But as the old saying about sports teams goes, they don’t play the games on paper, and there are reasons to question whether Washington has the wherewithal to behave as a purposeful actor on the world stage and pursue its long-term interests. The problem is not just that with politics no longer stopping at the water’s edge, U.S. foreign policy could veer unpredictably from administration to administration. It is that the United States is taking on water itself. The country has entered what can only be characterized as an age of unreason, with large swaths of its population embracing wild conspiracy theories. The United States today looks like Athens in the final years of the Peloponnesian War or France in the 1930s: a once strong democracy that has become ragged and vulnerable. France, descending into appeasement, would soon well illustrate that a country consumed by domestic social conflict is not one that will likely be capable of practicing a productive, predictable, or trustworthy foreign policy. ∂ NO MORE BLANK CHECKS∂ This dystopian scenario may not come to pass. It might not even be the most likely American future. But the logic of anarchy requires that all countries must at least process the United States’ polarization and domestic dysfunction, think through the implications of that scenario in which all bets are off, and imagine a world in which Washington, for all its raw power, is less relevant in world politics. This prospect will invite major reassessments of U.S. behavior.∂ Some of the impending revisions will be benign and even beneficial from a U.S. perspective. On the positive side of the ledger, Middle Eastern countries may finally begin to imagine life without strong U.S. military commitments in the region. In 1990, it was understandable that U.S. allies welcomed the U.S.-led war to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation. Had that invasion gone unchecked, Iraq would likely have achieved political domination over the vast oil reserves of the entire Persian Gulf region. Thus, in the absence of a peer military competitor or a pressing security threat, the United States was well positioned to repel that aggression. ∂ But much has changed in the intervening three decades. The United States is now the world’s largest producer of oil and natural gas; China is currently the biggest export market for Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia; and if anything, given climate change, the United States should be looking to discourage, not subsidize, the burning of fossil fuels. If one were designing U.S. foreign policy from scratch today, it would be quite difficult to justify a U.S. security commitment in the Gulf. The U.S. relationship with Saudi Arabia, in particular, has always been more a marriage of convenience than a deeply rooted friendship. That was especially evident in the Trump era, which featured the shady princeling-to-princeling connection between the president’s son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and Mohammed bin Salman, the Saudi crown prince. But personal ties are the most fleeting. They account for the Trump administration’s near silence over the assassination of the Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi (allegedly ordered by the crown prince himself) and its tacit approval of the humanitarian nightmare that is the Saudi war in Yemen. In contrast, as a candidate, Biden [said](https://www.cfr.org/article/presidential-candidates-saudi-arabia) that should he be elected, Saudi Arabia would no longer enjoy a “dangerous blank check.” It is always possible that campaign-trail rhetoric will yield to the realities of power politics, but in assessing their own national security in the coming years, Saudi Arabia and its fellow Gulf kingdoms have no choice but to at least anticipate the withdrawal of U.S. power from the region. ∂ Israel must confront similar calculations. During the Obama administration and after, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made the radical decision, rare and risky in the annals of diplomacy, to throw in his lot with a foreign political party rather than a country. By sidestepping President Barack Obama to work directly with congressional Republicans and then by embracing Trump with a bear hug, Netanyahu hitched his strategic wagon to the star of a U.S. president who did not see past the perceived domestic political advantages to be gained from his Middle East policy. Trump reciprocated by dashing off another political blank check, recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, withholding criticism of any of that country’s transgressions (and thus abandoning the notion that the United States might be an honest broker in peace negotiations with the Palestinians), and essentially bribing some countries to normalize their diplomatic relations with Israel—all without receiving anything in return from the perspective of U.S. national interests. It remains to be seen whether bilateral relations between Israel and the United States will emerge unscathed now that U.S. diplomacy in the Middle East has passed from the hands of Trump’s small coterie of Middle East advisers. ∂ AFTER AMERICA∂ If the post-Trump perceptions of the United States in the Middle East may be good news for U.S. power and interests, the same cannot be said for the rethinking that will take place in the rest of the world. And in contrast to in the Gulf region and the Middle East more generally, in Europe and Asia, the United States has enormous geostrategic, political, and economic interests—as it has for a century. What happens in Europe and East Asia, which are among the world’s vital centers of economic activity, matters for the United States. Reduced engagement with and commitment to partners in these regions will create opportunities for others—actors who will be indifferent or even hostile to what the United States wants in the world. These challenges defy easy reassurance. Biden will surely (and wisely) reaffirm the U.S. commitment to NATO. It is unlikely that the alliance would have survived a second Trump administration, given Trump’s ambivalence about democratic allies in general and participation in what he oddly perceived to be a dues-paying organization in particular. Will the alliance survive much past 2025? There are reasons to be doubtful.∂ In 1993, the realist international relations scholar Kenneth Waltz argued that with the Soviet Union gone, NATO had outlived its usefulness, and he [predicted](https://www.jstor.org/stable/2539097), “NATO’s days are not numbered, but its years are.” The alliance turned out to have decades of life left, of course. What Waltz missed was that NATO has always been more than a narrow military alliance; it is also a broader security community of like-minded states and a stabilizing force on a historically war-prone continent. As such, the alliance has advanced what another realist scholar, Arnold Wolfers, called “milieu goals”—measures designed to make the international environment more benign. NATO has managed to achieve these goals at very little cost, considering that it has always been unlikely that the United States would cut its overall spending on defense and thus save money if it withdrew from NATO.∂ But now, NATO faces existential threats on both sides of the Atlantic. In Europe, authoritarian backsliding in Hungary, Poland, and Turkey is endangering the notion of the alliance as a like-minded security community. (It was this notion that caused Spain to join the alliance in 1982, after it transitioned to democracy.) A NATO that contains authoritarian members will rot from within. In the United States, meanwhile, growing skepticism of internationalism may mean that the country no longer has any interest in pursuing milieu goals. Washington might simply pick up its marbles and go home. Europe would be compelled to test the theory that the alliance is a force for comity and stability. But the implications of American abandonment would go far beyond the continent. It could also presage a post-American world that is darker, more authoritarian, and less able to address collective challenges.∂ There is no region of the world where revised assessments about the United States will be more consequential than Asia. Many observers fret over the prospect of a ruinous shooting war between China and the United States, as Beijing looks to assert what it considers to be its rightful place as the dominant power in the region. Emerging great powers with revisionist aspirations are nothing new and are commonly destabilizing, as they invariably step on the toes of the contented guardians of the status quo. That said, the future of Asia will be determined more by political calculations than military confrontations. Regional actors, once again, will have to make guesses about the future international disposition and reliability of the United States.∂ The main geopolitical assessment that regional powers will have to make is not whether the United States would win a war against China; it is whether the United States will stay involved. Will Washington retain its alliance commitments? Will it demonstrate enough political engagement and recognizable military capacity to give regional powers the confidence to balance against China? If countries figure that the United States is out, or indifferent, then many will decide they have little choice but to bandwagon with China, given its overwhelming power. If it becomes apparent that China’s power and influence will be left unchecked, countries in the region will increasingly accede to more of China’s demands in bilateral disputes and show greater deference for its preferences more generally. ∂ The ground in Asia is clearly shifting. Washington renounced its own grand trade agreement, the TPP, and a TPP that includes the United States is not likely coming back. As international trade agreements will almost certainly remain a lightning rod and perhaps even a litmus test for powerful constituencies in both political parties, trying to breathe life back into the TPP by joining its successor pact is unlikely to be successful—nor deemed worth the anticipated political blowback. China, in contrast, has picked up that dropped ball and recently signed on to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Less ambitious than the TPP, that agreement nevertheless boasts countries that intended to join the U.S.-led pact: Australia, Japan, Malaysia, Vietnam, and South Korea, among others. And international politics and economics are not easily disentangled. Trump commonly disparaged military allies as freeloaders and viewed American troops stationed abroad, including in South Korea, as a for-profit, mercenary force. China is now South Korea’s largest export market, and South Korea sells almost twice as much to that country as it does to the United States. Should Seoul assess that a future U.S. president might cut the cord of the U.S. alliance with South Korea, South Korea might increasingly fall into the orbit of China’s influence.∂ SCARRED FOR LIFE∂ The future of U.S. influence—in Europe, Asia, and everywhere else—depends a great deal on what the United States says it will do and whether it follows through with consistent actions. Biden is capable of following through. But in an anarchic world, U.S. influence will depend at least as much on something else: how other states measure long-term American purpose. By producing a Trump presidency and calling attention to the underlying domestic dysfunctions that allowed a previously inconceivable development to occur, the United States is now looked at far differently than it once was. These new and consequential perceptions will endure, and for some time. ∂ A second Trump administration would have done irretrievable damage to the United States as an actor in world politics. But even with Trump’s defeat, the rest of the world cannot ignore the country’s deep and disfiguring scars. They will not soon heal.

#### Biden puts heg back on the table

Ashley Smith 20 [Ashley Smith, 12-29-2020, "The empire strikes back: Joe Biden’s plan to restore U.S. hegemony," New Politics, https://newpol.org/the-empire-strikes-back-joe-bidens-plan-to-restore-u-s-hegemony/, accessed 2-13-2021]LHSBC

Joe Biden defeated Donald Trump to win the presidency in a contest almost entirely focused on domestic policy. Biden ran on overcoming the pandemic and restoring bourgeois “norms,” while Trump ran on keeping the economy open and stoking up white nationalist bigotry.∂ During all the debates about the election, the socialist Left had little to [no serious discussion](https://www.tempestmag.org/2020/11/the-elephant-and-the-donkey-in-the-room/) of the two candidates’ foreign policy. That Biden’s first act after securing victory was to announce nominees for his national security team has finally forced this conversation to the fore.∂ When introducing them, Biden [declared](https://www.ft.com/content/e9f7fc88-7f08-43af-976c-9b164cf32ed8), “America is back, ready to lead the world, not retreat from it. Once again sit at the head of the table. Ready to confront our adversaries and not reject our allies.” This declaration of imperial restoration jolted the Left to attention.∂ Many have denounced Biden’s militarist [record](https://www.jacobinmag.com/2020/06/joe-biden-foreign-policy-military-liberal-interventionism-obama), exposed his nominees’ [defense industry ties](https://inthesetimes.com/article/joe-biden-department-of-defense-pentagon-transition-team-weapons-industry-military), and criticized their [hawkish positions](https://www.counterpunch.org/2020/11/11/will-the-biden-team-be-warmongers-or-peacemakers/). Some did so with naïve hopes of [convincing Biden to adopt progressive positions](https://truthout.org/articles/most-dem-voters-are-to-the-left-of-biden-on-foreign-policy-can-he-be-moved/) on foreign policy. They will be severely disappointed.∂ A creature of the establishment, Biden is determined to ensure U.S. dominance in the changing balance of state power in global capitalism. He [made clear](https://www.ft.com/content/7b687a78-109c-416e-9795-793bb017f964) his administration will “not be a third Obama term because … we face a totally different world than we faced in the Obama-Biden administration.”∂ He is therefore proposing a new imperial strategy that combines features of Obama’s muscular multilateralism (apparently an evolution from John Kerry’s 2004 celebration of the Democratic Party’s “[tradition of muscular internationalism](https://www.globalpolicy.org/images/pdfs/03progressiveinternationalism.pdf)” ) with Trump’s focus on great power rivalry with China and Russia. This augurs not the peace that liberals hoped for, but a dangerous reassertion of U.S. imperial power.