

Chapter 15

Conclusion

Realities, Imperatives, and Principles in a New Era of Great Power Competition

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This chapter summarizes the major features of the new era of Great Power competition (GPC). It then provides an assessment of the novel 2019–2020 coronavirus pandemic implications, concluding that the virus’s impact is likely to accelerate ongoing geopolitical trends rather than generate new ones. The chapter analyzes three main imperatives for American success in GPC by observing that the Sino-American dyad is not a new Cold War; successful competition with China must feature a wise choice of U.S. allies, and the United States can succeed only if the national government smartly intervenes in the economy to fortify American competitive advantage. It offers historically based analysis demonstrating that four competitive principles are most critical to U.S. success in a long-term competition with China: firmness with flexibility, durable partnerships and alliances, the peril of reciprocal societal denigration, and playing for time.

The year 2020 began with a global health shock of a kind unobserved in a century—a deadly novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This long-predicted, but nonetheless gripping, worldwide trauma layered over the top of ongoing historically broad and deep international economic and geopolitical changes.¹ Decades-long economic globalization began a sharp decline at the end of the 2010s, punctuated by a dramatic trade war between the world’s two largest economies: the United States and China. Geopolitics also witnessed dramatic change. Two distinct global rivals—China and Russia—rose during the late 2010s to challenge what had been a quarter-century run of American global dominance, or unipolarity. This era of Great Power competition (GPC) generated patterns of international interaction with far more confrontation and conflict than observed from 1990 to 2015, which largely was characterized by cooperative and collaborative behaviors among the world’s largest states.

A century ago, the Great Pandemic of 1918–1919 corresponded with a deadly inflection point within a prolonged period of GPC that ran from 1895 to 1945. The period from 1914 to 1918, during which the major protagonists fulminated their multistate rivalry in a prolonged and horrifically destructive period of direct military clash, became World War I.

That so-called Great War did not end the multiparty competition. There was no clear transition from one dominant power to another and no durable arrangement to channel state competition away from direct military clash. Thus, the multipolar Great Power struggle lurched forward with most of the same prewar players and into an even more global and destructive military clash 20 years later in World War II.² In 2020, COVID-19 mixes into a three-state Great Power competition, wherein the United States, China, and Russia openly compete for international status and power and the trajectory of relative power from a long-dominant America to either rival remains incomplete and far from certain.

The chapters of this volume have grappled with the many issues and uncertainties surrounding the ongoing transition from a unipolar world dominated by American global power to one where rivals Russia and China now compete openly with the United States and each other. In the case of Vladimir Putin's Russia, its contemporary power capabilities are mainly reimagined and repurposed military and reenabled propaganda implements rather than anything new. In the case of China, truly historic economic growth is catalyzing new wealth and imagination, generating an array of power capabilities that enable broad competition with the United States and growing influence with other states.

This chapter offers a collection of observations about the dawning new era of Great Power competition. It extends some of the numerous insights generated in the previous chapters but does not recite them all.³ This chapter evaluates the main elements of contemporary Great Power competition between and among the three main rivals. It situates major contemporary GPC dynamics in context with those of past periods of multilateral Great Power rivalry, including an assessment of what the COVID-19 pandemic might mean for dominant GPC trends. The chapter then addresses the critical question of whether ongoing Great Power transition must result in direct military clash and what factors might elevate the risk. It also analyzes the prospects for GPC to enable viable and durable partnerships for collaboration and cooperation to develop across the five categories of interstate interaction found in table 2.2: political and diplomatic, ideological, informational, military, and economic.

The chapter explicitly covers the objects for influence of contemporary Great Power competitors: other countries and their perspectives. It offers three major imperatives about the reciprocal and dynamic interaction of American competitive advantages and the needs of potential partners. The concluding section presents four principles most vital to U.S. success in its competitive Great Power dyad with China: firmness with flexibility, partnerships and alternative geometries, leaders versus peoples and the poison of mass denigration, and playing for time.

Essential Outlines of Contemporary Great Power Competition

Contemporary Great Power competition is unique, but not unprecedented. Multipolar GPCs have been contested throughout modern history. Each contributed important insights to the dynamics of the contemporary world. At the same time, contemporary dynamics exert their own pull on the choices and risks faced by the modern Great Powers. These factors include, but are not limited to, the impact of modern economic advancements, the importance of new technologies as means of competition, and the influence of warfighting

risks on contemporary societies. Finally, modern GPC is already changing patterns of geostrategic interaction.

Essential Elements

There are three contemporary Great Powers in 2020. The United States stands atop the triumvirate, with China a rising competitor and Russia vying for top-level prestige while facing clear signs of decline. The emerging strategic aims of China and Russia are incompatible with those established by American power in the post-World War II era; this has produced the return of a historically dominant pattern of Great Power competition. China is the Great Power best poised to displace America from its long-dominant power position. It has a positivist perspective on what a new global order could look like, one loosely captured in its concept of a “community of common identity.” While a net power comparison between the United States and China indicates that their power transition timeline is longer than some now fear, the Sino-American competitive dyad is likely to be the dominant Great Power rivalry into the future.⁴ Russia is an urgent but transient security risk for the United States and China, with the potential to do enormous military damage to the world if miscalculation leads to military clash. However, Russia practices a reactive, disruptive strategy aimed to pacify its immediate borders (a loosely formed “Eurasia focus”) and to question contemporary institutions and processes that it perceives as a threat. Unlike China, it is a competitor without a viable vision for a new world order or the necessary power to generate one. China and Russia may engage in tactical entente to erode American power, frustrate U.S. actions and preferred institutions, and question norms and rules they deem threatening. Their long-term interests, however, diverge too much for a durable partnership. Thus, Washington must remain careful not to misunderstand tactical cooperation as some form of deeper anti-American strategic alliance.

“[T]he official mind in Washington clearly has moved toward the view that China is today, and will be for the foreseeable future, the principal challenger to overall U.S. hegemony in the international system. No other countries come close because they lack comparable levels of comprehensive national power, even though several states, such as Russia, North Korea, and Iran, oppose the United States locally or on important specific issues.”

—Ashley J. Tellis, Alison Szalwinski, and Michael Wills, eds., *Strategic Asia 2020* (2020)

Essential Backdrop

The realignment of Great Power relations from an era of singular American dominance to one with three main actors playing parts in a multipolar competition has evolved slowly. Cooperative relations began to erode in 2008. By 2014–2015, the three protagonists were in a de facto GPC, which was formalized in U.S. strategic documents in late 2017 and early 2018. GPC emerged against a backdrop of major economic change. More than two decades of rapid economic globalization came under increasing scrutiny for a record of fragility and unfulfilled expectations. Mainly, but not exclusively, globalization lost prestige from repetitive boom-and-bust cycles and a propensity for creating an ever smaller circle of extraordinarily rich and comfortable elites juxtaposed against a growing circle of underserved constituent groups.⁵ Today, a fourth industrial revolution is fueling deglobalization and eroding global markets and supply chains. On one level, it is exacerbating the socio-

economic disruption of the digital age with widening inequality in incomes and greater unemployment among low-skilled workers. On another level, it is reducing the price of precision and advanced manufacturing and creating a new generation of smaller, smarter, and cheaper weapons. The inexorable movement of product manufacturing closer to domestic markets will continue to be a factor with great impact on GPC.

The foundation of modern Great Power wealth and competitive advantage has fundamentally changed from one dominated by industrial era technology to one in which information technology (IT) has become the source of geopolitical power. China has been the early beneficiary of this change, leveraging an ability to appropriate (and misappropriate) global intellectual property to accelerate technological growth while maneuvering to control global information flows it finds threatening. Russia and China have determined that information power is more likely than industrial power to determine the outcome of long-term geopolitical contests.⁶ Thus, both Russia and China have been increasingly waging foreign propaganda campaigns on social media platforms and other online channels of international influence. To keep pace, the United States must rethink its competitive posture, work with other developed nations, and, via public-private partnerships, reprioritize resources into key information technology and capabilities in order to pursue broad, agile approaches to limiting the foreign propaganda threat.

The United States has distinct advantages over both China and Russia as the fourth industrial revolution begins to reshape the world. Working with partners and allies—and while adjusting American laws and regulations to the new economic forces—the United States is well-poised to exploit its natural advantages in higher education, innate innovation, entrepreneurial spirit, and global market share. China also may benefit greatly from the fourth industrial revolution by prioritizing government investment in its high-tech manufacturing sectors. However, it must grapple with looming economic challenges from growing unemployment, an aging and less productive workforce, and a potential for social unrest. Russia, meanwhile, is not well poised for future economic competition, as it lacks the public- or private-sector elements necessary to participate fully in the modern economy.

Geostrategic Interactions

Russia and China present distinct competitive threats to the United States around the globe. In many regions, Russia often poses the more immediate challenge, whereas the repercussions of Chinese economic investments manifest themselves subtly and will likely undermine U.S. strategic interests more gradually.

The United States and China have primary and conflicting interests in the Indo-Pacific region. The importance of those interests to both countries makes the region a central venue for Great Power competition. The U.S. Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision is not compatible with China's aspirations for increasing control within its First Island Chain and wider Chinese regional aims, sometimes espoused as a community of common destiny. Here, Sino-American competition could turn toward confrontation or a military clash if careful diplomacy is not exercised. China has economic dominance in markets and investment across most of the region. It also has eroded U.S. military advantage in potential locations of confrontation near its shores and inside the First Island Chain. The United States retains an overall advantage in military technology and power projection across the

wider Indo-Pacific region, commercial financial dominance, and a resonant ideology and ability to communicate it, along with a regional political and military alliance structure unmatched by China.

Russia has a primary interest in Europe, with special sensitivity to sovereignty in its near abroad—including former Soviet Union provinces. American and European diplomacy will remain challenged to stanch Russian misadventures without generating overt confrontation or clash. While Europeans mistrust Russia generally, their perception of Russia as a security threat varies greatly. Europe cannot alone defend member states from Russia. Thus, Europeans worry that the United States may detach itself from Europe—particularly the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Today—and in the foreseeable future—Europe remains unable to create an autonomous system of security and defense. Should the United States move to depart the Alliance, Europe may intensify accommodation with Russia—and even with China.

Moscow and Beijing are only nominally united in their desire to compete with and displace U.S. influence across Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, and the Arctic. The United States retains a historic strategic interest in primacy across the Western Hemisphere, and the region appears unlikely to be similarly important for the other two Great Powers in the near term, making it a less intense area of competition absent unforeseen miscalculation. Conversely, the Middle East promises to be an area of dynamic competition and occasional nonmilitary confrontation in the coming decade—with access to resources the principal focal point.

As U.S. and Russian interests in external energy sources wane, however, the competitive focus in the Middle East may shift to prestige and resonance of ideological narratives. States in Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, and the Arctic are often eager recipients of Russian and Chinese attention and resources out of convenience rather than ideological commitment. Thus, the United States should avoid imposing regional strategies that treat Russian or Chinese activities as uniformly harmful to U.S. interests. A Washington focus on American strengths as an economic partner, the quality and quantity of its military assistance, and the positive and benign nature of its military forward presence should best safeguard U.S. interests in these regions of less intense contemporary GPC.

Weapons of mass destruction remain a critical feature and potentially dynamic factor in GPC. The system of arms control treaties that, for decades, limited U.S. and Russian nuclear forces is under great strain and could collapse. Russia began a slow modernization of its aging nuclear forces in the 2000s. In March 2018, Vladimir Putin announced that Russia was developing new types of nuclear systems, including a multi-warhead intercontinental ballistic missile, along with hypersonic, autonomous, and nuclear-powered delivery systems. It is unclear whether Moscow has begun to place a greater reliance on nuclear weapons or the threat to use them during regional conflicts.

The United States is engaged in an expensive recapitalization and modernization of its nuclear forces and plans to begin fielding new systems in the late 2020s. China is investing more in nuclear capabilities, modernizing and expanding strategic systems and developing dual-capable theater-range platforms that would heighten the nuclear risks in Indo-Pacific conflicts. For now, Sino-American nuclear weapons activities do not appear likely to lead to a Cold War–style nuclear arms race. Yet the risk of a new multistate arms race in nuclear

weapons, delivery systems, and missile defenses is growing, as Great Power relations become more competitive and even confrontational. The three Great Powers today signal that they do not anticipate that an unwelcomed conventional clash would escalate to the nuclear level, but risks of threshold miscalculation remain. At the same time, chemical or biological attacks could be difficult to attribute and may be well suited to support Russian and Chinese objectives in operations below the threshold of open armed conflict.

Despite the focus on GPC, threats to peace, stability, and American interests from rogue states and terrorism are far from eradicated. Rogue states such as Iran and North Korea lack the military and long-term economic power and/or transnational cultural appeal to match U.S. power globally or stabilize an alternative international political order. They are motivated by a combination of regime survival, aspirations for regional dominance, and sometimes global relevance, as well as an inclination to confront the United States, which they all believe is the main obstacle to their own aspirations. They tend to confront the United States below the threshold of direct armed conflict and across multiple domains. While a menace to be managed by the United States, there is little prospect for a fully cooperative anti-U.S. rogue state axis. Moreover, China and Russia must fear spillover to their own economic and strategic interests, so Beijing and Moscow are unlikely to join fully in disruptive rogue adventurism, instead pursuing a mixture of cooperative and obstructive responses on a case-by-case basis.

American counterterrorism efforts will confront a set of new realities. Recent American counterterrorism operations in Syria likely will be the model of the future. Russia must be expected to undermine U.S. counterterrorism objectives, either directly or indirectly. As in Syria, Russia will combine diplomatic initiatives, proxy warfare, and electronic warfare to foil U.S. military dominance. Regional states will continue to pursue their own counterterrorism objectives—some that align with U.S. objectives and others that do not. To be effective in this new environment, the United States will require new counterterrorism authorities, new technologies, and other tools that can help manage the risks from small-footprint deployments. It also must hold sponsor states accountable for actions by proxies against U.S. counterterrorism forces.

Finally, two nontraditional competitive venues—space and cyberspace—are those where all three Great Powers have primary interests engaged and growing. There is high risk that intensifying competition in space could lead to greater confrontation there. Agreement on some viable rules and norms for collaborative use and cooperative actions in space could reduce the growing risks of confrontation and miscalculation leading to clash. Likewise, the absence of cooperative rules and norms in cyberspace has contributed to a darkening turn toward confrontational dynamics.

Relevant History and Contemporary Dynamics

The contemporary era is characterized by heightened competition among more than two Great Powers—a multipolar competition. This makes it distinct from the most recent period of GPC, a bipolar rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union that played out over a 45-year Cold War. In past multipolar Great Power competitions, rivalrous dyads ebbed and flowed. These dyads normally involved a rising power and a dominant one, raising the strategic question about the inevitability of relative power decline by the dominant

state and a power transition between them. Great Power transition challenges rising states with the dilemma of how to assert their relative power gains without provoking outright clash with the dominant state. Transition also confronts the dominant, but relatively declining, state with the vexing question of whether its rising challenger could be accommodated in a manner that avoids destructive military clash and an unacceptable change in the status quo. These transitions play out over decades and centuries, not years.

Although three-quarters of Great Power transitions since 1500 have featured a destructive period of war between them, this outcome is not foreordained. Great Power competitors joined in a relative power transition can culminate their interactions with accommodation or acquiescence short of war, but those peaceful outcomes require hard work and astute leadership. When one side (or both) in a relative power transition dyad recognizes a shift in the relative alignment of economic and military power moving decisively against it, it is much more inclined to risk a preemptive conflict than when it perceives a stable power status quo. Too often, Great Power leaders misperceive relative power, eschewing detailed, empirical assessments of power to inform decisionmaking and abet strategic planning. Even when accurate assessments of relative decline or vulnerability are made, domestic or bureaucratic interests may retard agile adaptation necessary to mitigate risks of Great Power war. Thus, success in GPC requires extraordinary political leadership in both international statecraft and generating domestic renewal and adaptation.

The Sino-American competitive dyad is likely to be a dominant Great Power rivalry well into the future.⁷ It is the competitive dyad most fraught with the dangerous dynamics of Great Power transition, although any misstep leading to accidental war with Russia would be enormously destructive and consequential, especially if Russia escalated to a nuclear weapons threat or use in order to end a conventional conflict. While some Western pundits stoke fears of an imminent and disastrous power shift in favor of China on the horizon, a net power comparison between the United States and China indicates that the transition timeline is longer than some now predict. Properly understood, this elongated transition affords China and the United States time to better appreciate the risks of unbridled rivalry and seek a path of modulated competition with elements of confrontation and collaboration underpinning the search for mutually acceptable strategic outcomes.

Geopolitical Shocks and GPC: COVID-19

The big geostrategic question of 2020 is how the COVID-19 pandemic will affect contemporary Great Power competition. As a once in a lifetime, truly global health crisis, COVID-19 must be understood as a factor in evaluating GPC and the future trajectory of relative power transitions between them. An in-stride assessment of likely pandemic impacts on GPC suggests that, while each competitor will suffer absolutely from this significant exogenous shock, none seems likely to endure a mortal blow or one that alters the relative balance of power immediately or shifts the trajectory of relative power transition. This can be established with an overall assessment of historic pandemic geostrategic effects followed by an evaluation of likely impacts from COVID-19 on the three Great Powers.

The Spanish flu, or Great Pandemic of 1918–1919, is the most analogous global health shock in modern memory. Its impact on the world order and the Great Powers of the time remains debatable. The Spanish flu added to an already enormous death toll during World

War I. Along with the Great War, it was a factor that ended the prewar phase of economic globalization, but the pandemic might have had an important effect on the postwar order in general, and the United States in particular, due to the health of the American President, Woodrow Wilson.

While in Paris to negotiate the end of World War I and the framework for the postwar world in April 1919, Wilson contracted the flu and was taken “violently ill.”⁸ Prior to getting sick, Wilson had been a forceful voice in Paris, challenging the leaders of Britain and especially France to adopt limited war reparations against Germany and for a genial peace that would bind the wounds of war, give voice to oppressed peoples, and widen the space for peace and global integration. After becoming ill, Wilson reportedly grew disoriented and distracted—a symptom attributed to severe influenza and fever. Exhausted, he gave up on the demands he had been making against reparations and forceful occupation of Germany. While hard to know if a healthy Wilson would have won his point against a determined French position to seek a punitive peace, Wilson’s physical decline was noteworthy.⁹ The “victor’s peace” demanded in the final version of the Versailles Treaty set up the humiliation of Germany and a cause that German fascism exploited in its subsequent interwar rise.

Six months later, back in the United States and while in the middle of a bitter political battle with the U.S. Senate to secure ratification of the Treaty of Versailles and entry into the League of Nations, Wilson suffered a severe stroke and withdrew from public life. Again, it is impossible to know whether Wilson’s stroke was abetted by his earlier bout with the Spanish flu, but doctors have subsequently linked weakened organs to prolonged oxygen loss and inflammation experienced by survivors of severe influenza bouts. A bedridden Wilson saw his campaign for ratification of the Treaty of Versailles and participation in the League of Nations defeated by the Senate in March 1920.¹⁰ The result was American withdrawal from leadership in world politics for over 20 years—throughout the interwar period—and an absence of American wealth and power as a counterweight to increasing global fragmentation, radicalization, and war.¹¹

Fifty million people died during the Spanish flu without redirecting the course of global politics, the framework for domestic politics, or basic human behaviors.¹² The insight of Spanish flu history is that, while a traumatic global pandemic may not alter broad global patterns or trends for key countries, it may have important indirect impact on geopolitical futures should the virus badly afflict an important political leader.

But what about after overarching geopolitical changes from COVID-19? Henry Kissinger wrote in April 2020 that COVID-19 will forever alter the world order, asserting that the pandemic’s sweeping global impacts confirm that purely national solutions cannot solve major global issues. Kissinger argued that the ongoing movement toward nationalism must be understood as a danger, and collaborative approaches arising from the pandemic extended toward cooperation to protect the “liberal world order.”¹³ Skeptics assert that Kissinger wrote earlier, and more accurately, that world orders last until their foundations are fundamentally shattered by events, and a pandemic is not that kind of event.¹⁴ Major trends in early summer 2020 seem to be bearing out an earlier, more skeptical Kissinger. The crisis has undercut support for globalization, but that was already trending, with rising populism around the world. It has exposed an already identified yawning gap between major contemporary security, climate, and health challenges and the insufficient power of

any one country to address these challenges.¹⁵ Thus, the pandemic shows that the modern era needs more global governance, not less—but without enough shock to the system to force significant change.¹⁶

Then there is the question of whether COVID-19 portends a change in the relative balance of power among Great Power protagonists. Some American political observers worry that the United States could lose the global leadership contest with China if it holds to an “America First” approach and does not seek its historic post-World War II role of leading collective responses to global challenges.¹⁷ These worries are most acute with respect to U.S. relationships in the Indo-Pacific region. There, pundits fear that American regional legitimacy is at risk due to Washington’s comparatively feeble pandemic responses vis-à-vis those of partners such as South Korea and Taiwan, China’s obvious interest in reviving East Asian economies with an eye to cement its role as a hub, and the risks to U.S. multinational credibility should Washington remain idle and aloof from coordinated regional response and recovery.¹⁸ But China and Russia confront their own challenges in recovering from COVID-19. There is a chance that the virus’s economic impact may be harsher on the United States than on China. Should this happen, it would accelerate the power shift to Asia, but that was already under way.¹⁹

And there are real limits to China’s capacity to take advantage of the current crisis. China’s economy will not be able to return to its prior growth trajectory of some 5 to 6 percent annually until the economies of the United States and the European Union recover as well. Funding another credit-fueled stimulus as the Chinese did in 2008–2009 is off the table due to China’s high overall debt levels and the real risk of triggering a collapse of its financial system.²⁰

As of summer 2020, a unique characteristic of the current crisis has been the conspicuous absence of U.S. global leadership. The United States has not rallied the world in a collective effort to confront either the virus or its economic effects. Nor has the United States inspired the world by its approach to the pandemic at home.²¹ Should Washington recover its footing and lead a G20 effort at expanded financial cooperation working with regional friends and tying in China and Europe, it might emerge with a stronger reputation regionally and globally. This hopeful outcome seems unlikely given the main policy focus of the Trump administration.

Considering these contemporary factors, the post-COVID-19 world is unlikely to be radically different from the one that preceded it. The pandemic and response are reinforcing fundamental geopolitical traits.²² Deglobalization, rising anti-immigration sentiment, and Great Power competition all were established before the pandemic. It seems unlikely that the pandemic will shift general trends back toward global cooperation and multilateralism. A lack of global cooperation is likely to continue, resulting in a weakly coordinated response to the health crisis and slow global economic recovery.²³

But the case of Woodrow Wilson shows individual leaders matter and contingency has to be considered. President Wilson’s bout with the Spanish flu occurred in its “second wave” during the winter of 1918–1919. If a second COVID-19 wave in the winter/spring of 2020–2021 were to metastasize and incapacitate or kill senior Great Power leaders, could this generate a major geopolitical shift? For Russia, Vladimir Putin has enormous power and has maneuvered to retain it through 2036. But Putin’s death or incapacitation is unlikely

to change the trajectory of Russian strategy or relative power capabilities. Some Western foreign policy experts worry that a Russia under Putin that is weakened by COVID-19 and the collapse of world oil prices might be more openly aggressive and prone to risk military conflict. But others think a weaker Russia would likely become less assertive and more dependent on China.²⁴ On balance, the trends with Russia seem more likely to accelerate than change. Moreover, major pundits agree that the systems over which Putin presides—political, economic, military, and informational—are rooted in Russian history and likely to outlast him.²⁵

In China, President Xi Jinping is powerful and the clear head of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), but China's strategic vision and development trajectory are deeply grounded and supported by other top CCP leaders. Xi has taken greater risks than some of his predecessors in pursuing CCP aims globally and across the Indo-Pacific region in particular. Nonetheless, the exit of Xi as China's leader would do little to alter China's basic strategic framework or its plans for moving forward—particularly in the Indo-Pacific region. As American policy analyst Richard Haass observed, “nothing about the current crisis will change China's view that the U.S. presence in Asia is a historical anomaly or reduce its resentment of U.S. policy on a range of issues, including trade, human rights, and Taiwan.”²⁶

In the United States, COVID-19's effect on individual leaders might have modest impact given that 2020 is a Presidential election year. As of fall 2020, major party candidates President Donald Trump and former Vice President Joe Biden are basing campaign strategies on contrasting views of America's proper role in such a sweeping global pandemic. The Trump administration is touting its record of success in America First policies, abstaining from wider global leadership to combat the crisis, and attacking the World Health Organization and China for enabling the pandemic. The Biden campaign promises a less combative United States, and one more focused on leading a collective international response.

Should President Trump suffer incapacitation or death from the virus, a Biden victory would not be certain. Trump's Vice President, Mike Pence, seems a likely torchbearer for the same kinds of policies pursued during 2020, and a Pence election seems likely to entrench America First strategic aims for another 4 years. Conversely, a defeated Donald Trump in November 2020 would have resulted—at least in some part—from the electorate's disapproval of his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. This would open the door for some greater international collaboration and American leadership, but this door may open only a little bit. A post-Trump Democratic President would still confront some 30 to 35 percent of American voters who are jaded about international commitments and unwilling to sign up for spending American resources leading other “rich” nations in combating major international problems.²⁷ A new administration might find some support for a late-breaking American-led global initiative to find a vaccine and underwrite its mass distribution, but asking the American people again to tackle all the global problems at the heart of U.S. foreign policy will continue to be a tough sell.²⁸ The impetus for America and its allies to decouple from the Chinese economy seems likely to grow as a result of the pandemic, and only partly because of concerns about China. There will be renewed focus on the potential for interruption of supply chains along with a desire to stimulate domestic manufacturing. Global trade will partly recover, but more of it will be managed by governments rather than markets.²⁹

So the other side of the COVID-19 crisis is likely to look as it did before, with Great Power strategies and relative power positions much the same. New technologies and challenges will continue to outpace the collective ability to contend with them. No single country enjoys the standing the United States did in 1945 or in 1990, and no other country, neither China nor anyone else, has both the desire and the ability to fill the international leadership void the United States has created.³⁰

Thus, a viable approach to the new era of Great Power competition must begin with a clear-eyed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the major protagonists in the five main categories of interstate competition: political and diplomatic, ideological, informational, military, and economic. As the dominant GPC dyad, China and the United States are the critical nations for comparison. Their relative advantages in these five categories inform the realm of the feasible and establish the unworkable. For Washington, a sober analysis suggests that it must eschew highly confrontational policies in places where it lacks advantage and seek collaboration whenever feasible, while at the same time compete with firmness in categories where it has advantage. America needs to revisit and clearly appreciate that the main source of its ability to project power and exert influence now, as since World War II, is its global networks of allies and partners.

How to Compete Wisely: The Important Role of Alliances and Partnerships

An America that competes smartly with China must understand both the value of time and where it can leverage its major advantages. The United States retains a commanding advantage in military power, although not to the degree it did 20 years ago. But its global military advantages can be offset if China (or Russia) is able to pick favorable physical and political ground for a short, decisive military conflict. Washington must acknowledge this and compensate for it. America's ideology resonates well globally and especially in the Indo-Pacific region. Similarly, its ability to promulgate information and sustain support remains superior to China's, despite Beijing's serious efforts to articulate and reinforce a clear message—a message often undercut by the fact that it features CCP talking points inconsistent with Chinese actions at home and abroad. China is upping its efforts to use political and diplomatic tools to undercut U.S. alliances and partnerships internationally and especially in the Indo-Pacific region, but Washington—despite some obvious recent self-sabotage of its diplomatic advantage—retains strong ties and bonds established over decades that are not easily destroyed. At the same time, China has significant economic advantages over the United States, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. Beijing can mobilize direct trade and investment resources and provide countries with valued opportunities for growth that the United States cannot alone match.

America's relative advantages in ideas, information dissemination, political and military alliances, and conventional military power—when applied away from regions of local Chinese (or Russian) advantage—inform where the United States can build on strength. Concurrently, American weaknesses in relative economic strength compared with China or the conventional military capabilities to defend allies and partners near China (or Russia) informs Washington about how it must proceed for competitive success. The United States

will succeed in competition over time by working with friends and partners and eschewing the strategic error of posing stark binary choices to would-be partners and friends.

These understandings translate into three major imperatives that should inform competition between the United States and China. First, the Cold War was a Great Power competition but not analogous to contemporary GPC. Cold War dissimilarities are important to understand so that policy choices for GPC do not err in applying Cold War lessons. Second, Great Power competitors do best when they form durable partnerships with capable allies and friends. These partnerships are not risk free; Great Powers can make bad choices. However, chosen wisely, Great Power alliance networks expand security options, generate diplomatic leverage and helpful lines of communications, and bolster political legitimacy.³¹ Finally, Great Power competitors do not have the luxury of “hands off the wheel” economic and technology policies. In reality, the myth of American capitalism as a *laissez-faire*, private-market enterprise does not comport with fact—even in times of broad geopolitical and geoeconomic cooperation. During times of Great Power rivalry, the U.S. Government must shake off the myths that constrict competitive decisionmaking and understand the importance of deliberate government-sponsored development in key security and wealth-making technologies and processes.

Despite some contrary commentary, the world is in a new era of GPC.³² Although the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union was a Great Power competition, it was unique in modern history and without great resonance with contemporary GPC dynamics.³³ Nostalgic U.S. calls for broad application of Cold War competitive strategies such as containment fail to appreciate that its unique features make it a poor strategic template for today.³⁴ However, some aspects of a competitive mindset from that time can be useful in the present.³⁵

First, the Cold War was always bipolar and never multipolar. From 1945 to 1991, no other country in the world possessed the global strategic ambitions or the levels of power held in Washington and Moscow. In 2020, GPC is multipolar and has been so from inception.³⁶ Second, the bipolar competition of the Cold War did not feature a clear rising power challenging a dominant one. Instead, the United States and the Soviet Union each claimed primacy and jostled as presumptive equals in every dimension of state interaction. There was no Great Power transition process during the Cold War. Contemporary GPC features a transition framework consistent with historical precedence with a clearly dominant power, the United States; a clear rising power, China; and another Great Power, Russia, contesting geopolitical primacy but with limited and suspect power capabilities. The ongoing transition raises uncertainties and risk calculations that were not present during the Cold War.

Third, the Cold War began with sharply divided Great Power geographic spheres of influence and little interaction between them. A Soviet bloc and a U.S.-led Western bloc of states quickly formed after 1945, and almost no economic, social, communications, or political interactions existed between them—beyond basic diplomacy and some limited mechanisms for travel and cultural exchange. In a starkly different fashion, the Great Power rivalry dyad of the United States and China evolved after more than 30 years of broadly cooperative interaction and engagement in diplomatic, social, and political activities. In all but the military sphere—and even in the hotly contested communications sphere—American and Chinese competitive tensions evolved against a high degree of interactions and

interdependence. So in the Cold War, an American strategic imperative became one of increasing transparency, openness, and resonance with Soviet bloc peoples in a manner that bypassed Communist leaders and provided greater intellectual and physical opportunities to the masses.³⁷ In contemporary GPC, the United States, along with its allies, confronts a different competitive challenge: how to selectively disengage itself from China in places of strategic vulnerability without squandering the kinds of beneficial connectivity, transparency, and access that now exist and that remain desirable.

The Cold War bifurcation into trade blocs was outside the historic norm for multipolar GPC. Past Great Power competitions and transitions featured a mosaic of simultaneous economic confrontation and collaboration. The United Kingdom and Imperial Germany had steadily increasing trade volume—although an evolving character of exports—throughout the 25 years before World War I.³⁸ Napoleonic France retained extensive economic ties with Great Britain beyond its 1803 declaration of war, and when Napoleon tried to impose an end to all British trade on the continent in 1806, extensive British merchant activities through Spain and Russia continued to supply France and Europe.³⁹ At its Cold War height, Soviet exports to the United States totaled only \$1 billion (in 1990).⁴⁰ In 2017, Chinese exports to the United States were \$500 billion, and U.S. company affiliates in China that year made \$544 billion.⁴¹ Severing such well-established economic ties between Great Power rivals is difficult to do. Thus, it cannot be surprising that fully decoupling America from the Chinese economy would be difficult and with a cost that would be unacceptably high.⁴² The United States and China already have been gradually disengaging in multiple economic areas. Reciprocal direct foreign investment has been declining for 5 years. Some U.S. technology firms abandoned China as its “Great Firewall” grew, and more have become wary of doing business in China since its 2015 announcement of Made in China 2025 goals for IT and artificial intelligence (AI) dominance. Finally, the number of Chinese students in American universities began to decline in 2018. At the same time, Chinese and American interdependence in trade, capital markets, and currency markets run deep. Until the United States launched a trade war with China in 2018, these areas were not decoupling—thus demonstrating they will be difficult to disentangle.⁴³

Past Great Power challenges inform critical dynamics of competition today. Great Power ability to win influence through durable alliances and valuable partnerships with less powerful states matters to successful competition.⁴⁴ A dominant power best wins influence with other states by amplifying points of strategic commonality and minimizing points of friction. Today, the United States enjoys common ideological and political objectives with a robust array of states around the world, including across the Indo-Pacific region. Among other regional agreements and treaties establishing this strength are two major, complementary, bilateral vision documents: the U.S.-India Joint Strategic Vision of January 2015 and the India-Japan Vision 2025 strategic document signed in December 2015.⁴⁵ Beyond this convergence with liberal democratic states, most countries prefer military cooperation with the United States to the limited and transactional cooperation offered by China.

At the same time, most states do not believe that severing economic ties with China is in their best interests.⁴⁶ While American commercial finance stands supreme, China’s economic strength in trade supply chains, direct investments for infrastructure, and consumer market power are too large and important for smaller states to summarily jettison.⁴⁷ Washington

lacks the economic capability to enforce a full-blown economic decoupling from China on its most important partner states.⁴⁸ Thus, the United States will compete best with China by gaining and sustaining influence with ideologically and politically aligned states—without making them choose severing economic ties with China as a cost of participation. It must pick its grounds carefully when urging partners not to engage in particular forms of trade, finance, or technology ventures that would help China build its power and compromise U.S. partners' sovereignty.

America's best choice to compete with China is to anchor a partner/alliance structure on common ideology and political philosophy while leading it into a period of partial economic disengagement.⁴⁹ The United States will have to negotiate partner assent to a framework that limits the most dangerous exposure of Western markets, labs, and innovative institutions to CCP control over Chinese economic actors, while continuing mutually beneficial trade and financial activities between China and America and its allies. This approach would require a measured and deliberate move toward restricting some forms of Chinese access to the United States and its partner economies and societies. The start point would see America and its partners agree to three major defensive economic goals from reduced trade with China: Limit vulnerability to CCP surveillance and sabotage, eliminate supply chain dependencies on China that may enable the CCP to credibly coerce or actually disrupt critical Western economic functions, and slow diffusion of innovation and technologies to China that are critical to Western commercial and military competitive edge.⁵⁰ A network of cooperative advanced industrial democracies—each committed to common core values and interests—would leverage U.S. competitive advantages in ideological resonance, alliance-building, and partnership reliability without demanding severance of all economic interactions with China.

The network would continue genuine and reciprocal trade with China but take collective steps to monitor and constrain Chinese trade and investment activities aimed to steal advanced technologies from their commercial companies. It would cooperate and participate in collective public-private ventures that offer practical alternatives to Chinese critical information technologies at viable pricing and that form trusted networks that protect sensitive and proprietary data. It would band together in challenging Beijing's most outrageous trade and industrial policies, increasing the odds that China will reconsider uncompetitive and illegitimate practices developed over many years. Finally, it would seek to prioritize meaningful reform of international institutions committed to a truly liberal global economy, overcoming the rise of nontariff barriers and national protectionism while establishing new standards for expanded free trade, investment, and growth in cutting-edge technologies featured in the fourth industrial revolution.⁵¹

An important catalyst for this kind of a U.S. partnership initiative featuring partial economic disengagement from China would involve high-standard trade agreements linking the economies of North America, Europe, and key parts of Asia. The United States need not begin this task from scratch; it needs only to rethink the opportunities already available to it. The 11 members of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) left the door open to American membership.⁵² A bridge from CPTPP through the United States to Mexico might be an important subsequent step. Although a number of Indian impediments to a free and full multilateral trade and finance partnership

remain, earnest dialogue between CPTPP and India could chart a path for future inclusion. That path would include systematic attention to and investment in an enormously important economy in a liberal democratic country that shares Western ideological beliefs and that has great economic potential.⁵³ A major trans-Atlantic agreement would be an additional logical step.

Exploiting America's comparative advantages in ideological, political, and alliance formation realms—while evolving an alignment of partners committed to partial disengagement from China's economy instead of a stark choice to decouple—best leverages U.S. competitive strength and minimizes risks from abrupt economic stagnation or unintentional war. Nonetheless, such an approach would require an uneasy truce within the American polity. Given its relative economic disadvantages with China, America cannot today swoon to the muse of *laissez-faire* economics and be properly competitive. Certain segments of the American polity hold to a dogma that unbridled free markets and unshackled private corporations are all that is necessary to ensure American economic success worldwide. This is a misreading of geopolitical competitions and U.S. economic history.

The United States has a clear record of government interventions to favor critical economic activities.⁵⁴ It has consistently subsidized American agriculture to sustain farmers from the challenges of foreign competitors with both subsidized and natural comparative advantage. Washington also has favored protective tariffs and quotas against foreign competition in all but brief periods of its history. In times of extreme competition with Great Power rivals, American politicians have moved with great alacrity to subsidize economic programs and segments of the economy deemed to be vital to succeed against international competitors. Before America entered World War II, such subsidies came from U.S. Government loan guarantees for ships, planes, tanks, and industrial products needed by Great Britain and later Russia. During the Cold War, American-targeted investment and complementary tariff barriers “put a finger on the scale” in favor of advanced technologies, defense equipment, and even American mass agriculture in an effort to ensure competitive U.S. advantages against the Soviet Union.⁵⁵ During the Cold War, Washington also indulged discriminatory tariffs and quotas for its junior anti-Soviet partners—countries such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and those in Europe—to secure long-term geopolitical advantage despite short-term economic costs.

Educating the public would be necessary to generate political support for domestic economic renewal of a kind necessary to capitalize American government investment in competitive technologies and processes—like those involving IT, 5G, AI, quantum, and space. Here, the mindset of public direction and incentives for competitive and innovative technology that informed American policy in the Cold War is a relevant legacy.⁵⁶ As in the Cold War, American policymakers will need to subsidize priority elements for competitive advantage in the economic sphere. Public investment will require investment capital. The need is clear: Federal-level investment in American research and development activities in 2018 was at its lowest level since 1955.⁵⁷ To develop that pool, national political leaders will need to confront the extreme concentration of power and wealth in the hands of modern multinational corporate technology giants. With 50 percent of American wealth concentrated in 1 percent of its population, U.S. politicians will need to look at breaking up monopolistic companies and taxing exorbitant wealth as a means to incubate public investment and subsidies to rejuvenate

critical technologies, new businesses, and education to spur innovation.⁵⁸ Thus, it will take leadership and political risk, but American national leaders can expose the myth that the U.S. Government is not an essential participant in competitive economics for what it is. Then it may take steps to ally with friendly countries and partner states to advance a program of managed disengagement and enhanced competition with China.

Seen through the lens of applied history, these three imperatives for U.S. success in contemporary Great Power competition—distinguishing modern GPC from the Cold War, building on American competitive advantages with partner states, and acknowledging the role for government management of critical economic programs in GPC—are complemented by four competitive dynamics with relevance for at least the next decade.

Four Competitive Principles

The study of historic Great Power dyadic rivals offers a number of principles that can enable effective competition while minimizing the prospect of Great Power transition collapsing into Great Power war. Four stand out: firmness with flexibility, durable partnerships and alliances, the peril of reciprocal societal denigration, and playing for time.

Firmness with Flexibility

First, the dominant Great Power must demonstrate firmness with flexibility. It must clearly signal the strategic aims that it will defend at all costs and then offer the prospect of dialogue on those it may be willing to negotiate. While firm on its nonnegotiable aims, it should be flexible in finding issues and venues where win-win outcomes are possible. For example, the United Kingdom accepted American primacy in the Western Atlantic as a better path to sustaining high seas primacy on vital routes for its Middle East and Asian colonies—and preferable to naval confrontation in recognition of growing American power. At the same time, the rising United States came to accept the once-abhorrent British monarchy in recognition of growing political enfranchisement for a great number of British citizens. Is there such trade room today for the United States and China to agree on rules for collaboration in space and cyberspace while at the same time negotiating over reduced CCP domestic economic and human rights constraints?

Flexibility must be paired with firm resolve. Strong security arrangements, backed by formidable U.S. military power, might harden feelings of antagonisms and suspicion, but they are indispensable to preserving the peace with China.⁵⁹ If the CCP expects resistance from the United States and several mid-sized U.S. security partners, it is unlikely to fight for regional hegemony in the near term.⁶⁰ There is a discernible degree of caution in China's behavior that is wary of demonstrated strength and exploits perceived weakness.⁶¹ The United States and its Indo-Pacific partners must stand firm in resistance to China's illegal maritime claims by demonstrating the will to operate in international waters and airspace with freedom of navigation operations and other joint activities. They also must stand firm with Japan on disputed islands. Concurrently, the United States must demonstrate flexibility and adaptability in defense activities within the First Island Chain. It should proceed with a mobile and unpredictable basing posture for American forces. In particular, Washington also should work with Taiwan on development of weapons and tactics for self-defense that emphasize the advantages of smaller, smarter, and cheaper. This kind of flexibility is not the

same as ceding *de facto* spheres of influence to China with the First Island Chain or elsewhere in the Pacific.⁶² Instead, it is an acknowledgment that basic premises about sticking with allies and partners can remain firm even as tactics and techniques adapt.

The United States also can firmly support democratic institutions, individual liberties, and human rights in its alliances and in its interactions with China while demonstrating flexibility in pursuing aspirations for Chinese political reform. After first defending allies and partners from encroachment of Chinese authoritarian tendencies, America can demonstrate flexibility and patience in modeling patterns of individual liberty, freedom of information, and political participation to the people of China. During the Cold War, U.S. efforts to strengthen non-Communist elements within the Soviet bloc often met frustration in the near term. Western radio transmissions were blocked and censored, humanitarian assistance was refused, greater transit and tourism opportunities were blunted, and people-to-people programs declined. But over the long term—and especially after the Helsinki Accords of 1975—these activities gave hope to those laboring for a freer future behind Moscow’s Iron Curtain. American support for democracy and liberty in regions around the world during the 1970s and 1980s made the global ideological climate steadily less friendly to the Soviet Union’s repressive regime.⁶³ This kind of a Cold War competitive mindset is applicable for competition with China today and must be melded with modern collective approaches that portray Chinese political and ideological representations as inappropriate. Today, as then, a large amount of America’s appeal is the power of an uncensored world.⁶⁴

Durable Partnerships and Alliances

The second competitive principle reinforces the imperative of alliances discussed earlier. This is both an imperative and a principle so important for successful GPC that it is worth reinforcement and extension. History demonstrates that the dominant Great Power must look to build and maintain durable, reciprocal interstate alliances that provide would-be partners with alternatives to the either-or choices posed by a hard-charging rival.⁶⁵ Great Britain was right to seek strategic partnerships and allies in its rivalry with Napoleonic France, parlaying these alliances into first containment of the threat and later its defeat. Napoleon largely relied on territorial conquest and installation of family in positions of political power to expand French national power and elements of the French Revolution.⁶⁶

Today, the United States has a far greater base for building economic and military partnerships than any other Great Power in modern history. It also confronts a rising Great Power in China with little experience or inclination in this area. The United States has invested in critical global alliances and partnerships over the years for precisely this kind of moment. Japan is an important illustration. Before the United States sought to secure China’s entry into the World Trade Organization—a push in the late 1990s—it first reaffirmed the U.S.-Japanese alliance formally in 1995. This was a prudent hedge of the American bet on China’s rise to become a “responsible stakeholder” in the world order and an investment that today blunts Chinese aspiration to dominate the Indo-Pacific beyond its First Island Chain—because Japan sits there.⁶⁷ The U.S.-Japan alliance is an example of America’s “high card” of alliances and international institutions in its competition with China—and these should be cherished and well played.

Washington has an enormous opportunity to construct alternative economic, diplomatic, and political geometries with an array of partners to give them alternatives to Chinese enticements and blandishments. However, many of America's eager partners are today apprehensive about the recent unpredictability of U.S. foreign policy conduct. They want and value American partnership but worry that, unlike all its post–World War II predecessors, the current U.S. administration views commitment to rules-based international order and institutions to be more of a self-imposed constraint than a competitive advantage.⁶⁸ Among other signs they desire in an American strategic partner is a future foreign policy free from sanctions, tariffs, and restricted access to U.S. dollars as major instruments unconstrained by allies, rules, or institutions.⁶⁹ To be fully competitive with China, American policy must overcome this apprehension and practice a competitive foreign policy that views alliances as assets to be invested in rather than costs to be cut.⁷⁰

The Peril of Reciprocal Societal Denigration

Third, successful GPC short of direct military clash is extremely unlikely if the rivals descend into a poisonous, open, and reciprocal denigration of one another's people. The choice to criticize the government of a rival state while distinguishing it from the people is not as risky—although a tightrope must be walked to maintain the difference. Once the British and Imperial German press went after the character of the other's societies, the march toward World War I accelerated. So, too, World War II in the Pacific loomed ominously once the United States and Tojo's Japan devolved to mutual societal recrimination, but the U.S. Government's conscious Cold War effort to distinguish the Soviet Union's Communist Party from the Russian people, reserving greatest criticism toward the Party and offering outreach to its people, generated a far different result. American leaders are likely to compete best with China while clearly distinguishing between its criticism of the CCP and its feelings for the Chinese people.

The growing acrimony and invective between China and the United States during the months from 2018 to 2020 is worrisome. In 2018, the Trump administration reportedly considered blocking Chinese citizens from receiving any student visas as part of its package of economic pressure but backed away.⁷¹ In March 2020, the U.S. Secretary of State pressed major industrialized nations to call the COVID-19 pandemic the “Wuhan virus.” This

“We must reject the notion that the competition with China is a ‘clash of civilizations’ and that conflict is inevitable. Our concerns are with the CCP and not the Chinese people. We can collaborate where possible but compete aggressively to protect our national interest and the international order that has kept us safe since 1945.”

—Michael Brown, Eric Cheung, and Pavneet Singh, *Preparing the United States for the Superpower Marathon with China* (Brookings Institution, April 2020)

action during the G7 Foreign Ministers Meeting was later walked back, but it disrupted American leadership of the global pandemic response and gave CCP propagandists an incident with which to whip up anti-Western Chinese nationalism.⁷² President Trump threatened to “cut off the whole relationship” with China during a May 2020 interview.⁷³ Such broadly critical rhetoric risks reinforcing a tactic already at the top of the CCP playbook: ceaselessly exploiting Chinese nationalism to shore up its legitimacy.⁷⁴

The dangers of reciprocity from China are real. While the Chinese foreign minister and other senior government officials often frame their criticism of the United States in ways that target the government in Washington, its activities abroad and at home often cross the line into mass denigration of Americans or other Westerners.⁷⁵ Since late 2019, normally taciturn Chinese diplomats are now observed openly criticizing not only Western policies but also the social and cultural aspects of Europeans, Australians, and Americans in what has been coined “Wolf Warrior diplomacy.”⁷⁶ Inside China, the CCP has co-opted Chinese nationalism as a tool to indoctrinate citizens and its diaspora to a narrative that America and its allies once colonized China and today victimize China by preventing its rise to a superpower, and that the CCP is China’s only savior.⁷⁷ While the risks from such unbridled and growing mutual denigration do not now seem to include direct military clash, history indicates they will trend toward deepening risks of war in the future should implacable people-to-people hostility grow unabated.

To reduce the risk—and channel competition appropriately—the United States should focus legitimate criticism on the CCP and its policies in a manner that counters Chinese narratives feeding nationalist xenophobia. The line between criticizing the CCP and Chinese society is a fine one to walk—and will require calibration. An American effort to toe this line took place in early May 2020 when the Trump administration deputy national security advisor for Asia delivered a speech in Mandarin Chinese intended for the Chinese people that critiqued CCP efforts to clamp down on free speech while praising brave Chinese doctors and front-line workers in the response to COVID-19.⁷⁸ An American program of communication should concentrate on countering CCP-driven disinformation.⁷⁹ It also should work to counter the clear CCP domestic narrative that it is all that stands between China and chaos.⁸⁰ At the same time, the United States should try to maximize positive interactions and experiences with the Chinese people. The United States and its free-and-open partner societies should consider issuing more visas and providing paths to citizenship for more Chinese, with proper safeguards in place. Chinese who engage with citizens of free countries are the ones who are most likely to question their government’s policies whether from abroad or when they return home. In this approach, the United States would do what it did with expatriate Russian communities during the Cold War: View Chinese expatriate communities as valuable citizens while discriminating between Ministry of State security agents for expulsion.⁸¹

Playing for Time

Finally, some argue that time works in favor of the rising Great Power in a competitive dyad, putting the dominant Great Power at dire risk if it does not take swift confrontational action while its relative power is high. But this thesis rests on at least two dubious assumptions: that the rising power’s ascent is likely to be rapid and that the rising power will continue to ascend in a mainly linear fashion and not confront problems or challenges on the way. In the present moment, there is a strong case to be made that the critical factors confronting China at home and abroad make time work in favor of the United States.⁸²

First, America has its own domestic inconsistencies and challenges, but these pale in comparison with those certain to play out within China over the coming couple of decades. The CCP faces multifaceted challenges to safeguard both its political position and

“Beijing is learning, as have other nations, that building advanced equipment is the relatively easy and inexpensive part of becoming a major military power. Its characterization of the international environment, pressures from its military-industrial complex, and the arms race it has triggered will require increased funding and shape debate on how much money can be spent on other national priorities. It will also shape the challenges China faces in the international system because nations will respond to China’s buildup by arms purchases of their own and efforts to use alliances, alignments, and other instruments of geopolitics to counterbalance Chinese power.”

—Thomas Fingar and Jean C. Oi, “China’s Challenges: Now It Gets Much Harder,” *The Washington Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2020)

an economic rise that seems critical to CCP legitimacy. These multifaceted challenges include rampant environmental degradation; rising income inequalities; a rapidly aging and less productive population; chronic worry about abuses of political power; widespread corruption; restive domestic regions including Tibet, Xingxang, and Mongolia; and a poor record on human rights.⁸³ As China’s economy shifts toward more reliance on domestic economic consumption, its economic growth decelerates, and its national debt continues to grow, these many domestic challenges are moving to the fore.⁸⁴ Second, China faces serious unresolved challenges along its own borders, rendering its ability to dominate the Indo-Pacific region doubtful in the near term and making any global push by Beijing to reorder international norms and institutions a truly long-term proposition.

China’s neighbors include formidable economic and military powers such as Japan, South Korea, Australia, and India. Each of them is increasingly apprehensive about China’s strategic ambitions and is deepening security ties with one another and the United States in response. Beijing’s ham-handed efforts to crush democratic resistance in Hong Kong and nationalism in Taiwan have stiffened regional headwinds for Chinese messaging.⁸⁵

It is unwise for the United States to assume that China will succumb to these challenges. Such complacency could distract necessary attention to a serious Great Power rival. At the same time, a U.S. conclusion that China is destined for global dominance—particularly in the near term—is both unsupported and likely to generate strategic overreaction.⁸⁶ China’s economic rise will make it a long-term challenge for the United States to manage rather than one to be conquered or converted.⁸⁷ The United States and China are destined for a lengthy, uneasy coexistence, not decoupling or appeasement.⁸⁸ Thus, a U.S. strategy that plays for time as China’s contradictions grow and as American resilience, regeneration, and the realization of a new competitive mindset emerge from more than two decades of torpor seems the one best suited for U.S. success in contemporary Great Power competition.⁸⁹

The Way Forward

Knowing the imperatives and principles of what the United States should do to succeed in a new era of Great Power competition is not the same as figuring out how to do it. Galvanizing American resolve to compete with the Soviet Union and move into a Cold War was a challenging process. Former Secretary of State Dean Acheson famously stated that the U.S. Government had to make arguments “clearer than truth” to get the American people and Congress to buy into

the effort to contain the Soviet Union. Acheson's work on National Security Council Paper 68 made the necessity of containment clear but was later critiqued as overreach.⁹⁰

In 2020, the operative U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) of 2017 stands as a stark contrast to its 2002 predecessor, a mere 15 years prior. The 2002 version of the NSS began with this preamble:

The great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom—and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise. In the twenty-first century, only nations that share a commitment to protecting basic human rights and guaranteeing political and economic freedom will be able to unleash the potential of their people and assure their future prosperity.⁹¹

The 2017 NSS successor paints a starkly different landscape:

China and Russia challenge American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity. They are determined to make economies less free and less fair, to grow their militaries, and to control information and data to repress their societies and expand their influence. . . . These competitions require the United States to rethink the policies of the past two decades—policies based on the assumption that engagement with rivals and their inclusion in international institutions and global commerce would turn them into benign actors and trustworthy partners. For the most part, this premise turned out to be false.⁹²

In today's new era of GPC, the Sino-American dyad is the rivalry of greatest significance. This contest features an ongoing power transition—always a dangerous dynamic of international politics in modern history. China is clearly growing in relative economic power, but the United States is a dominant state with clear comparative advantages—“high cards” in its hand—that it can build on to advantage.⁹³ Alliance maintenance and cultivation is the most critical card. Firm and flexible confrontation when necessary and collaboration with China where possible is a second. Avoiding a regressive game of reciprocal societal invective is the third. And playing the long game—playing for time—is the fourth.

The NSS properly recognized the China challenge for what it was—formalizing a de facto new era of Great Power competition—but this overdue recognition could go terribly wrong if it generates unwarranted American hysteria and overreaction against Beijing. Overreaction in Washington could lead to high cards played badly.

The NSS culminates its geopolitical evaluation with a highly relevant rejoinder:

We learned the difficult lesson that when America does not lead, malign actors fill the void to the disadvantage of the United States. When America does lead, however, from a position of strength and confidence and in accordance with our interests and values, all benefit. Competition does not always mean hostility, nor does it inevitably lead to conflict—although none should doubt our commitment to defend our interests. An America that successfully competes is the best way to prevent conflict. Just as

*American weakness invites challenge, American strength and confidence deters war and promotes peace.*⁹⁴

These words are measured, historically informed, and wise. Applied well—without resort to overreaction or backsliding into complacency—these words can inspire American confidence in the way forward for this new era of GPC. They also can give U.S. allies and potential partners confidence in American leadership and resolve. China's behavior is galvanizing opposition among countries that do not want to be vassal states.⁹⁵ A rejuvenating United States, with reframed domestic priorities and renewed focus on well-established and well-treated allies and partners, will have a clear advantage in what is likely to be a drawn-out era of Great Power competition with China.

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Notes

¹ Among a long list of public testimony, detailed studies, and published works of nonfiction and fiction predicting that such a novel and deadly virus was increasingly likely and the United States was vulnerable, see Daniel Coats, *Statement for the Record: Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence* (Washington, DC: Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 2019), 21; Katie Pearce, "Pandemic Simulation Exercise Spotlights Massive Preparedness Gap," *Johns Hopkins University Hub*, November 6, 2019, available at <<https://hub.jhu.edu/2019/11/06/event-2019-health-security/>>; *Crimson Contagion 2019 Functional Exercise Key Findings—Coordinating Draft* (Washington, DC: Department of Health and Human Services, December 3, 2019), available at <<https://int.nyt.com/data/documenthelper/6824-2019-10-key-findings-and-after/05bd797500ea55be0724/optimized/full.pdf>>; Sonia Shah, *Pandemic: Tracking Contagions, from Cholera to Ebola and Beyond* (New York: Sarah Crichton Books, 2016); Lawrence Wright, *The End of October: A Novel* (New York: Knopf, 2020).

² The Ottoman Empire (Turkey) and Austria-Hungary emerged from World War I so wounded that they would no longer compete as Great Power competitors in the interwar period. For further discussion, see chapter 2.

³ For a detailed listing of the major insights from the 15 total book chapters (one of which is a couplet chapter, chapter 3), see the Major Findings section at the beginning of this volume.

⁴ See this described in detail at Aaron L. Friedberg, "Competing with China," *Survival* 60, no. 3 (2018), 7–64.

⁵ For a detailed critique of the most conspicuous failures of modern globalization and hyper-interdependence in supply and finance chains by Nassim Nicholas Taleb, the originator of the terms *black swans* and economic *fat tails*, see Bernard Avishai, "The Pandemic Isn't a Black Swan but a Portent of a More Fragile Global System," *The New Yorker*, April 21, 2020, available at <www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/the-pandemic-isnt-a-black-swan-but-a-portent-of-a-more-fragile-global-system>; Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *Antifragile: Things That Gain from Disorder* (New York: Random House, 2012).

⁶ For a detailed discussion of this valuation of information power over industrial power, see chapter 6 of this volume.

⁷ As demonstrated in chapter 3b of this volume, China does not today possess and is unlikely to attain sufficient power assets in the coming decade to enable a strategy of remaking the international order in its favor before domestic risk factors collapse the rule of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)—even if that was its actual strategy. For an opposite view that asserts China possesses a global grand strategy aspiring for leadership of a new tributary system soon to be resourced through a massive effort organized under three overlapping policies—carrying the names "Made in China 2025," "Belt and Road Initiative," and "Military-Civil Fusion"—see H.R. McMaster, "How China Sees the World: And How We Should See China," *The Atlantic*, May 2020, available at <www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/05/mcmaster-china-strategy/609088/>.

⁸ Steve Coll, "Woodrow Wilson's Case of the Flu, and How Pandemics Change History," *The New Yorker*, April 17, 2020, available at <www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/woodrow-wilsons-case-of-the-flu-and-how-pandemics-change-history>.

⁹ Jon M. Barry, *The Great Influenza: The Story of the Deadliest Pandemic in History* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 383–388.

¹⁰ Lloyd E. Ambrosius, "Woodrow Wilson's Health and the Treaty Fight, 1919–1920," *The International History Review* 9, no. 1 (February 1987), 73–84.

¹¹ Charles P. Kindleberger, *The World in Depression, 1929–1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

¹² Barry, *The Great Influenza*, 449–455; Shah, *Pandemic*, 5–6, 97–119, 201–217; James Traub, "After the Coronavirus, the Era of Small Government Will Be Over," *Foreign Policy*, April 15, 2020, available at <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/15/coronavirus-pandemic-small-government-aftermath-nationalism/>>.

¹³ Henry A. Kissinger, "The Coronavirus Pandemic Will Forever Alter the World Order," *Wall Street Journal*, April 3, 2020, available at <www.wsj.com/articles/the-coronavirus-pandemic-will-forever-alter-the-world-order-11585953005>.

¹⁴ Traub, "After the Coronavirus, the Era of Small Government Will Be Over"; Henry Kissinger, *World Order* (New York: Penguin, 2014), 361–374.

¹⁵ Richard Haass, "The Pandemic Will Accelerate History Rather Than Reshape It," *Foreign Affairs*, April 7, 2020, available at

<www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-04-07/pandemic-will-accelerate-history-rather-reshape-it>.

¹⁶ Traub, “After the Coronavirus, the Era of Small Government Will Be Over.”

¹⁷ See Kurt M. Campbell and Rushi Doshi, “The Coronavirus Could Reshape Global Order,” *Foreign Affairs*, March 18, 2020. This is also implied in Kissinger, “The Coronavirus Pandemic Will Forever Alter the World Order.”

¹⁸ Matt Burrows and Peter Engelke, *What World Post COVID-19? Three Scenarios*, Atlantic Council Strategy Paper (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, April 2020), 3–4, available at <www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/What-World-Post-COVID-19.pdf>.

¹⁹ Amitav Acharya, “How Coronavirus May Reshape the World Order,” *National Interest*, April 18, 2020, available at <<https://nationalinterest.org/feature/how-coronavirus-may-reshape-world-order-145972>>.

²⁰ Michal Green and Evan S. Medeiros, “The Pandemic Won’t Make China the World’s Leader,” *Foreign Affairs*, April 15, 2020, available at <www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-04-15/pandemic-wont-make-china-worlds-leader>.

²¹ Haass, “The Pandemic Will Accelerate History Rather Than Reshape It”

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Burrows and Engelke, *What World Post COVID-19*, 3–4.

²⁴ For a review of these offsetting opinions about Russia’s future, see Tom McTague, “The Pandemic’s Coming Geopolitical Second Wave,” *The Atlantic*, May 18, 2020, available at <www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/05/coronavirus-pandemic-second-wave-geopolitics-instability/611668/>.

²⁵ See for example, Tony Wood, *Russia Without Putin: Money, Power, and the Myths of the New Cold War* (London: Verso Books, 2018), 1–9; Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin* (Washington DC: Brookings, 2015), especially 190–226, 312–341.

²⁶ Haass, “The Pandemic Will Accelerate History Rather Than Reshape It”

²⁷ In 2019, the Chicago Council on Global Affairs survey found that 30 percent of Americans wanted the United States to play no active part in the world. A Gallup Poll that same year recorded up to 35 percent of Americans felt the United States should play much less of a role internationally than it did before the Trump administration. See Dina Smeltz et al., *Rejecting Retreat: Americans Support U.S. Engagement in Global Affairs* (Chicago: The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2019), available at <https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/report_ccs19_rejecting-retreat_20190909.pdf>; V. Lance Tarrance, “Public Opinion and U.S. Engagement with the World,” *Gallup*, April 11, 2019, available at <<https://news.gallup.com/opinion/polling-matters/248588/public-opinion-engagement-world.aspx>>.

²⁸ Haass, “The Pandemic Will Accelerate History Rather Than Reshape It”

²⁹ John Lee, *Decoupling the U.S. Economy from China After COVID-19* (Washington, DC: Hudson Institute, May 7, 2020), available at <<https://www.hudson.org/research/16009-decoupling-the-us-economy-from-china-after-covid-19>>; Haass, “The Pandemic Will Accelerate History Rather Than Reshape It.”

³⁰ Green and Medeiros, “The Pandemic Won’t Make China the World’s Leader”; Haass, “The Pandemic Will Accelerate History Rather Than Reshape It”; Kissinger, “The Coronavirus Pandemic Will Forever Alter the World Order.”

³¹ Hal Brands and Peter D. Fever, “Reevaluating Diplomatic and Military Power: What Are America’s Alliances Good For?” *Parameters* 4, no. 2 (Summer 2017), 25–30.

³² A leading voice against calling this a period of Great Power competition (GPC), Michael Mazarr of RAND rests his contrarian view on a very narrow definition of *classic Great Power competition*, which he argues must feature a set of potential enemies with constantly shuffling allegiances and rivalries that typically manifest in military forms of competition. As detailed in chapter 2 of this volume, Mazarr’s stimulating viewpoint does not comport with a detailed examination of modern GPC—a history that has included bipolar competition as well as multipolar competition and has consistently involved a wide array of overlapping patterns of collaboration and confrontation in economics, ideas, information exchange, diplomacy, and militaries. See Michael J. Mazarr, “This Is Not a Great-Power Competition: Why the Term Doesn’t Capture Today’s Reality,” *Foreign Affairs*, May 29, 2019, available at <www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2019-05-29/not-great-power-competition>.

³³ Kurt M. Campbell and Jake Sullivan, “Competition Without Catastrophe,” *Foreign Affairs* 98, no. 5 (September/October 2019), 98–101.

³⁴ For examples of some overwrought calls for Washington to invoke a Cold War against China, see Newt Gingrich, *Trump vs. China: Facing America’s Greatest Threat* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2019); Giselle Donnelly, “What America Needs Is a ‘Good,’ Long Cold War,” American Enterprise Institute, February 10, 2020. For a concise listing of five reasons why the Sino-American strategic competition is not a new Cold War, see Michael Brown et al., *Preparing the United States for the Superpower Marathon with China* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, April 2020), 3–5.

³⁵ Valuable competitive mindset dynamics from the Cold War are different from Cold War strategies and are detailed below, including those found in Stephen M. Walt, “Yesterday’s Cold War Shows How to Beat China Today,” *Foreign Policy*, July 29, 2019, available at <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/07/29/yesterdays-cold-war-shows-how-to-beat-china-today/>>. Also see Campbell and Sullivan, “Competition Without Catastrophe,” 101–107.

³⁶ Other key differences between today’s Sino-American dyadic competition and the Cold War are mentioned in chapter 3a of this volume. By way of extension, China is the one rising Great Power with the positivist ideology and power potential to supplant the preferred U.S. international order. However, in 2020, China is not exporting its ideology aggressively or globally. Unlike the Soviet Union, which aggressively sought the destruction of the United States in the hearts and minds of countries it wanted to become future Communist states, China today has not called for the destruction of the United States and wants the world to be tolerant of its CCP-driven ideology. See Evan Osnos, “The Future of America’s Contest with China,” *The New Yorker*, January 6, 2020, available at <<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/01/13/the-future-of-americas-contest-with-china>>; Odd Arne Westad, “The Sources of Chinese Conduct: Are Washington and Beijing Fighting a New Cold War?” *Foreign Affairs* 98, no. 5 (September/October 2019), 86–95.

³⁷ See Walt, “Yesterday’s Cold War Shows How to Beat China Today.”

³⁸ Edgar Crammond, “The Economic Relations of the British and German Empires,” *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 77, no. 8 (July 1914), 777–824.

³⁹ Alexander Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 28–33.

⁴⁰ See “1991: Trade in Goods with USSR,” United States Census Bureau, available at <<https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c4610.html#1991>>.

⁴¹ Osnos, “The Future of America’s Contest with China.”

⁴² In addition to the extremely high economic costs to the United States from fully decoupling all intertwined supply chains, China could take punitive steps that would impose high costs on an

array of other activities that today are taken for granted in the United States, including, but not limited to, large restraints or high taxes on commercial travel, greater use of non-dollar denominated currencies for international transactions, disruptive manipulation of its own currency and international commercial financial markets, and a resistance to working jointly on a wide array of other mutual issues and interests. See Keith Johnson and Robbie Gramer, "The Great Decoupling," *Foreign Policy*, May 14, 2020, available at <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/05/14/china-us-pandemic-economy-tensions-trump-coronavirus-covid-new-cold-war-economics-the-great-decoupling/>>; Henry M. Paulson, Jr., "Delusions of Decoupling," remarks at the New Economy Forum, Beijing, November 2019, available at <<https://www.paulsoninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Delusions-of-Decoupling.pdf>>; Osnos, "The Future of America's Contest with China"; Campbell and Sullivan, "Competition Without Catastrophe," 99.

⁴³ Kevin Rudd, "To Decouple or Not to Decouple?" Robert F. Ellsworth Memorial Lecture, University of San Diego, November 4, 2019.

⁴⁴ This is not to imply that there are not costs and frustrations to alliances and partnership; there are. But the costs of American alliances are actually less burdensome than they are portrayed and more diverse and significant than appreciated. See Brands and Fever, "Reevaluating Diplomatic and Military Power," 25–30. For similar points, see Walt, "Yesterday's Cold War Shows How to Beat China Today"; Mira Rapp-Hooper, "Saving America's Alliances: The United States Still Needs the System that Put It on Top," *Foreign Affairs* 99, no. 2 (March/April 2020), 127–140.

⁴⁵ See *U.S.-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region* (Washington, DC: The White House, January 25, 2015), available at <<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/01/25/us-india-joint-strategic-vision-asia-pacific-and-indian-ocean-region>>; *Japan and India Vision 2025 Special Strategic and Global Partnership* (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, December 12, 2015), available at <https://www.mofa.go.jp/sa/sw/in/page3e_000432.html>.

⁴⁶ See Ashley Tellis, Alison Szalwinski, and Michael Wills, *Strategic Asia 2020: U.S.-China Competition for Global Influence* (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2019), 41–42; Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Power and Interdependence with China," *The Washington Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2020), 15, 19.

⁴⁷ As of 2018, 70 percent of countries traded more with China than they did with the United States. In 1980, 80 percent traded more with the United States than China. See Alyssa Leng and Roland Rajah, "Chart of the Week: Global Trade Through a U.S.-China Lens," *The Interpreter*, December 18, 2019, available at <<https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/chart-week-global-trade-through-us-china-lens>>. At the same time, the United States continues to enjoy unrivaled power from its large commercial financial institutions and the dollar's unrivaled status as the global reserve currency—neither of which is likely to be challenged by China in the near term. See Nye, "Power and Interdependence with China," 15; see also appendix B of this volume, available at <<https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Contemporary-GPC-Dynamics-Matrix/>>.

⁴⁸ Ali Wynne, "How to Think About Potentially Decoupling from China," *Washington Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2020), 47.

⁴⁹ The concept of *partial disengagement* is derived from Charles W. Boustany, Jr. and Aaron L. Friedberg, *Partial Disengagement: A New U.S. Strategy for Economic Competition with China*, NBR Special Report No. 82 (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, November 2019); Aaron L. Friedberg and Charles W. Boustany, Jr., "Partial Disengagement: A New U.S. Strategy for Economic Competition with China," *Washington Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2020), 23–40. A similar construct that focuses beyond economics and on the military, political, and diplomatic domains of Sino-American competition is found in Campbell and Sullivan, "Competition Without Catastrophe," 101–110.

⁵⁰ Boustany and Friedberg, *Partial Disengagement*, 26–35.

⁵¹ Most of these ideas are developed in some detail in Boustany and Friedberg, *Partial Disengagement*, 22–25. This approach requires the United States and its allies to cooperate in the reform and advancement of existing international organizations rather than abandon them. The dangers of abandonment are clear, for China has demonstrated an ability to fill the vacuum left by the United States and push for its own interests and agendas. See Colum Lynch and Elias Groll, "As U.S. Retreats from World Organizations, China Steps in to Fill the Void," *Foreign Policy*, October 6, 2017, available at <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/10/06/as-u-s-retreats-from-world-organizations-china-steps-in-the-fill-the-void/>>; Alex Pascal, "Against Washington's 'Great Power' Obsession," *The Atlantic*, September 23, 2019, available at <www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2019/09/multilateralism-nearly-dead-s-terrible-news/598615/>.

⁵² Among the many appealing for America to rethink and join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, see Boustany and Friedberg, *Partial Disengagement*, 24.

⁵³ The challenges to fully engaging India economically are significant, but India continues to look seriously at beginning the vital processes of reducing economic protectionism and modernizing land, labor, and environmental laws. See Bill Spindle and Rajesh Roy, "India's Coronavirus Crisis Spurs a New Look at Self-Reliance," *Wall Street Journal*, May 17, 2020, available at <www.wsj.com/articles/indias-coronavirus-crisis-spurs-a-new-look-at-self-reliance-11589724001?mod=itp_wsj&ru=yahoo>.

⁵⁴ Harvard Economist and Asia Center Senior Fellow William Overholt makes this point powerfully in many venues, including William H. Overholt, *China and America: The Age of Realist Geoeconomics* (Atlanta: The Carter Center, January 2018); William H. Overholt, "The Enemy Is Us," *The International Economy* (Summer 2015), 46–53.

⁵⁵ For the important role U.S. Government subsidization and promotion of agriculture played during the Cold War, see Shane Hamilton, *Supermarket USA: Food and Power in the Cold War Farms Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

⁵⁶ For detail, see Walt, "Yesterday's Cold War Shows How to Beat China Today."

⁵⁷ Osnos, "The Future of America's Contest with China."

⁵⁸ These ideas are from Taleb in Avishai, "The Pandemic Isn't a Black Swan."

⁵⁹ Charles Edel and Hal Brands, "The Real Origins of the U.S.-China Cold War," *Foreign Policy*, June 2, 2019, available at <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/06/02/the-real-origins-of-the-u-s-china-cold-war-big-think-communism/>>.

⁶⁰ Many Chinese leaders cannot believe that the Obama administration did not react more strongly to the 2010 seizure of Scarborough Shoal and the 2014 arming of it despite Chairman Xi Jinping's promise to Obama that year that China had no intention of doing so. These Chinese officials indicate that a firm U.S. and allied response can moderate intemperate Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific region. See Osnos, "The Future of America's Contest with China."

⁶¹ Denny Roy, "China Won't Achieve Regional Hegemony," *Washington Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2020), 105–106.

⁶² For variations on this misguided notion, see Graham Allison, "The New Spheres of Influence: Sharing the Globe with Other Great Powers," *Foreign Affairs* 99, no. 2 (March/April 2020), 30–40; Fareed Zakaria, "The New China Scare: Why America Shouldn't Panic About Its Latest Challenger," *Foreign Affairs* 99, no. 1 (January/February 2020), 52–69.

⁶³ Edel and Brands, "The Real Origins of the U.S.-China Cold War."

⁶⁴ Osnos, "The Future of America's Contest with China."

- ⁶⁵ Choosing proper allies also was a competitive mindset success for the United States during the Cold War. See Walt, “Yesterday’s Cold War Shows How to Beat China Today.”
- ⁶⁶ Michael Broers, “Pride and Prejudice: The Napoleonic Empire Through the Eyes of Its Rulers,” in *Napoleon’s Empire: European Politics in Global Perspective*, ed. Ute Planert (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 307–317; Michael V. Leggiere, “Enduring Strategic Rivalries: Great Britain vs. France During the French Wars (1792–1815),” in *Great Strategic Rivalries: From the Classical World to the Cold War*, ed. James Lacey (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 289–390, available at <<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/great-strategic-rivalries-9780190620462?cc=us&lang=en&#>>.
- ⁶⁷ Nye, “Power and Interdependence with China,” 16.
- ⁶⁸ “Don’t Be Fooled by the Trade Deal Between America and China,” *The Economist*, January 2, 2020, available at <www.economist.com/leaders/2020/01/02/dont-be-fooled-by-the-trade-deal-between-america-and-china>.
- ⁶⁹ Nye, “Power and Interdependence with China,” 15–17.
- ⁷⁰ Campbell and Sullivan, “Competition Without Catastrophe,” 110.
- ⁷¹ See Stuart Anderson, “What Will Trump Do Next with Chinese Student Visas,” *Forbes*, October 18, 2018, available at <www.forbes.com/sites/stuartanderson/2018/10/18/what-will-trump-do-next-with-chinese-student-visas/#453fb89757a4>.
- ⁷² See John Hudson and Souad Mekhennet, “G-7 Failed to Agree on Statement After U.S. Insisted on Calling Coronavirus Outbreak ‘Wuhan Virus,’” *Washington Post*, March 25, 2020, available at <www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/g-7-failed-to-agree-on-statement-after-us-insisted-on-calling-coronavirus-outbreak-wuhan-virus/2020/03/25/f2bc7a02-6ed3-11ea-96a0-df4c5d9284af_story.html>; Jo Kim, “The Chinese People Step Up to Enforce China’s Nationalist Propaganda,” *The Diplomat*, May 5, 2020, available at <<https://thediplomat.com/2020/05/the-chinese-people-step-up-to-enforce-chinas-nationalist-propaganda/>>.
- ⁷³ Demetri Sevastopulo, “Trump Threatens to Cut Off Relations with China,” *Financial Times*, May 15, 2020, available at <www.ft.com/content/cfba6bf-3de5-458d-92d1-a62fb958a354>.
- ⁷⁴ Minxin Pei, “China’s Coming Upheaval: Competition, the Coronavirus, and the Weakness of Xi Jinping,” *Foreign Affairs* 99, no. 3 (May/June 2020), 82–106.
- ⁷⁵ See Eva Dou, “In China-U.S. Showdown, Beijing’s Steely Propagandist Sharpens Her Attack,” *Washington Post*, May 21, 2020, available at <www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/in-china-us-showdown-beijings-steely-propagandist-sharpens-her-attack/2020/05/21/f71133e4-94bd-11ea-87a3-22d324235636_story.html>.
- ⁷⁶ Chun Han Wong and Chao Deng, “China’s ‘Wolf Warrior’ Diplomats Are Ready to Fight,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 19, 2020, available at <www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-wolf-warrior-diplomats-are-ready-to-fight-11589896722>; Jamie Dettmer, “China’s ‘Wolf Warrior’ Diplomacy Prompts International Backlash,” *Voice of America*, May 6, 2020, available at <www.voanews.com/covid-19-pandemic/chinas-wolf-warrior-diplomacy-prompts-international-backlash>; Lily Ko, “Australia Called ‘Gum Stuck to China’s Shoe’ by State Media in Coronavirus Investigation Stoush,” *The Guardian*, April 28, 2020, available at <www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/28/australia-called-gum-stuck-to-chinas-shoe-by-state-media-in-coronavirus-investigation-stoush>; John Ross, “China Warns of Student Boycott of Australia,” *Inside Higher Education*, May 1, 2020, available at <www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/05/01/china-warns-australia-student-boycott>.
- ⁷⁷ Kim, “The Chinese People Step Up to Enforce China’s Nationalist Propaganda”; Vicky Xiuxhong Xu, “China’s Youth Are Trapped in the Cult of Nationalism,” *Foreign Policy*, October 1, 2019, available at <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/10/01/chinas-angry-young-nationalists/>>.
- ⁷⁸ *Remarks by Deputy National Security Advisor Matt Pottinger to the Miller Center at the University of Virginia* (Washington, DC: The White House, May 4, 2020), available at <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-deputy-national-security-advisor-matt-pottinger-miller-center-university-virginia/>>.
- ⁷⁹ For details on the organizations involved in international propaganda and influence activities, see appendix 1 in Larry Diamond and Orville Schell, eds., *China’s Influence & American Interests: Promoting Constructive Vigilance* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2019), 133–141. Some former policymakers specifically focus on the Chinese Ministry of State Security, the United Front Work Department, and the Chinese Students and Scholars Association as ones for attention to counter CCP-driven propaganda. See McMaster, “How China Sees the World.”
- ⁸⁰ Osnos, “The Future of America’s Contest with China.”
- ⁸¹ Proper “safeguards” for Chinese student, teacher, and research visas should include very tight limitations on Confucius Institutes in the United States to eliminate their revealed role in espionage, monitoring, and thought-policing on behalf of the CCP. The ideas for American policy valuing the Chinese people while holding the CCP accountable includes McMaster, “How China Sees the World.”
- ⁸² Strategic patience during the Cold War also was an American competitive mindset virtue. See Walt, “Yesterday’s Cold War Shows How to Beat China Today.”
- ⁸³ See Pei, “China’s Coming Upheaval”; “Revised Demographic Forecasts for China: Key Takeaways,” *The Economist*, July 2, 2019; William H. Overholt, *China’s Crisis of Success* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
- ⁸⁴ See William H. Overholt, “The West Is Getting China Wrong,” *East Asia Forum*, August 11, 2018, available at <<https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/08/11/the-west-is-getting-china-wrong/>>; Yasheng Huang, “China Has a Big Economic Problem and It Isn’t the Trade War,” *New York Times*, January 17, 2020.
- ⁸⁵ Wyne, “How to Think About Potentially Decoupling from China,” 41–64.
- ⁸⁶ For similar conclusions, see Nye, “Power and Interdependence with China,” 13; Wyne, “How to Think About Potentially Decoupling from China,” 50–52.
- ⁸⁷ Osnos, “The Future of America’s Contest with China”; Martin Wolf, “The Looming 100-Year U.S.-China Conflict,” *Financial Times*, June 4, 2019.
- ⁸⁸ Osnos, “The Future of America’s Contest with China.”
- ⁸⁹ For a detailed assessment of options for a U.S. strategic mindset for competition with China, see chapter 14 of this volume.
- ⁹⁰ On Acheson, see Robert Kagan, “How Dean Acheson Won the Cold War: Statesmanship, Morality, and Foreign Policy,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 14, 1998, available at <<https://carnegieendowment.org/1998/09/14/how-dean-acheson-won-cold-war-statesmanship-morality-and-foreign-policy-pub-260>>.
- ⁹¹ *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The White House, September 2002), available at <<http://nssarchive.us/national-security-strategy-2002/>>.
- ⁹² *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The White House, December 2017), available at <<http://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2017.pdf>>.
- ⁹³ See Nye, “Power and Interdependence with China,” 16.
- ⁹⁴ *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (2017).
- ⁹⁵ McMaster, “How China Sees the World.”