

Chapter 3a

# Contemporary Great Power Geostrategic Dynamics

## Relations and Strategies

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By Thomas F. Lynch III and Phillip C. Saunders

*This chapter provides a comparative assessment of the strategic objectives for the three contemporary Great Powers: the United States, China, and Russia. It first traces the evolution of each power's strategic interests from 2000 to 2017, indicating where important milestones transitioned the powers' relations from relative cooperation and collaboration into de facto rivalry (by 2014 to 2015) and then a formally acknowledged rivalry (in 2017). The chapter next outlines the Great Powers' current strategic viewpoints and how they contrast across the five major categories of state interaction: political and diplomatic, ideological, informational, military, and economic. It demonstrates that each power has many divergent strategic interests, making rivalry inevitable. The chapter indicates where varying strategic interest intensity combines to make risks of Great Power clashes most worrisome in the coming 5 years: the Indo-Pacific, cyberspace, outer space, and, to a receding degree, the Middle East. It concludes that Russian strategic aims make Moscow a transient security risk to U.S. geopolitical dominance, while China's ideological vision and aspirations make it the most important, albeit presently less threatening, rival to the U.S. status as the head of the global liberal international order.*

This chapter focuses on the three modern Great Powers—the United States, China, and Russia—and the broad framework of their contemporary interactions. It provides an overview of the ongoing major debates about the nature and degree of challenges posed by these three major states. It traces the recent trajectory of their strategic interaction narratives from 2000 to 2014–2015, establishing the dominant evolutionary themes for each over that time. The chapter next sketches the national strategy and major strategic aims for each country in 2020 and what these mean for the upcoming 5 years of Great Power competition (GPC). It then makes an analytical evaluation of what each of these national strategies implies about the Great Power's aims for international norms, rules, and institutions, followed by a discussion of what these strategies suggest for Great Power relations in major geographic regions. It concludes with 10 major insights and implications for GPC from 2020 to

2025, setting the table for a more detailed assessment of specific Great Power capabilities to achieve their strategic aims found in the next chapter.

### **Great Power Relevance and Geostrategic Dynamics in the Early 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

As described in chapter 1, this volume defines *Great Power state* as one that has three main characteristics: unusual capabilities in comparison with those of other states, behavior that indicates a willingness to use those capabilities in and beyond the state's immediate neighborhood, and the perception by other actors in the system that the state has both unusual capabilities and the will to use them, making it an actor that must be treated as a major power.<sup>1</sup> From the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and into 2020, three states have satisfied these criteria: the United States, China, and Russia.

Yet these three Great Powers are far from uniform in status. Each differs substantively in terms of the strategic outcomes it wishes to assure, the relative capabilities it possesses, and the specific cases and places where it seems ready to pursue its main strategic goals. In turn, these differences color the perceptions held by other global actors—states and non-state entities—about where and how to treat each major power.

“First, who is America’s principal competitor? The Trump administration’s national security strategy and the aforementioned national defense strategy often refer to China and Russia jointly. That two countries of such significantly different economic proportions can both be considered Great Powers—China’s gross domestic product in 2017 was nearly eight times as large as Russia’s (\$12.2 trillion versus \$1.6 trillion)—suggests that analysts should delineate more clearly the criteria for earning that designation.”

—Ali Wyne, *America’s Blind Ambition Could Make It a Victim of Global Competition*,  
The National Interest, February 2019

Although most global analysts and international relations scholars generally agree that the United States remains the most powerful of the three contemporary Great Power states in 2020, pundits diverge widely in terms of how great the challenge from Russia or China is to current U.S. dominance.<sup>2</sup> They also diverge in practical terms about how the U.S. Government should conceive of competition between these two rivals.<sup>3</sup> Some observers even question the pairing of Russia and China as Great Power competitors to the United States, noting that Beijing is a resurgent, selective revisionist power, while Moscow is a faltering, disruptive, and opportunist one.<sup>4</sup>

Among those pundits worried about confrontation of Russia with China, most agree that China will pose a greater long-term challenge to Washington. History reminds us, though, that declining powers can enact more acute short-term disturbances.<sup>5</sup>

These debates make it important to carefully compare the commonalities and differences among the three modern Great Powers. This chapter does so first with a direct comparison of two dimensions of current global Great Power relations: their recent geostrategic trajectories and their contemporary national strategies for current and future geostrategic relations. Once established, these comparisons are applied to an overview of the major aspects of their interactions, with the current global institutions and norms and then in the major geographic locations of interaction. The following chapter then compares

and evaluates the Great Power national capabilities (tool sets) and their capacity and willingness to use these tools in pursuit of geostrategic ambitions as developed in this chapter.

In keeping with the framework developed in chapter 2 (table 2.2), this chapter and the next address Great Power strategies, capabilities, and willingness to use their tool sets in a framework focusing on five competitive categories: political and diplomatic, ideological, informational, military, and economic. A credible assessment of GPC in the emergent era must begin with a brief summary of the recent trajectory of geostrategic relations from the perspectives of each major power.

### **U.S. Perspectives from 2000 to 2015**

From 1992 to 2008, the United States stood alone—atop all aspects of the international power structure—at a unique unipolar moment.<sup>6</sup> Its post-World War II rival, the Soviet Union, was vanquished in 1991 with the end of the Cold War, and so was Moscow's vision of universal communism and the superiority of command-directed economies. Another latent potential rising power, China, began its own "opening up and reform" in late 1978, when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) incorporated market principles into "socialism with Chinese characteristics."<sup>7</sup> With a pragmatic foreign policy focused on external stability, China began a gradual but accelerated integration into global economic and governance structures; this effort was accompanied by an end to CCP efforts to control thought and micromanage peoples' daily lives. Relative to life during the Mao era, Chinese citizens gained increasing control over their life choices and enjoyed greater political and ideological freedom as long as they did not challenge CCP political control.<sup>8</sup> Policymakers in Washington welcomed these trends toward internal liberalization and external moderation. They were cautiously optimistic that a liberalizing China would eventually become integrated into the web of global economic, informational, political, and ideological norms established by the United States after World War II. Washington pursued "strategic engagement" in its official relations with both Moscow and Beijing.<sup>9</sup> Thus, U.S. strategy and policies toward China and Russia from 1992 through 2008 were dominated by cooperative interactions and collaborative programs. The goal of this collaboration was supporting domestic reforms and integrating both countries as responsible members of the global community defined by U.S. norms and preferences. As documented in chapter 2, this dominant cooperative paradigm coincided with a period of U.S. military ascendance rarely seen in the past 500 years.

From a U.S. perspective, the era of stable cooperative/collaborative relations wavered and then collapsed between 2008 and 2014–2015 due to a series of Russian and Chinese military and paramilitary actions in Georgia, Ukraine, the South China Sea, and the East China Sea and in commercial interactions that demonstrated clear disagreement with key aspects of the U.S.-led liberal international order.<sup>10</sup> Russia conducted a covert military invasion of Crimea in 2014 and then annexed it from Ukraine. U.S.-led Western countries slapped Russia with various economic sanctions and expelled Moscow from diplomatic and economic organizations it had joined in the immediate post-Cold War world. From 2013 through 2015, Chinese assertiveness in maritime territorial disputes, increasing state intervention to support Chinese businesses at the expense of foreign competitors, and Xi Jinping's centralization of power and tightening of political and information controls catalyzed U.S. responses. In 2014 and into 2015, the Obama administration asserted freedom

of navigation rights and challenged Chinese Pacific maritime claims. It openly condemned Chinese industrial espionage and intellectual property practices, and it reimaged a broad new Trans-Pacific Partnership as a lever to reshape Chinese economic policies. The U.S. policy toward its former geopolitical “strategic engagement” partners chilled gradually during the second term of the Obama administration, with a public hardening toward both nations during 2014 and 2015.<sup>11</sup> Thus, 2014 and 2015 were the years that a de facto, three-party Great Power rivalry became obvious—although not yet fully acknowledged.<sup>12</sup> The formal declaration of the Great Power rivalry was acknowledged and conveyed in U.S. strategy documents published in 2017 and 2018: the 2017 National Security Strategy (NSS) and the 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS).<sup>13</sup>

### **China’s Perspectives from 2000 to 2014–2015**

The central challenge facing Chinese leaders in the post-Cold War era was to take advantage of the opportunities provided by a globalizing world economy and rebuild domestic legitimacy while managing China’s vulnerability to outside pressure, especially that of ideological and military pressure from what it viewed as a dominant and unrestrained United States. After the United States imposed sanctions following the 1989 Tiananmen domestic political crackdown, Chinese leaders concluded that Washington was pursuing a strategy of “peaceful evolution” to end CCP rule and seeking to Westernize (*xihua*) and split up (*fenhua*) China. They adopted a strategy of trying to resist U.S. ideological subversion and limit pressure while maintaining a cooperative relationship with Washington by compromising on less important interests and deferring goals, such as unification with Taiwan and China’s maritime territorial claims.<sup>14</sup> Chinese leaders sought to extend a post-Cold War “period of strategic opportunity” to build China’s comprehensive national power relative to that of the United States and to allow an inevitable global trend toward multipolarity to erode U.S. dominance and constrain its unilateral behaviors. This restrained policy was consistent with Deng Xiaoping’s dictum after the collapse of the Soviet Union that China should “bide its time and hide its capabilities” and avoid premature efforts to play an international leadership role.<sup>15</sup>

The U.S. response to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks aided China’s strategic approach. Washington’s plunge into long-term commitments in Afghanistan and Iraq diverted U.S. attention to the Middle East and ensnared the U.S. military. Then the 2008 global financial crisis—which produced a prolonged U.S. recession even as China’s economy returned to its rapid growth trajectory—led many Chinese analysts to see an acceleration of U.S. relative economic decline as a sign of growing multipolarity that created new opportunities for China. Although Chinese leaders sought to avoid a direct clash with Washington, they hastened efforts to expand China’s regional and global economic presence and influence, sometimes at the expense of the United States. Rapid and sustained economic growth, especially following China’s accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, helped the CCP increase domestic legitimacy based on its ability to build China’s power and raise living standards. Growth also gave Chinese leaders more resources and new channels of influence as additional countries became dependent on access to China’s market and sought loans and economic assistance from Beijing.

China's economic success was based largely on orthodox development economic advice about maintaining a stable financial system while giving markets the dominant role in reallocating labor and resources to their most productive uses.<sup>16</sup> China's openness to foreign direct investment brought an infusion of Western capital, technology, and management practices that contributed to rapid growth and turned China into an export powerhouse, as Western and Asian multinational corporations incorporated inexpensive Chinese labor into their production networks. At the same time, China rejected advice from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank to fully liberalize its capital account, preferring to manage its currency in order to create competitive advantage and avoid the risk of the destabilizing capital flight that brought down multiple governments in the 1997–1998 Asian financial crisis. China also drew from the post–World War II experiences of Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan, all of which adopted economic policies that involved a higher degree of state intervention to accelerate export-oriented development and build domestic companies into globally competitive national champions.

China's model involved a large role for state-owned enterprises in which the CCP directly controlled management and provided support in the form of subsidies; preferential access to capital; protected domestic markets; and favorable laws, regulations, and courts. A series of reforms allowed Chinese state-owned enterprises to become more competitive by rationalizing their operations and jettisoning older workers as well as pension and social welfare obligations.<sup>17</sup> China's rapid and sustained growth, while maintaining a communist political system, yielded a growing sense of self-confidence among CCP leaders and theorists. Although CCP leaders initially downplayed praise of a "Beijing consensus" by Western analysts, in recent years Chinese leaders have argued that China's development experience with authoritarian capitalism is a valid alternative model that deserves respect and has useful lessons for other developing countries.<sup>18</sup> Some even argue that China's performance in responding to the 2020 novel coronavirus demonstrates the superiority of China's model over Western approaches.

At the same time, Chinese leaders worried about a range of potentially serious domestic threats to sustained CCP rule. These included separatist threats in Tibet and Xinjiang, where ethnic minorities mounted violent protests in 2008; the political impact of rising inequality and worries about what might happen if economic growth slowed; and a growing number of mass incidents in which citizens protested local CCP corruption and governance. CCP leaders also worried about U.S. subversion. Beijing shared Russia's view that the United States had fomented a series of "colored revolutions" in the Middle East, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Ukraine to overthrow authoritarian governments, and it worried that China was a future target. China had conditionally tolerated U.S. alliances in Asia, as long as they were not aimed against China and contributed to regional stability. As Washington sought to modernize its alliances for the post–Cold War era and to increase security cooperation with Taiwan, Chinese leaders and strategists began to view the United States as encircling and constraining China in order to slow its growth and obstruct its regional ambitions. These concerns increased with the Obama administration's rebalance to Asia, which was formally announced in 2011.<sup>19</sup>

By the time of Xi's accession to the CCP Secretary General position in November 2012, China's political leadership saw a new strategic moment, with both opportunity and threat.

The strategic opportunity came from China's dramatic economic and technological advances, increased influence and military power, and the perception that the United States and the West were entering a state of irrevocable economic and moral decline. The strategic threat came from internal pressures that could jeopardize stability and the potential for the United States to step up ideological efforts to subvert the Chinese socialist system and economic and military efforts to encircle and contain China. Although internal scholarly debates about whether its "moment had come" continued into Xi's premiership, China's self-concept and CCP leaders' vision of a proper future world order dramatically changed between 2000 and 2014.<sup>20</sup>

### **Russian Perspectives from 2000 to 2014**

Vladimir Putin ascended to political leadership in Russia at the end of 1999. Under his predecessor Boris Yeltsin—Russia's first post–Cold War elected leader—the country emerged from an unraveling Soviet Union as a weakened international power with an agenda to adapt to a global world order valuing individual freedoms, liberal democracy, capitalism, openness, and transparency. Yeltsin's Russia aimed for accommodation and assimilation into the U.S.-led world order. The 1990s saw Moscow enter such economic and financial institutions as the G7/G8 and the WTO and witnessed Russia grudgingly accede to expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military alliance into Eastern Europe while gaining an observer status in NATO as a form of compensation.<sup>21</sup>

Russian cooperation with and convergence into a Western set of norms and institutions wavered as early as the mid- to late 1990s, with Washington and Moscow disagreeing over U.S./NATO intervention in the Balkan wars and aggressive U.S. expansion of NATO.<sup>22</sup> Russian cooperation with the West reversed fully under Putin, who swiftly generated a Russian national security concept that decried the post–Cold War world as fundamentally unjust and untenably dismissive of Russia's proper role as a Great Power:

*The world situation is characterized by a system of international relations . . . [with] attempts to create an international relations structure based on domination by developed Western countries in the international community, under U.S. leadership and designed for unilateral solutions (primarily by the use of military force) to key issues in world politics in circumvention of the fundamental rules of international law. . . . Russia is one of the world's major countries, with a centuries-old history and rich cultural traditions. Despite the complicated international situation and difficulties of a domestic nature, Russia objectively continues to play an important role in global processes by virtue of its great economic, science-technological, and military potential and its unique strategic location on the Eurasian continent.<sup>23</sup>*

Putin immediately singled out NATO as an entity hostile to Russian security interests and insisted that the Alliance's eastward expansion represented a dire threat to Moscow.<sup>24</sup> Later, in a 2007 speech, he explicitly warned NATO to cease eastward expansion.<sup>25</sup> Putin also tapped into historic Russian nationalism to contest U.S. and Western "disrespect" for Russia's rightful role as a Great Power. Many Russian elites joined Putin, amplifying an already extant narrative that the United States and its Western allies had taken advantage

of Russia at its moment of greatest weakness—building a sense of national victimhood.<sup>26</sup> Putin began a two-decade pushback on U.S. military and political power, tactically and operationally challenging the military and its allies in a series of global activities that included an invasion of the state of Georgia in 2008 and an annexation of its province, Abkhazia.<sup>27</sup> Six years later, Putin orchestrated a paramilitary invasion and annexation of Crimea, followed by the initiation of a proxy war in eastern Ukraine that continues into 2020. Tough Western financial sanctions followed the Crimea/Ukraine adventures of 2014, and Russia withdrew its observers from NATO, found itself expelled from the G7/G8, and became a key player in the dissolution or abrogation of multiple post-Cold War arms control regimes.<sup>28</sup>

Russian domestic politics regressed from the early 1990s, with Putin crafting rules that moved Russia toward illiberal democracy and authoritarian rule, including abrogation of term limits for the Russian president. Economics under Putin devolved into what many Western analysts decried as a “military-industrial-political-criminal complex” designed to launder high volumes of Russian money captured by Putin-friendly oligarchs. Russian economic growth became increasingly tethered to global oil prices—its main export. Rising prices underwrote a period of heady prosperity in Russia from 2000 to 2006, but the majority of the country’s economy entered into long-term stagnation before and especially after the global financial crisis of 2008–2009. Putin’s team failed to diversify or modernize Russian industries. Massive state-backed construction projects became a gold mine for crooked officials in Russia, and a vast amount of Russian wealth got transferred out of the country by a cohort of Putin-connected oligarchs into Western banks, real estate ventures, and other personal investments.

Putin and his oligarch consorts welcomed those aspects of the international financial system that circulated their personal expropriation of Russian wealth. At the same time, they chafed against economic and financial institutions that joined in various ever-increasing sanctions against Russian individuals and entities indicted for illegal transactions, participation in lethal Russian espionage against “disloyal” expatriates, and involvement in Russian paramilitary interventions and encounters in Ukraine, Syria, and elsewhere. For most of the 2010s, Russia invested heavily in traditional and modern media agencies around the world—leveraging military intelligence expertise as well as commercial technologies—to develop and deliver an array of anti-Western propaganda, conspiracy theories, and disinformation. This novel “information management” undertaking has generated enormous global impact by questioning the legitimacy of longstanding Western political institutions, societal norms, and leader legitimacy—enhancing the Russian narrative that U.S. and Western values and frameworks are illegitimate (except for those that the Putin kleptocracy deems useful).

At the end of 2019—20 years into the era of Putin—Russia stood as a Great Power state with pride in its recent past. It is a military Great Power. It has a reorganized military on which Putin has spent a disproportionate amount of Russian gross domestic product—an average of 4 percent per year since 2010—to ensure that its nuclear weapons remain a viable deterrent and its ground and air forces can protect its borders and act decisively against threatening states in its near abroad, and it continues to demonstrate limited but effective global projection abilities while leveraging Russian airlift and some sealift to enable a mixture of military and paramilitary forces.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, Putin’s Russia displays

characteristics in its economic, political, and ideological elements that make it seem less than a Great Power. To some extent, Putin has offset these serious liabilities masterfully while leveraging modern communications and information messaging to “question everything” about the Western-led world order.

With this short analytical overview of the past 20 years of U.S.-China-Russia relationship trajectories established, this chapter now turns to delineation of the current strategies of each of the Great Powers and what these strategies indicate for specific activities and policies from 2020 to 2025.

## **Great Power Strategies**

### **U.S. National Strategy and Geostrategic Trajectory**

The National Security Strategy (NSS) of December 2017 asserted that the United States and fellow Great Powers Russia and China had transitioned formally from an almost 20-year period of cooperation and collaboration into a new era of competition.<sup>30</sup> The 2017 NSS identified three additional threats to U.S. security—North Korea, Iran, and transnational terrorist and criminal organizations—but clearly premised U.S. security and future prosperity on the ability to compete with Moscow and Beijing.<sup>31</sup> Although the advancement of NSS and NDS premises into action during 2017–2020 generated tensions between U.S. economic and security aims as well as between U.S. administration political aspirations and ideological norms, these documents clearly build on trends present prior to 2016.

First, the United States continued its halting but longstanding efforts to rebalance economic, military, and informational priorities toward the Asia-Pacific region. The Trump administration formalized a new term, *the Indo-Pacific region*, to highlight the increasing priority placed on India and South Asia by successive U.S. administrations.<sup>32</sup> The George W. Bush administration had declared the 21<sup>st</sup> century to be the “Asia-Pacific century” but then got enmeshed in the South Asian and Middle Eastern wars against terrorist organizations.<sup>33</sup> Beginning in 2011, the Obama administration announced a long-anticipated “Rebalance to Asia” but, like its predecessor, found itself shackled to counterterrorism activities in other parts of the world that reduced the salience of a rebalance to Asia.<sup>34</sup>

Second, the 2017 NSS embedded several U.S. economic, military, and ideological norms for the Indo-Pacific region that evolved during the Bush and Obama administrations and adhered closely to longstanding post–World War II U.S. preferences for global order and interaction. Prior to the 2017 NSS, they were most clearly articulated in the U.S.-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Indo-Pacific Region of January 2015: commitment to growth and broad-based prosperity in the region; assurance of free and unfettered trade; assurance of freedom of navigation and flight; commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes among states; adherence to international norms and protocols (especially those regarding sovereignty); collective action against terrorism, piracy, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; and the commitment to universal human rights.<sup>35</sup>

Third, growing U.S. energy independence in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century began to erode American interests in the provision of stability in and commercial access to areas of the world important primarily for their fossil fuel exports, particularly in the Middle East. This

trend was encouraged by growing domestic wariness of overseas military activities and a move toward insular nationalism that emerged before 2017.<sup>36</sup>

Conversely, the 2017 NSS exhibited a new and skeptical attitude toward post–World War II U.S. alliance structures and partnerships. NSS language focusing on the autonomous, unilateral imperatives of U.S. national strategy threw into stark relief the longstanding U.S. valuation of international institutions, multilateral alliances, and partner nations. An unwavering U.S. commitment to politico-military institutions such as NATO and its bilateral Pacific alliances with Japan and South Korea could no longer be taken for granted.<sup>37</sup> This change signaled reduced U.S. interest in bearing the costs of maintaining global norms, rules, and procedures in economic, military, diplomatic, and informational domains. In 2020, it remains to be seen how this devaluation of post–World War II institutions and alliances can be reconciled with consistent and continuing U.S. preferences for global rules and norms.

At the same time, U.S. foreign policy ended the 2010s in an ambiguous place. Strategic writings champion the importance of alliances, economic norms, and multilateral institutions, but U.S. actions between 2017 and 2019 veered between strong support and the view that these institutions are “fundamentally unfair.” U.S. foreign policy has focused on renegotiating agreements to redress the U.S. trade deficit but has found itself unable to “easily win” bilateral trade wars with an array of states, including China. Its efforts revealed that many domestic economic constituencies value multilateral free trade and fear American decoupling from both the Chinese economy and the wider global one. These tensions in early 2020 suggest that current foreign and domestic policies are impediments to the U.S. ability to successfully engage in the kind of strategic Great Power competition envisioned by the NSS and NDS.<sup>38</sup>

### **China’s National Strategy and Geostategic Trajectory**

Avoiding a hostile relationship with Washington has been a consistent element of China’s post–Cold War national strategy. Simultaneously, Beijing has sought to reduce its vulnerability to U.S. power by building its own comprehensive national power (a Chinese construct that includes all elements of power) and improving relations with other major powers, countries on its periphery, and developing countries in other regions. Chinese leaders have relied primarily on economic, diplomatic, and informational instruments to advance foreign policy goals. China has pursued strategic partnerships with other Great Powers and major regional powers around the world to strengthen political and economic relations without the binding commitments inherent in alliances. China also has begun establishing and supporting new regional and global institutions that can expand its influence and provide a counterweight to the United States. They include the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, focused on Central Asia; the Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS) grouping; the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia; and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which provides an alternative to the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.<sup>39</sup> To dampen concerns about rising Chinese military power, Beijing launched a so-called charm offensive that articulated “win-win” policies based on economic cooperation and sought to downplay growing Chinese military capabilities and economic leverage over smaller states.<sup>40</sup>

Beijing's efforts have been most complicated in the Indo-Pacific region, where economic and military power from China poses the greatest direct threat to its regional neighbors (see chapter 9). For countries outside the region, China successfully portrayed itself as an economic partner of opportunity with a vast supply of cheap labor that could reduce production costs for multinational companies; a large market with 1.3 billion potential consumers; and, by the mid-2000s, an important source of foreign direct investment, loans, technology, and foreign aid that could help other developing countries.

China's rapid growth was achieved through increased integration into the global economy, a course that not only took advantage of opportunities in a globalizing world but also created new vulnerabilities. As China became the "workshop of the world" following its 2001 entry into the WTO, its large trade surpluses meant that employment of many Chinese workers became dependent on continued access to developed country markets in North America and Europe. These critical markets were subject to unpredictable and unpleasant external economic developments, such as the 2008 global financial crisis. The production and consumption needs of China's booming economy made Beijing increasingly reliant on imported oil and natural gas, natural resources, and foodstuffs. In response, the Chinese government urged Chinese companies to "go global" in search of markets, natural resources, and technology.<sup>41</sup>

China's strategic successes produced an expanded overseas footprint of investments, loans, companies, and workers—many in unstable parts of the world—that had to be protected. Success also increased China's dependence on sea lines of communications that passed through maritime chokepoints such as the Malacca Strait and the Gulf of Aden. These areas were vulnerable to disruption by nonstate actors (such as Somali pirates) and to interdiction by major naval powers such as the United States and India. President Hu Jintao articulated the "new historic missions" for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in 2004, tasking the Chinese military to expand beyond its traditional missions of defending China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and ensuring CCP rule to also protect China's overseas interests and right to development. This shift led the PLA to begin antipiracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden in December 2008 and to conduct evacuations of Chinese citizens from Libya (2011) and Yemen (2015).

Under President Xi, these various economic, diplomatic, and military initiatives have been drawn together into a more coherent strategy. In 2013, Xi launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which gathers many of China's overseas investments, loans, and infrastructure projects under one grand banner.<sup>42</sup> BRI seeks to strengthen China's land and maritime connections to Eurasia with new ports, roads, and railroad infrastructure, funded by Chinese loans and built by Chinese companies. The vision is of a future in which China stands at the center of a vast Eurasian regional system, integrated economically and tied together by road, rail, and pipeline infrastructures. The economic benefits to China are obvious, but the BRI also has strategic implications in terms of expanding Chinese economic influence over participating countries and constructing alternative trade routes that bypass maritime chokepoints.<sup>43</sup> Western critics of BRI fear that it will not only enhance China's access to material resources and markets but also enable future capabilities for surveillance and social control and boost Chinese influence to push for broader changes in global governance and

international norms.<sup>44</sup> BRI has expanded geographically to include Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America and functionally to encompass a “digital silk road.”

During its reform era, China initially focused on exploiting its comparative advantage in cheap labor, but Chinese leaders also sought to help state-owned enterprises and private companies innovate and move up the global “value chain.” This effort initially involved relatively decentralized joint ventures and efforts to acquire foreign technology, quality control, and management skills. But increasingly this strategic endeavor involved national-level industrial policy tools to promote indigenous innovation and help Chinese companies become globally competitive producers and exporters. Promulgated in 2015, Beijing’s Made in China 2025 is a 10-year economic development plan that leverages a range of government subsidies to make China dominant in global high-tech manufacturing. It includes a range of practices that skirt global investment, intellectual property rights, and technology transfer norms.<sup>45</sup>

China’s economic development has benefited greatly from access to an open, globalized world economy supported by relatively liberal rules, norms, and institutions and undergirded by U.S. power. As China’s power has grown, Beijing has expanded efforts to strengthen China’s influence in various international institutions and to seek changes in international rules and norms to better accommodate its national interests. In early 2020, China does not seek to challenge the United States for global leadership; China’s domestic fragility would make it difficult for Beijing to take on many of the responsibilities and burdens that such a role would entail.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, China has no interest in shoring up the foundations of U.S. global leadership and is working with other countries such as Russia to promote a multipolar world where the United States is less dominant. Chinese scholars and officials have articulated a range of areas where China seeks modifications in international rules and norms: ensuring that China and other developing countries have more influence in global institutions, increasing the degree to which the United States is actually constrained by global rules and norms, and reducing the role of U.S. alliances and military deployments that might constrain China.<sup>47</sup>

China is broadly comfortable with the existing United Nations (UN) system and its formal emphasis on sovereign equality of states, not least because Beijing possesses a veto on the Security Council and can block actions against its interests. Chinese complaints are usually couched in terms of the need for fairness for developing countries and increased “democracy” in international relations. But the underlying demand is for a Chinese seat at the table and a greater role for Beijing in shaping international rules and norms. That said, China opposes many of the liberal principles embedded in the U.S.-led system, such as the emphasis on individual political rights rather than collective economic rights. It favors stronger norms of nonintervention and the rights of sovereign states to choose their political systems and control what happens inside their borders. After years of downplaying Western claims that China has a unique development model, the so-called Beijing consensus, China has begun to argue that its economic success showcases strengths of its CCP-controlled political system and presents a new development model that may have useful lessons for other countries.<sup>48</sup> This message has appeal for authoritarian governments that hope to replicate Chinese economic success without liberalizing their political systems, although the extent to which China has a coherent model that other countries could emulate is debatable.<sup>49</sup>

Articulated after Xi became secretary general in 2012, his China Dream of national rejuvenation includes the aspiration to build a powerful and prosperous China by 2049. Subsequent CCP statements indicate that unification with Taiwan is considered part of “national rejuvenation.” This broad goal is accompanied by the “two centenary goals” of building both a moderately prosperous society by 2021 and a “prosperous, strong, democratic, civilized, harmonious, and beautiful modernized socialist strong country” by 2049.<sup>50</sup> Xi’s 2017 report to the 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress also articulated a three-step goal for military modernization: The PLA should achieve mechanization and make strides in applying information technology and developing strategic capabilities by 2020; national defense modernization should be basically completed by 2035; and the PLA should become a “world class military” midcentury, on its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2049.<sup>51</sup> China has also published a range of narrower national plans and strategies in fields such as high-tech manufacturing, space, and artificial intelligence.

As the preceding discussions suggest, Chinese leaders proclaim national objectives formulated in terms of power and employ a range of diplomatic, economic, and military tools to advance those objectives; however, China’s public articulations of such regional and global goals consistently emphasize vague principles—“mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty” and “peaceful resolution of disputes through dialogue”—while downplaying conflicts of interest between states and the central role that power plays in international relations. For example, China’s 2017 white paper on Asia-Pacific security cooperation stresses “common development” and “political and security partnerships” but expresses a negative view of alliances.

The document draws a distinction between “major powers” and “small and medium powers,” which “need not and should not take sides among big countries.”<sup>52</sup> However, the white paper does not mention relative power or balance of power, even though the perceived vulnerability of other Asian countries to China’s rising power is the central dynamic in the Indo-Pacific. This diplomatic effort to obscure relative power and discourage regional efforts to balance against Chinese power is inconsistent with Chinese internal, military, and academic analyses, which regularly stress the importance of relative power and power tra-

jectories. It is also inconsistent with Chinese diplomatic practice, which reflects an acute awareness of power relations and a willingness to use power to reward and punish.<sup>53</sup> China’s efforts to articulate a global vision for a “harmonious world” and a “community of common destiny” suffer from similar shortcomings—the implication being that less powerful countries facing a more powerful China must rely on China’s uniquely peaceful nature. The real message is that China will not compromise in pursuing its interests and that less powerful countries must be prepared to give way.

“As they begin to assert themselves, rising powers usually feel impelled to challenge territorial boundaries, international institutions, and hierarchies of prestige that were put in place when they were still relatively weak. Their leaders and people typically feel that they were left out unfairly when the pie was divided up, and may even believe that because of prior weaknesses, they were robbed of what ought to be theirs. . . . This is what typically brings them into conflict with the established Great Powers.”

—Aaron L. Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy* (2012)

Beijing's lack of candor about its regional and global objectives leaves space for competing assessments of China's international ambitions. There is an increasing consensus that China seeks to dominate the Indo-Pacific region; the analytic differences lie mostly in whether this authority will involve an intrusive effort to micromanage the region or a looser sphere of influence where China seeks a veto on actions that might damage its security interests.<sup>54</sup> There is agreement that Beijing seeks greater influence over global rules, norms, and institutions, but disagreement on the scope and urgency of China's ambitions and likelihood of realizing them.

Some analysts view China as a moderate revisionist power that seeks to change aspects of global rules and norms that affect its specific national interests, but that has limited ideological ambitions and remains willing to deal with countries regardless of their regime type.<sup>55</sup> Those with this view see China's articulation of the goal of building a "community of common destiny for mankind" as a continuation of past Chinese efforts to express normative principles that should govern international relations rather than a coherent program for systematic changes in the current rules, norms, and institutions of the post-World War II order. From this perspective, China's efforts to use its economic achievements to win international respect for its governance model are aimed more at building domestic legitimacy than at forcing others to follow China's example. Others view China's authoritarian regime as requiring external validation and an accommodating international environment in order to keep the CCP in power, and thus see "a community of common destiny" as a far more ambitious effort to transform international rules and norms and propagate authoritarian values in order to maintain domestic stability.<sup>56</sup> Both groups agree that China prefers authoritarian norms in areas such as cyber sovereignty and prioritizing collective economic rights over individual political rights, but the latter faction suggests that liberal norms pose an existential political threat to the CCP and thus require its active efforts to transform the international system rather than simply adapt to it.

In early 2020, China seems to conceive a national security strategy in concentric circles. Its primary focus is on internal security, both by maintaining political support from the Han majority and by managing a host of separatist and nontraditional security challenges. For China, this includes preventing Taiwan independence, which it considers a domestic issue. The second ring involves countries on its periphery in the Asia-Pacific region (the Indo-Pacific). China will work to maintain regional stability, achieve a satisfactory resolution of its territorial disputes, and reconcile the region to a dominant Chinese role. The United States stands as an obstacle to these ambitions, so China will work to erode U.S. power and influence in the region while seeking to avoid direct confrontation. The third ring lies outside Asia, where China will seek to maintain access to resources and markets, protect its expanding overseas interests, and expand its influence in regional and global institutions while introducing alternative institutions where feasible. China's approach to relations with its fellow Great Powers will be to seek recognition of its status as a global player and deference to its interests in Asia and beyond. Beijing will avoid direct military challenges or confrontations where possible and will compete in the economic, technological, military, and diplomatic spheres to improve its regional and global position.<sup>57</sup>

"The competition for global influence between the United States and Russia has been exaggerated and fueled in large measure by a combination of inflated assessments of Russian capabilities and ambitions, the United States' expansive definition of its interests, and a pervasive consensus within the foreign policy establishment that the exercise of U.S. leadership demands a central role for Washington in engineering American solutions to global problems. . . . The only realistic and sustainable solution to these challenges is to focus on their root causes and adopt a more realistic view of Russia and a more disciplined, restrained, and judicious approach to defining U.S. interests around the globe."

—Eugene Rumer and Richard Sokolsky, *"Thirty Years of U.S. Policy Toward Russia,"* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 20, 2019

### Russia's National Strategy and Geostrategic Trajectory

In Vladimir Putin's Russia in 2020, the perception of existential threats drives its strategy of "aggressively defensive" policies aimed at disrupting the Western world.<sup>58</sup> Russian global strategy is loosely tethered to a nostalgic view of imperialism and the bygone era of the Russian Empire.<sup>59</sup> Unlike the Soviet Union, with its positivist strategic aim of promulgating global communism, Putin's Russia pursues reactive and limited strategic outcomes. It asserts rights of control in the historic lands of the Russian and Slavic peoples of its "near abroad" and domestic borders, sometimes referred to as the construct of neo-Eurasianism.<sup>60</sup> Simultaneously, Russia seeks to despoil U.S.-led rules, norms, and institutions around the globe. It pursues a strategy of reactive resistance to U.S. leadership in-

ternationally and proactive assertion of the right to historic imperial dominance over the states of its near abroad. Moscow seeks a multicentric world that impedes and resists U.S.-led Western institutions. Simultaneously, it asserts regional power and authority based on bilateral, transactional military and economic relations advantages.<sup>61</sup> Both elements of this strategic approach (versus a formal, lucid strategy) represent Putin's desire that Russia be viewed as a global power despite Moscow's demonstrably weak position across all but the military and informational dimensions of strategic interaction.<sup>62</sup>

Russia seeks to manage its relationship with the United States, the European Union, and NATO to deter "supposed" hostile action by weakening the cohesion of these alliances.<sup>63</sup> Moscow also leverages a tactical relationship with China, the Chinese-led Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the international BRICS consortium countries to tarnish U.S. influence abroad.<sup>64</sup> Although the Russian government cooperates with China on a handful of political issues, it remains wary of its Asian Great Power competitor and seeks to limit Chinese influence in the former Soviet states.<sup>65</sup> Russia's regional priorities closely focus on consolidating Russian ascendancy in former Soviet space and Eurasia and on projecting relevance in the Middle East and the Arctic.<sup>66</sup>

Putin understands that his control in Russia is not limitless, and his policy actions directly reflect his wishes to maintain personal power and legitimacy.<sup>67</sup> He has become a master of deflection, shifting the dialogue from the problems Russia faces at home to managing conflicts abroad through diplomatic and military force.<sup>68</sup> By flexing Russian specialized military and diplomatic power in the Middle East, Putin cultivates solidarity from "other dictators threatened by revolution," but he does not demonstrate any capacity to bring nations together or work toward common goals or mutual betterment.<sup>69</sup> Simulta-

neously, Putin seeks Russia's status as a Great Power, but his reliance on the narrative of neo-Eurasianism (sometimes referred to as *confessional imperialism*) is a far cry from the comprehensive ideological framework of the former Soviet Union or the modern, cohesive ideology of China.<sup>70</sup> Unlike the Soviet Union, which oversaw the First and Second Communist International forums that proselytized a formal and structured vision of world rules, norms, and institutions featuring Marxist/Leninist sociopolitical and command-driven economies, Putin's Russia does not have any form of a positivist vision for reordering the world political space.<sup>71</sup>

Thus, Russia is a contemporary Great Power with a peculiar mix of short-term power capabilities and long-term challenges. It leverages a history of martial prowess with unique global capabilities in several areas of military might, especially nuclear weapons, space, and aerospace, and specialized but limited precision weapons and elite forces power projection through recently modernized air and sea platforms. Modern Russia also generates considerable disruptive capacity and will do so over cyberspace and social media, undermining Western political, ideological, and informational narratives with a limited-aspiration, maximum-confusion campaign. As chronicled in the following chapter, Russia's current capabilities match well with Putin's limited strategic aspirations and transactional aims; however, the future of Russia's Great Power status is in doubt, as its major power indicators are receding today and promise an even greater downward turn into the future.

### **Evolving GPC Bilateral and Trilateral Geostrategic Dynamics: Norms, Institutions, and Geographic Regions**

Based on the national strategies and geostrategic trajectories of the three Great Powers in early 2020, one can discern in and among them today broad philosophical and specific regional dynamics that are likely to remain salient over the coming 5 years. Some have to do with U.S.-Russia relations; several involve U.S.-China relations; and others engage Chinese and Russian dynamics.

First, all three Great Power states have unique perspectives and attitudes about the *established rules, norms, and institutions of the international system*, which produce consequential strategic contrasts and policy imperatives.

The United States was the dominant architect of post-World War II norms, rules, and institutions for international interactions and exchange. In general, these American preferences continue to dominate the contemporary global system, which bears the hallmarks of a U.S./Western desire for multilateralism, the peaceful resolution of disputes, cultural pluralism, free and open global trade and finance, open and transparent communications, and individual human rights.<sup>72</sup>

However, Washington increasingly has become sensitive to the fiscal and human costs of maintaining and enforcing the existing order. Since 2017, the Trump administration has amplified existing American concerns that preferred U.S. rules and norms are too costly and other states are unwilling to pay a fair share of maintenance costs (the free-rider problem). The Trump administration has chafed more openly than its predecessors at the fact that multilateral organizations and regimes constrain unilateral U.S. bargaining power. Growing insularity and nationalism have masked U.S. self-awareness that it derives enormous benefits from current rules that are unlikely to last should the standing order erode.

Simultaneously, the United States remains oblivious to the ways in which it has acted outside of global rules when convenient. It also has been unable and/or unwilling to generate new rules about international issues, such as currency valuation, the use of space, the policing of cyberspace, and others.<sup>73</sup>

Although invited into the global order during 1945–1946, the Soviet Union spent the Cold War ideologically opposed to the U.S./Western “first-world” order, limiting its participation to parts of the United Nations (UN) system. After a brief period of attempted assimilation during the 1990s, Putin’s Russia entered 2020 with a mixed attitude toward that order: working to erode many aspects of the system while leveraging the selective benefits of the order where Russian national interests are met, such as at the UN and in the international banking and finance system. Working with China and other states, Russia desires to reshape some international rules and norms that constrain its power. At the same time, Russia is unlikely to accept integration into institutions that it did not design, as Putin believes Great Powers do not dissolve into other integration projects but forge their own.<sup>74</sup>

Contemporary Russia can be expected to support rules that allow for authoritarian regimes, resisting those that assert a “duty to intervene” against totalitarian or abusive governments. Russian political and diplomatic interests remain aligned with tethering friendships and transactional state-to-state engagements with all states willing to entertain Moscow’s presence—especially when those friendly states join Russia in opposing longstanding Western norms. Putin’s Russia will work against norms of nonintervention and military restraint—actively cultivating paramilitary and proxy forces that violate fellow-state sovereignty—in the pursuit of dominance in its near abroad and when responding in support of a friendly state anywhere in the world.<sup>75</sup> Moscow will exploit today’s trade and finance systems to its advantage but will resist and subvert economic system norms when they mandate too much transparency or exact too much fiscal pain. Its approach to cyberspace, social media, and other forms of mass communication will continue to sow confusion and derision in the activities of competitor states, resisting the creation of new rules and norms mandating reciprocal freedom and openness in this informational realm.

The People’s Republic of China was not involved directly in the establishment of the post–World War II global order.<sup>76</sup> As mentioned, Beijing began engaging global institutions beyond the UN system as part of its reform and opening up policy in 1978, with a focus on those areas with direct benefit to China’s growth and development. China claims to act as a representative of developing countries in global institutions, even though its own status and interests have diverged as its power has grown. China has benefited from many economic institutions that support trade and commerce, such as the WTO and the World Bank; however, China has sought to use its status as a developing country to resist or evade some commitments and has taken advantage of gaps in international rule and norms in areas such as currency valuation. China has sought a greater voting share and increased influence in institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Asia Development Bank, but it has also begun to develop parallel institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank as vehicles for its interests.<sup>77</sup>

Great Power national strategies and geopolitical aims combine in 2020 in a manner that highlights some areas where collaboration may remain feasible. They also indicate

**Table 3a.1. Basic Postures and Compatibility of Strategic Aims, 2020–2025**

	<b>United States</b>	<b>China</b>	<b>Russia</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
<b>Political and Diplomatic</b>	Liberal democratic governance	Authoritarian, one party state rule	Authoritarian rule with illiberal democratic facade	U.S.-China = incompatible; China-Russia = short-term compatible; U.S.-Russia = short-term incompatible
<b>Ideological</b>	“Free and open societies” with individual freedoms, universal human rights, and pluralism	“A community of common destiny” (ambiguous); state sovereignty and collective order, limited human rights	Loose “neo-Eurasianism” and multipolarity; state ascendance, Russian sovereignty and disruption of global norms	U.S.-China = incompatible; U.S.-Russia = short-term clash/long term? China-Russia = short-term compatible, long term?
<b>Informational</b>	Free and open exchange, only limited restrictions	State control and cyber sovereignty restrictions; increasing external propaganda	State overwatch with selective closure; complementary disinformation	U.S. incompatible with China and Russia
<b>Military</b>	High-tech, robust quantity mix of regular and irregular forces, great deployment reach	Improving tech, high-quantity, regular forces; gradually expanding regional deployability	Some critical high-tech, limited quantity regular with irregular forces; global deployability in selected areas/missions	(details provided in chapter 3b)
<b>Economic (Trade and Finance)</b>	Free and open trade; transparent, free-flowing finances	Open trade with strong state role; managed financial system; barriers to trade	State-monopolized trade; exploitation of international finances for oligarch gains	U.S.-China = compatible in near term if U.S. underpins; China-Russia = compatible and largely complementary; U.S.-Russia = compatible if U.S. accepts Russia free riding and stops use of trade sanctions and financial listing to achieve political aims

areas where strategic aims and values are likely to be competitive or even confrontational. Table 3a.1 helps paint a picture of the prospects for strategic compatibility in the five areas of state interactions that underpin global rules, norms, and institutions.

**Political and Diplomatic**

The current system aligns with U.S. goals and strategic aims, supporting the role of the UN, multinationalism in diplomatic relations, and peaceful and collective resolution of disputes. It also is biased toward a U.S./Western preference for liberal democratic governance. Yet Washington demonstrates increasing ambivalence about many of these norms and institutions; it remains stolid in declared support but far less certain in its policy actions to sustain them. China values the UN and its protection of state sovereignty but is increasingly using its economic and military power to pursue its interests in the Indo-Pacific region at the expense of other countries. With its domestic CCP dominance and preference for a state-centric global order, China is opposed to liberal democratic governance norms and is

seeking to expand its influence in regional and global institutions. Russia, with its Security Council veto power, also favors the status quo institution of the UN. Moscow has recently demonstrated a desire to take charge of multilateral political institutions such as Interpol and global counterterrorism organizations, presumably from a desire to bend these toward Russian interests.<sup>78</sup> Moscow is less accepting of peaceful, collective resolution of disputes. Under Putin, Russia practices single-man authoritarianism with illiberal democratic institutions. After Putin, Russia's political culture may change, but that outcome seems unlikely in the coming decade.

### **Ideological**

In 2020, the U.S./Western ideology valuing free and open societies, commercial markets, and protection of political rights clashes directly with Beijing's desire to leverage Chinese power to obtain regional deference, preference for authoritarian norms, and pursuit of the ambiguous goal of a *community of common destiny*. There is a growing awareness of this clash, but the impacts from it moving forward remain uncertain. Moscow has no overarching ideology save that of sustaining historic Russian pride and prominence, maintaining ascendance in its territorial near abroad, and exercising global access and avoiding cooperation by a U.S./Western order.

### **Informational**

U.S. preferences are for the free and open exchange of ideas with little restriction and a global communications architecture that features consensus-based cooperation. Russia and China find this construct threatening and prefer closed and restrictive communications and exchange, with the state having the right to control the flow of information within and across its borders. Both states have well-developed propaganda and censorship apparatuses for both online and traditional media and seek to use these operations to shape foreign perceptions. China denies Western accusations that it engages in extensive commercial and cyber espionage. Russia also has been willing to leverage the current openness in the system to flood it with disinformation and discordant themes, confronting its regional opponents and the United States with uncomfortable dissonance in open communications systems.

### **Military**

The current international system espouses the peaceful resolution of disputes and multilateral cooperation to deal with aggressor states. The UN was founded on this premise, and many subsequent regional and functional organizations and norms have grown up around sustainment of the practice. But this promise has not been met in practice, and in 2020, there are differing views by the Great Powers on where and how to use the military instrument. In general terms, the United States has a dominant military across most of the use-of-force spectrum and an unparalleled ability to project military power. Washington continues to emphasize a high-tech, large-quantity force with a dominant set of deployment and sustainment resources. China has a military that is rapidly improving its technological capabilities and has a limited but growing reach. Chinese military reforms are improving naval, air, and missile capabilities and beginning to build a joint force focused on fighting and winning informationalized wars. Over the past decade Russia has recapitalized its

military in a manner that has sustained its nuclear ascendance, incorporated some critical advanced technologies, and moved toward utilization of a mixture of regular military forces with irregular and commercial forces. Russia also has modernized to sustain global deployability in limited numbers for much of its limited-sized military force. (The following chapter addresses in much greater detail the capabilities of the Great Power military forces.)

### **Economic (Trade and Finance)**

Never perfect in the post–World War II era, modern trade and finance systems were built around the norms of freedom and openness. The General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs established relative norms for free and open trade and was succeeded by the WTO. The World Bank provided pooled funds from developed countries to foster economic growth in underdeveloped ones. The International Monetary Fund offered donor funding to offset short-term imbalances in international payments between countries. As world currencies became convertible, tariffs were reduced and private international investment again became robust.<sup>79</sup> The United States continues to underwrite the norms of freedom and openness represented in these institutions—but with increasingly obvious “donor fatigue.” China has greatly benefited from these norms and institutions and continues to support many of them. Beijing values free-flowing trade and finance, but with a model that emphasizes a large state role in economic decisionmaking. China has been slow to fundamentally lower domestic barriers to overseas ownership and has chafed at making its state-led economic decisions transparent. As noted, China has recently begun to establish parallel institutions and programs to compete with Western institutions in trade and finance, such as the BRI and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Russia, too, prefers state-monopolized trade. Moscow openly accepts and welcomes the elements of international trade and financial flows that sustain Putin and his oligarch constituency’s financial gains. Russia does not support or adhere to norms of freedom or openness in its general commercial activities.

As of 2020, trade and financial disputes have become primary flashpoints among the three global powers, and especially between the United States and China. Russia has bridled under U.S. and Western trade and financial sanctions in response to Moscow’s military adventures in its near abroad. More substantively, the United States and China entered a trade war in mid-2018 that continues into 2020. This emergent economic rivalry between the United States and China seems unlikely to just ease into a “normal business struggle,” similar to that between Japan and the United States in the 1980s, which waned with a decade of Japanese stagnation in the 2000s. Many in Washington are growing more and more convinced that an authoritarian, CCP-led China seeks to use unfair competition to challenge U.S. economic leadership and displace U.S. military dominance in the western Indo-Pacific in the near term. Beijing also may wish to supplant Washington’s preferred

“From the outset [June 2018], it was clear that the friction between the world’s two largest economies was about far more than just trade. At issue were long-simmering differences of ideology and values and a context for global geostrategic influence that was increasingly being played out in the economic and technological spheres.”

—“China’s Concept of World Order: Theory and Practice,” IISS Strategic Survey 2019

	<b>United States</b>	<b>China</b>	<b>Russia</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
<b>Indo-Pacific</b>	Primary	Primary	Secondary	Elevated risk of confrontation or clash between the United States and China
<b>Europe</b>	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary	Competition unless Russian near-abroad security interests challenged
<b>Middle East</b>	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary	Mainly competition over resources, but increasingly for prestige
<b>Africa</b>	Tertiary	Secondary	Tertiary	China resource interests—mainly competition
<b>Latin/South America</b>	Primary	Tertiary	Tertiary	U.S. pride and prestige interests
<b>The Arctic</b>	Secondary	Tertiary	Secondary	Limited risk of confrontation short of miscalculation
<b>Space</b>	Primary	Primary	Primary	Very high risk of confrontation and clash in this unregulated competitive space
<b>Cyberspace</b>	Primary	Primary	Primary	Already evident confrontation and concern about greater clash without new norms and rules

international rules, norms, and processes with a more state-centric model of economic activity in the more distant future.<sup>80</sup>

All three Great Power states also have different aims and attitudes toward different *geographic regions* in the competitive space of GPC.

As demonstrated in table 3a.2, there are eight major global regions and environments where the three Great Powers will compete. The strategies of each Great Power reveal that each nation has differing levels of interest intensity in these regions—all do not have primary interests in all spaces. A primary strategic interest intensity is defined as one in which the Great Power believes a significant risk to national security is found in that region, and where it could risk military conflict with a Great Power rival to defend that interest in the next decade. A secondary strategic interest intensity is one in which the state believes only a modest risk to its national security is in play, and where its preferred means of interaction with the other Great Powers will remain competitive and avoid confrontation or direct clash in other than accidental circumstances. A tertiary strategic interest involves a limited to no perceived risk to state security, and where Great Power interactions might be focused on activities that feature at least some collaboration, as well as subdued or proxy-level competition and (very rarely) confrontation.

As noted in this chapter's review of the main Great Power strategic interests, the United States and China have primary interests in the Indo-Pacific region that conflict. Here, their competition could turn toward confrontation or a military clash if careful diplomacy is not exercised. Russia has a primary interest in Europe, with special sensitivity to its near abroad—the former Soviet Union provinces. American and European diplomacy will remain challenged to stanch Russian misadventures without generating overt confrontation or clash. The United States retains a historic interest in primacy across the

Western Hemisphere, and this appears unlikely to be similarly important in the near term by the other two and likely to remain an area of less direct 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 as the principal focal point of interaction. However, as U.S. and Russian interests in energy sources wane, the competitive focus in the Middle East seems destined to be that of prestige and resonance of ideological narratives.

Interestingly, two nontraditional competitive venues, space and cyberspace, are those where all three Great Powers have primary interests engaged now and into the foreseeable future. There is high risk that intensifying competition in space could lead to greater confrontation there between the modern Great Powers. Agreement on some viable rules and norms for collaborative use and cooperative actions in space would seem a vital undertaking to reduce the growing risks of confrontation and miscalculation leading to clash. Likewise, the absence of cooperative rules and norms in cyberspace has already witnessed this medium for state interaction take a dark turn toward confrontational dynamics; in the absence of new norms and standards for cooperation, this medium of Great Power interaction risks an even greater set of malevolent and confrontational activities in coming years.

### **Major GPC Comparative Insights and Implications**

This chapter's analytical review of Great Power strategic postures and geostrategic preferences provides several important insights about the new era of GPC. Among them, 10 stand out.

First, the United States enters this new era as the dominant Great Power of the three rivals—its preferred norms, rules, and institutions for interstate interactions color all major categories of global activity. But the strategic aims of the three modern Great Powers are incompatible and thus assure the return to a historically dominant pattern of competition between Great Powers in the international system.

Second, China is the one rising Great Power with the combination of a positivist vision for the future and the ambition to push for changes in the international system on a near-term and long-run basis. China may not intend to do so, but the United States finds this combination disruptive to the standing—and Washington's preferred—international order. China's lack of a meaningful boundary between public and private ventures and its wide-ranging and intrusive efforts to gain competitive advantage and coercive leverage over states within its region carry significant risk of escalating confrontation with the United States. Thus, the primary competition in the emerging era—the only truly global, comprehensive national-level competition—likely will be between the United States and China.<sup>81</sup>

Third, Russia's Great Power aims are not grounded in a positivist global strategy with discernible alternative norms, institutions, and procedures for an international order. Instead, Moscow in 2020 practices a reactive and often disruptive strategy oriented toward questioning contemporary institutions and processes by which it feels threatened and simultaneously keeping subservient the smaller states on its geographic boundaries. Putin's Russia, therefore, has the potential to cause difficulties on specific issues but does not have the global aspiration to reshape the international system.<sup>82</sup>

Fourth, Chinese and Russian challenges to the existing U.S.-established global order of 2020 should be sharply distinguished. It is incorrect and unhelpful to lump China and

Russia together as the same kind of comprehensive U.S. rival now or into the future. The divergent degree of their global ambitions means that, for the United States, the future portends an overarching political, ideological, information, and economic competition with China, with secondary, largely regional contestations with Russia.<sup>83</sup>

“China and Russia refer to their relationship as a ‘comprehensive strategic partnership,’ in which Russia supplies oil to China and the two countries hold joint military exercises. And, officially, their relationship has rarely been better. But trade is lopsided in China’s favor; the fall in energy prices has made China considerably less dependent on Russia. Russia sells arms to China’s adversaries, India and Vietnam. And China has copied Russian weapons designs. These deeper geopolitical realities mean China and Russia will be only allies of convenience.”

—Robert Kaplan, *The Return of Marco Polo’s World* (2018)

Fifth, despite China’s long-term strategic vision and ambition, both China and Russia have regional interests in 2020 that appear more important and urgent than their global interests. Each desires *de facto* spheres of influence free from outside interference—on their borders and in nearby regions.<sup>84</sup> This is especially true in Central Asia and in the Russian Far East.

Sixth, China and Russia may continue their tactical entente over the coming 5 to 10 years, working together to erode U.S. power, frustrate U.S. actions, challenge U.S.-dominated institutions, and question U.S.-underwritten norms and rules they deem threatening. However, divergent long-term Sino-Russian strategic interests make it unlikely they will form an enduring

alliance.<sup>85</sup> The United States should remain careful not to misunderstand, as evidence of some deeper strategic cooperation, tactical coordination between Beijing and Moscow that balances U.S. power.<sup>86</sup>

Seventh, all three contemporary Great Powers are dissatisfied with some aspects of international order and are growing less willing to make compromises and sacrifices to keep it running. Thus, there is heightened potential for GPC rivalrous activities to reduce effectiveness of global institutions in managing complex regional and global problems. Some observers argued that the absence of Great Power cooperation or collaboration during the height of the early 2020 coronavirus pandemic was symptomatic of this breakdown.<sup>87</sup>

Eighth, U.S. economic and strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific and in Europe challenge Chinese and Russian regional interests most. These are competitive regions with the greatest near-term salience. The Middle East is evolving as a secondary area of GPC where less important Great Power interests collide in various ways. Other regional areas are of tertiary importance, where GPC interests exist but vary greatly and where competitive dynamics are less clear.

Ninth, space is an arena where longstanding cooperation and a relative absence of strategic competition is giving way to Great Power rivalry and the potential for confrontation. Great Power geopolitical competition is increasingly observed from and managed by space-based platforms. Thus, as global Great Power rivalries heat up, more and more states will develop technologies, including antisatellite weapons, that put human access to or effective use of space at risk. The risk of confrontation and clash in this unregulated competitive

arena is great, but so too is an opportunity to craft norms and rules of cooperation and deconfliction capable of reducing the risk of confrontation in space.<sup>88</sup>

Tenth, cyberspace is already a major medium impacting relative state power and an important element of the emerging era of Great Power competition. The risk of cyber-clash will grow without concerted effort to effect agreed-to global standards and norms that reconcile cyber-openness with security and safety concerns.<sup>89</sup>

### **From Aspirations to Actions: From “What to Do” to “How to Do It”**

The end of the 2010s heralded an indisputable shift of the major dynamics of international affairs from cooperation and collaboration and into a far more competitive set of international relations, especially between the United States, Russia, and China.

In a nutshell, the modern Great Powers have divergent strategic interests, meaning they will compete across five major interaction categories in the next 5 years. Cooperation and collaboration remain possible, but episodes of confrontation and clash are likely, even over nonmilitary issues. The United States must proceed with a clear-minded strategic approach that understands that Putin’s strategic aims make Russia a transient security risk, while Beijing’s ideological vision and aspirations make China the more important, albeit presently less threatening, security threat. A U.S. strategy that cooperates when possible, competes smartly, confronts only when necessary, and concurrently builds out unique U.S. strategic tools and power capabilities across all of its economic, diplomatic, ideological, informational, and military categories appears to be one best suited to the beginning of a new era of GPC.

The next chapter moves beyond an assessment of the strategic aims and intentions of the modern Great Powers. It will explore whether the United States, China, or Russia can achieve their aims. Do they have now, or will they soon possess, the capabilities necessary to achieve their strategic goals? It will itemize and evaluate many of the most important power capabilities and the relative abilities of the United States, China, and Russia now and into the coming decade—with special attention to the next 5 years.

“[I]f China’s power continues to grow, and if it continues to be ruled by a one-party authoritarian regime, its relations with the United States are going to become increasingly tense and competitive. That is the path along which events are presently proceeding, and like it or not, it is the future for which America and its allies have no choice but to prepare.”

—Aaron L. Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy* (2012)

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> This operational definition is derived from Thomas J. Volgy et al., “Major Power Status in International Politics,” in *Major Powers and the Quest for Status in International Politics: Global and Regional Perspectives*, ed. Thomas J. Volgy et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 1–26. Their definition derives from an amalgam of several other classic efforts at defining Great Power status, including the following historic references: Melvin Small and J. David Singer, “Formal Alliances, 1815–1939: A Quantitative Description,” *Journal of Peace Research* 3, no. 1 (1966), 1–32; Jack Levy, *War in the Modern Great Power System,*

*1495–1975* (Louisville: University Press of Kentucky, 1983); John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001); Benjamin O. Fordham, “Who Wants to Be a Major Power? Explaining the Expansion of Foreign Policy Ambition,” *Journal of Peace Research* 48, no. 5 (2011), 587–603.

<sup>2</sup> For examples of the range of these perspectives on China, see Aaron L. Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia* (New York: W.W. Martin and Company, 2011); 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/>>; Xiaoye Pu and Chengli Wang, "Rethinking China's Rise: Chinese Scholars Debate Strategic Overstretch," *Chatham House Papers* 94, no. 5 (September 2018). The range of views about the challenge posed by Russia to the United States and the international order is discussed in "How Big a Challenge Is Russia? Foreign Affairs Asks the Experts," *Foreign Affairs*, November 13, 2017, available at <[www.foreignaffairs.com/ask-the-experts/2017-11-13/how-big-challenge-russia](http://www.foreignaffairs.com/ask-the-experts/2017-11-13/how-big-challenge-russia)>.

<sup>3</sup> Michael J. Mazarr et al., *Understanding the Emerging Era of International Competition: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2018), available at <[www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2726.html](http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2726.html)>; Ashley J. Tellis and Robert D. Blackwill, *Revising U.S. Grand Strategy Toward China* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 2015), available at <[www.cfr.org/report/revising-us-grand-strategy-toward-china](http://www.cfr.org/report/revising-us-grand-strategy-toward-china)>; Ian Bremmer, "The End of the American International Order: What Comes Next?" *Time*, November 18, 2019, available at <<https://time.com/5730849/end-american-order-what-next/>>.

<sup>4</sup> Chapter 10 of this volume addresses the perspective that Russia is not really a Great Power but instead a disruptive (or spoiler) state. Those looking for an alternative view of Russia's role in an era of Great Power competition are encouraged to turn to that chapter.

<sup>5</sup> Ali Wyne, "America's Blind Ambition Could Make It a Victim of Global Competition," *The National Interest*, February 11, 2019, available at <<https://nationalinterest.org/feature/americas-blind-ambition-could-make-it-victim-global-competition-44227>>. Among those concerned with the short-term Russian risks, Soviet-expat-turned-Norwegian research fellow Pavel Baev's concern is most concise: "Russian revisionism from a position of weakness is both ambitious and desperate." See "How Big a Challenge Is Russia? Foreign Affairs Asks the Experts."

<sup>6</sup> Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 1 (1990/1991), 23–33; Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World* (New York: Norton, 2008); Hal Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Rise of the Post-Cold War Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> Susan L. Shirk, *How China Opened Its Door: The Political Success of the PRC's Foreign Trade and Investment Reforms* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, October 1, 1994); Barry Naughton, *Growing Out of the Plan: Chinese Economic Reform, 1978–1993* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> The 1989 crackdown on Tiananmen protestors and the Chinese Communist Party's 1999 campaign to eradicate the Falun Gong movement stand out as exceptions to these general trends.

<sup>9</sup> The belief that China's economic liberalization would most likely lead to middle-class demands for greater national political participation and a weakening-to-collapse of Communist Party control became somewhat bipartisan political orthodoxy in Washington. See Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 356–367, 393; "Asia," *Strategic Survey* 119, no. 1 (January 1, 2019), 68–133, available at <<https://doi.org/10.1080/04597230.2019.1676992>>.

<sup>10</sup> Russian experts observe that Moscow saw the United States as a Great Power rival much earlier. This is documented in subsequent paragraphs. China experts suggest that Beijing would argue that its rivalry with the United States did not become public until 2015. China's perspective is documented in the following section.

<sup>11</sup> Among the tell-tale U.S.-China events signaling the arrival of their de facto Great Power rivalry in 2014 and 2015, several stood out. First, the U.S. Department of Justice made a first-ever public indictment of Chinese military hackers for cyber espionage against U.S. corporations in May 2014. See Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs, "U.S. Charges Five Chinese Military Hackers for Cyber Espionage Against

U.S. Corporations and a Labor Organization for Commercial Advantage," May 19, 2014, available at <<https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/us-charges-five-chinese-military-hackers-cyber-espionage-against-us-corporations-and-labor>>. Second, the U.S. Department of State published a paper formally challenging China's assertion of sovereignty over maritime claims related to its "dashed line" encircling islands and waters in the South China Sea. This paper set the legal predicate for freedom of navigation operations conducted in the South China Sea by U.S. warships that began in 2015. See *Limits in the Seas: Maritime Claims in the South China Sea*, Paper no. 143 (Washington, DC: Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, December 5, 2014), available at <[www.documentcloud.org/documents/1376464-us-limits-in-the-seas-dos-no143-china-in-scs-12.html](http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1376464-us-limits-in-the-seas-dos-no143-china-in-scs-12.html)>. Finally, President Barack Obama's November 2014 summit in China did realize agreement by both states to sign the Paris Accord, but it did not find formal compromise for simmering grievances on the two critical issues of Chinese cyber espionage or maritime disputes. See Jane Perlez, "China's 'New Type' of Ties Fails to Sway Obama," *New York Times*, November 9, 2014, available at <[www.nytimes.com/2014/11/10/world/asia/chinas-new-type-of-ties-fails-to-sway-obama.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/10/world/asia/chinas-new-type-of-ties-fails-to-sway-obama.html)>.

<sup>12</sup> See the similar conclusion found in International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), "A New U.S. Consensus on China?" in *Strategic Survey: The Annual Assessment of Geopolitics* (London: Routledge, 2019), 390–391.

<sup>13</sup> *National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: The White House, December 2017), available at <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>>; *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2018), available at <<https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>>. The 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) is a classified document and thus not in public circulation; this NDS summary is the published, public record of that strategy.

<sup>14</sup> Phillip C. Saunders, "Managing Strategic Competition with China," in *Global Strategic Assessment 2009: America's Security Role in a Changing World*, ed. Patrick M. Cronin (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 2009), 260–264.

<sup>15</sup> Deng Xiaoping's statement came in the context of whether China should seek leadership of the international communist movement but was applied more widely as a guide to Chinese policy vis-à-vis the United States.

<sup>16</sup> Naughton, *Growing Out of the Plan*; Nicholas Lardy, *Sustaining China's Economic Growth After the Global Financial Crisis* (Washington, DC: Peterson Institute for International Economics, December 2011).

<sup>17</sup> For an example from the Chinese steel industry, see Edward S. Steinfeld, *Forging Reform in China: The Fate of State-Owned Industry* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>18</sup> The "Beijing Consensus," also known as the Chinese Economic Model, is a phrase coined by Joshua Cooper Ramo to distinguish China's economic growth experience featuring authoritarian politics and state-managed capitalist economics from the "Washington Consensus," which blends privatized, deregulated capitalism and liberal democratic politics. See Joshua Cooper Ramo, *The Beijing Consensus: Notes on the New Physics of Chinese Power* (London: Foreign Policy Centre, 2004); Joshua Kurlantzick, "Why the 'China Model' Isn't Going Away," *The Atlantic*, March 21, 2013, available at <[www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/03/why-the-china-model-isnt-going-away/274237/](http://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/03/why-the-china-model-isnt-going-away/274237/)>. Some Western observers see the Chinese model as emphasizing the need for a strong, centralized state to constrain rampant economic inequality and social injustice associated with rapacious capitalism and liberal democracy.

See IISS, “China’s Concept of the World Order: Theory and Practice,” in *Strategic Survey 2019*, 27–28; Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy*, 245–263; Aaron Friedberg, “Getting the China Challenge Right,” *The American Interest*, January 10, 2019, available at <[www.the-american-interest.com/2019/01/10/getting-the-china-challenge-right/](http://www.the-american-interest.com/2019/01/10/getting-the-china-challenge-right/)>.

<sup>19</sup> See Yawei Liu and Justine Zheng Ren, “An Emerging Consensus on the U.S. Threat: The United States According to PLA Officers,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 23, no. 86 (2014), 255–274; “Why Is the U.S. So Keen on ‘Color Revolutions?’” *People’s Daily Online*, October 11, 2014, available at <<http://en.people.cn/n/2014/10/11/c98649-8793283.html>>; Phillip C. Saunders, *The Rebalance to Asia: U.S.-China Relations and Regional Security*, INSS Strategic Forum 281 (Washington, DC: NDU Press, August 2013).

<sup>20</sup> For evidence of a continuing debate, see Pu and Wang, “Rethinking China’s Rise.” On the certainty of China’s change in strategic approach, see Kissinger, *On China*, 478–513.

<sup>21</sup> Eugene Rumer and Richard Sokolsky, *Thirty Years of U.S. Policy Toward Russia: Can the Vicious Circle Be Broken?* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2019), available at <<https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/06/20/thirty-years-of-u.s.-policy-toward-russia-can-vicious-circle-be-broken-pub-79323>>.

<sup>22</sup> For a review of the trajectory of Russian grievances against its post–Cold War treatment by the United States and the West, see Angela Stent, *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

<sup>23</sup> “Section I: Russia in the World Community,” in *National Security Concept of the Russian Federation* (Moscow: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, January 1, 2000), available at <[www.mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/official\\_documents/-/asset\\_publisher/CptICk6B6Z29/content/id/589768](http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICk6B6Z29/content/id/589768)>.

<sup>24</sup> “Section III: Threats to the Russian Federation’s National Security,” in *National Security Concept of the Russian Federation*.

<sup>25</sup> The 2008 promise of membership to Georgia and Ukraine—a U.S.-led North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) announcement—pushed across an invisible but distinct Putin line in the sand. Russia viewed it as another sign of NATO’s boundless ambitions, and it raised the prospect that Moscow might lose control, or at least immediate influence, over two neighbors that it saw as critical to its security, well-being, and prestige as a major power. Given the Alliance’s commitment to spreading democracy, Russia also perceived its neighbors’ intended accession as a threat to its domestic stability. See Rumer and Sokolsky, *Thirty Years of U.S. Policy Toward Russia*.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> The Russo-Georgian war of 2008 was a turning point in U.S.-Russia relations and in Russian relations with the West and proved a harbinger of competitive relations into the future, despite brief efforts by the Obama administration to “reset” them to a more cooperative footing. See Michael Kofman, “Raiding and International Brigandry: Russia’s Strategy for Great Power Competition,” *War on the Rocks*, June 14, 2018, available at <<https://warontherocks.com/2018/06/raiding-and-international-brigandry-russias-strategy-for-great-power-competition/>>.

<sup>28</sup> Rumer and Sokolsky, *Thirty Years of U.S. Policy Toward Russia*. Of course, the United States took the lead in abrogating some Cold War arms-control treaties with Russia as well, most notably the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* Also see John W. Parker, *Putin’s Syria Gambit: Sharper Elbows, Bigger Footprint, Stickier Wicket*, Strategic Perspectives 25 (Washington, DC: NDU Press, July 2017), 6–20, available at <<https://inss.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratperspective/>

>. For a review of Russian military spending as a percentage of gross domestic product—greater than that by the United States, China, or any Western country since 2010—see SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, available at <<https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>>.

<sup>30</sup> *National Security Strategy of the United States*, 2–3.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 2–4.

<sup>32</sup> Rex Tillerson, “Defining Our Relationship with India for the Next Century: An Address by U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2017, available at <<https://www.csis.org/events/defining-our-relationship-india-next-century-address-us-secretary-state-rex-tillerson>>; “President Trump’s Administration Is Advancing a Free and Open Indo-Pacific Through Investments and Partnerships in Economics, Security, and Governance,” The White House, November 18, 2018, available at <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-trumps-administration-advancing-free-open-indo-pacific-investments-partnerships-economics-security-governance/>>.

<sup>33</sup> For a review of the George W. Bush administration efforts to increase the priority on Asia, see Nina Silove, “The Pivot Before the Pivot: U.S. Strategy to Preserve the Power Balance in Asia,” *International Security* 40, no. 4 (Spring 2016), 45–88.

<sup>34</sup> “Fact Sheet: Advancing the Rebalance to Asia and the Pacific,” The White House, November 16, 2015, available at <<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/11/16/fact-sheet-advancing-rebalance-asia-and-pacific>>; Brian Michael Jenkins, “President Obama’s Controversial Legacy as Counterterrorism-in-Chief,” RAND, August 22, 2016, available at <<https://www.rand.org/blog/2016/08/president-obamas-controversial-legacy-as-counterterrorism.html>>. For a perspective suggesting that the Obama administration did more toward realizing an Asia rebalance before 2011 than is accepted in other accounts, see Jeffrey A. Bader, *Obama and China’s Rise: An Insider’s Account of America’s Asia Strategy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2012).

<sup>35</sup> “U.S.-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region,” 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>>.

<sup>36</sup> Alec Tyson, “Should U.S. Strike First If Threatened? Americans Are Divided,” Pew Research Center, November 28, 2017, available at <<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/11/28/americans-are-split-on-the-principle-of-pre-emptive-military-force/>>; “Public Opinion on Foreign Affairs, Terrorism, and Privacy,” Pew Research Center, June 26, 2014, available at <<https://www.people-press.org/2014/06/26/section-6-foreign-affairs-terrorism-and-privacy/>>.

<sup>37</sup> “New Troublemakers Emerge,” *The Economist*, December 7, 2019, available at <[www.economist.com/leaders/2019/12/07/new-troublemakers-emerge](http://www.economist.com/leaders/2019/12/07/new-troublemakers-emerge)>; Maria Bartiromo, “President Trump Touts Tariffs as ‘Very Powerful’ Tool,” Fox News, June 26, 2019, available at <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=citAb7fdq44](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=citAb7fdq44)>; @realDonaldTrump, “South Korea Has Agreed to Pay Substantially More Money to the United States in Order to Defend Itself from North Korea. Over the Past Many Decades, the U.S. Has Been Paid Very Little by South Korea, but Last Year, at the Request of President Trump, South Korea Paid \$990,000,000,” Twitter, August 7, 2019.

<sup>38</sup> IISS, “China’s Concept of the World Order,” 390–398; Brian D. Blankenship and Benjamin Denison, “Is America Prepared for Great-Power Competition?” *Survival* 61, no. 5 (October–November 2019), 43–64, available at <[www.iiss.org/publications/survival/2019/survival-global-politics-and-strategy-octobernovember-2019/615-04-blankenship-and-denison](http://www.iiss.org/publications/survival/2019/survival-global-politics-and-strategy-octobernovember-2019/615-04-blankenship-and-denison)>.

- <sup>39</sup> See Marc Lantaigne, *China and International Institutions: Alternative Paths to Global Power* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Scott L. Kastner, Margaret M. Pearson, and Chad Rector, *China's Strategic Multilateralism: Investing in Global Governance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
- <sup>40</sup> Joshua Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power Is Transforming the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).
- <sup>41</sup> Phillip C. Saunders, *China's Global Activism: Strategy, Drivers, and Tools*, Occasional Paper 4 (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 2006); David Shambaugh, *China Goes Global: The Partial Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Elizabeth Economy and Michael Levi, *By All Means Necessary: How China's Resource Quest Is Changing the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).
- <sup>42</sup> Nadege Rolland, "A Concise Guide to the Belt and Road Initiative," National Bureau of Asian Research, April 11, 2019, available at <<https://www.nbr.org/publication/a-guide-to-the-belt-and-road-initiative/>>.
- <sup>43</sup> Joel Wuthnow, *Chinese Perspectives on the Belt and Road Initiative: Strategic Rationales, Risks and Implications*, China Strategic Perspectives 12 (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 2017).
- <sup>44</sup> Daniel Kliman and Abigail Grace, *Power Play: Addressing China's Belt and Road Strategy* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, September 2018), available at <<https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/power-play>>; IISS, "China's Concept of the World Order," 35.
- <sup>45</sup> Jost Wübbeke et al., *Made in China 2025: The Making of a High-Tech Superpower and Consequences for Industrial Countries* (Berlin: MERICS, 2016), available at <<https://www.merics.org/en/papers-on-china/made-china-2025>>; Max J. Zenglein and Anna Holzmann, *Evolving Made in China 2025: China's Industrial Policy in the Quest for Global Tech Leadership* (Berlin: MERICS, 2019), available at <<https://www.merics.org/en/papers-on-china/evolving-made-in-china-2025>>. By early 2019, China had begun to downplay "Made in China 2025," not mentioning it in public since the beginning of a very public trade war launched against Beijing by the United States in summer 2018. Nonetheless, most observers believe Made in China 2025 remains a major Chinese economic and foreign policy underpinning. See Emily Crawford, "Made in China 2025: The Industrial Plan that China Doesn't Want Anyone Talking About," *Frontline*, May 7, 2019, available at <<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/made-in-china-2025-the-industrial-plan-that-china-doesnt-want-anyone-talking-about/>>.
- <sup>46</sup> For example, the United States kept its goods and financial markets open after the 2008 global financial crisis at the cost of a deeper recession and increased domestic unemployment. The Chinese system would have difficulty bearing that strain.
- <sup>47</sup> Thomas Fingar, "China's Vision of World Order," in *Strategic Asia 2012–13: China's Military Challenge*, ed. Ashley J. Tellis and Travis Tanner (Washington, DC: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2012), 342–373.
- <sup>48</sup> Ramo, *The Beijing Consensus*; "The China Model: The Beijing Consensus Is to Keep Quiet," *The Economist*, May 6, 2010, available at <<https://www.economist.com/asia/2010/05/06/the-beijing-consensus-is-to-keep-quiet>>.
- <sup>49</sup> For an affirmative view, see Stefan Halper, *The Beijing Consensus: How China's Authoritarian Model Will Dominate the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Basic Books, 2010); for a skeptical view, see Scott Kennedy, "The Myth of the Beijing Consensus," *Journal of Contemporary China* 19, no. 65 (June 2010), 461–477.
- <sup>50</sup> These dates are the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Republic of China, respectively.
- <sup>51</sup> Xi Jinping, "Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era," Report to the 19<sup>th</sup> National Party Congress of the Communist Party of China, Xinhua, October 18, 2017, available at <[http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/Xi\\_Jinping's\\_report\\_at\\_19th\\_CPC\\_National\\_Congress.pdf](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/Xi_Jinping's_report_at_19th_CPC_National_Congress.pdf)>.
- <sup>52</sup> *China's Policies on Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation* (Beijing: State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, January 2017), available at <[http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white\\_paper/2017/01/11/content\\_281475539078636.htm](http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2017/01/11/content_281475539078636.htm)>.
- <sup>53</sup> For a useful assessment of the Chinese white paper that illustrates these points, see Daljit Singh, "China's White Paper on Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region and Chinese Grand Strategy," ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute Perspective 22, April 7, 2017, available at <[https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS\\_Perspective\\_2017\\_22.pdf](https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS_Perspective_2017_22.pdf)>.
- <sup>54</sup> Graham Allison, "The New Spheres of Influence: Sharing the Globe with Other Great Powers," *Foreign Affairs* (March–April 2020), available at <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/usa/2020-02-10/new-spheres-of-influence>>.
- <sup>55</sup> Fingar, "China's Vision of World Order"; Phillip C. Saunders, "Implications: China in the International System," *The PLA in 2025* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, 2017); Alastair Iain Johnston, "China in a World of Orders: Rethinking Compliance and Challenge in Beijing's International Relations," *International Security* 44, no. 2 (Fall 2019), 9–60.
- <sup>56</sup> In the less benign interpretation, "a community of common destiny" is the core of a Chinese revisionist strategy that is incompatible with the current international order; it is based on the ideology that a strong centralized state is the only way to arrest the inherent inequalities and unacceptable aspects of Western-model electoral democracy, pluralistic civil society, and laws that emphasize protection of individual rights. In this framework, the Belt and Road Initiative and "Made in China 2025" are viewed as strategic enablers aimed toward the Chinese global economic dominance and integration necessary for a new international order where political and social norms of noninterference within state borders will supplant the freedom and openness norms predominant today. See IISS, "China's Concept of the World Order," 27, 390–398; Blankenship and Denison, "Is America Prepared for Great-Power Competition?"; Rolland, *A Concise Guide to the Belt and Road Initiative*; Liza Tobin, "Xi's Vision for Transforming Global Governance: A Strategic Challenge for Washington and Its Allies," *Texas National Security Review* 2, no. 1 (November 2018), 155–166; François Godement, "Global Values: China's Promotion of New Global Values," in *Strategic Asia 2019: China's Expanding Strategic Ambitions*, ed. Ashley J. Tellis, Alison Szalwinski, and Michael Wills (Washington, DC: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2019); Melanie Hart and Blaine Johnson, *Mapping China's Global Governance Ambitions* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2019); Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy*.
- <sup>57</sup> IISS, "China's Concept of the World Order," 35–36.
- <sup>58</sup> Peter B. Zwack and Marie-Charlotte Pierre, *Russian Challenges from Now into the Next Generation: A Geostrategic Primer*, INSS Strategic Perspectives 29 (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 2019), available at <<https://inss.ndu.edu/Portals/82/Documents/Strategic%20Perspectives/SP%2029%20Final%20for%20Web.pdf?ver=2019-03-25-100758-543>>.
- <sup>59</sup> Jeffrey Mankoff, "A Century After the Armistice, the World Is Still Coping with the End of Empires," Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 13, 2018, available at <<https://www.csis.org/analysis/century-after-armistice-world-still-coping-end-empires>>.
- <sup>60</sup> The oft-cited declaration of this construct of neo-Eurasianism is found in Vladimir Putin's October 2011 article in *Izvestia*,

"A New Integration Project for Eurasia: The Future in the Making." See Christopher S. Chivvis, *Understanding Russian Hybrid Warfare and What Can Be Done About It* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), available at <[https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/CT400/CT468/RAND\\_CT468.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/CT400/CT468/RAND_CT468.pdf)>; Nadezda Arbatova, "Three Faces of Russia's Neo-Eurasianism," *Survival* 61, no. 6 (December 2019/January 2020), 7–24.

<sup>61</sup> Each of these core elements of Russian strategy is detailed in "Section I: General Provisions," *Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation* (Moscow: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, February 18, 2013), available at <[https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/official\\_documents/-/asset\\_publisher/CptICk6BZ29/content/id/2542248](https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICk6BZ29/content/id/2542248)>.

<sup>62</sup> Rumer and Sokolsky, *Thirty Years of U.S. Policy Toward Russia*; Chivvis, *Understanding Russian Hybrid Warfare*, 2.

<sup>63</sup> Karl-Heinz Kamp, "From Wales to Warsaw: NATO's Future Beyond the Ukraine Crisis," *American Foreign Policy Interests* 36, no. 6 (November 2014), 361–365, available at <<https://doi.org/10.1080/10803920.2014.995544>>.

<sup>64</sup> Rachel S. Salzman, *Russia, BRICS, and the Disruption of Global Order* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2019), available at <[www.jstor.org/stable/61.ctvcj2sb2](http://www.jstor.org/stable/61.ctvcj2sb2)>.

<sup>65</sup> "Russia, China Agree to Natural Gas Deal," *Stratfor*, May 21, 2014, available at <<https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/russia-china-agree-natural-gas-deal>>; "China, Russia: An End to an Island Dispute," *Stratfor*, July 17, 2008, available at <<https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/china-russia-end-island-dispute>>; and, Zwack and Pierre, *Russian Challenges from Now into the Next Generation*.

<sup>66</sup> Zwack and Pierre, *Russian Challenges from Now into the Next Generation*.

<sup>67</sup> Michael Crowley and Julia Ioffe, "Why Putin Hates Hillary," *Politico*, July 25, 2016, available at <<http://politi.co/2EwrOVM>>. Putin's grab for permanent control took a new twist in March 2020 when a Putin-inspired initiative passed the Russian Duma, which allows him to serve another two 6-year terms beyond 2024—effectively allowing him to be president for life. See "Russia's President Reluctantly Agrees to 16 More Years in Power," *The Economist*, March 12, 2020, available at <<https://www.economist.com/leaders/2020/03/12/russias-president-reluctantly-agrees-to-16-more-years-in-power>>.

<sup>68</sup> Tom Kutsch and Michael Pizzi, "Russia May Be Wading into a Quagmire in Syria," *Al Jazeera America*, October 2, 2015, available at <<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/10/2/the-risks-of-russias-intervention-in-syria.html>>.

<sup>69</sup> Anne Applebaum, "Putin's Grand Strategy," *South Central Review* 35, no. 1 (2018), 22–34, available at <<https://doi.org/10.1353/scr.2018.0001>>; Jeffrey Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2011), 197; Stephen M. Walt, "I Knew the Cold War. This Is No Cold War," *Foreign Policy*, March 12, 2018, available at <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/12/i-knew-the-cold-war-this-is-no-cold-war/>>.

<sup>70</sup> Chris Buckley, "Xi Jinping Thought Explained: A New Ideology for a New Era," *New York Times*, February 26, 2018, available at <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/26/world/asia/xi-jinping-thought-explained-a-new-ideology-for-a-new-era.html>>; James H. Anderson, "A New Global Paradigm: The United States versus Russia," in *Great Strategic Rivalries: From the Classical World to the Cold War*, ed. James Lacey (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 479–510.

<sup>71</sup> Applebaum, "Putin's Grand Strategy"; David Gibbs, "Does the USSR Have a 'Grand Strategy'? Reinterpreting the Invasion of Afghanistan," *Journal of Peace Research* 24, no. 4 (December 1987), 365–379. For a review of the Communist International

framework for a global world and the Soviet Union's domination of that entity throughout its history, see Edward B. Richards, "The Shaping of the Comintern," *Slavic and East European Review* 18, no. 2 (April 1959), 197–204, available at <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3001362>>; Robert H. McNeal, "The Legacy of the Comintern," *International Journal* 201, no. 2 (Spring 1966), 199–204, available at <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40200330>>. For a discussion of how Putin's Russia overcomes no such cohesive, globalist positive vision, instead preferring a strategic approach that sustains Russian oligarch kleptocracy and the destabilization of global norms and institutions along with disruption of rival state political cohesion, see Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), especially 312–384; Walt, "I Knew the Cold War. This Is No Cold War."

<sup>72</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Power and Interdependence*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1989), 279–282; Charles P. Kindleberger, *Manias, Panics, and Crashes: A History of Financial Crises*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1996), 179–186.

<sup>73</sup> Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, "The Committee to Save the World Order," *Foreign Affairs* 97, no. 6 (November–December 2018), available at <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2018-09-30/committee-save-world-order>>; Matthew Bey, "Trump and the WTO's Uncertain Future," *Stratfor*, November 1, 2018, available at <<https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/trump-and-wtos-uncertain-future>>.

<sup>74</sup> Timofie Bordachev, "Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union: The View from Moscow," European Council on Foreign Relations, January 21, 2015, available at <[https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_russia\\_and\\_the\\_eurasian\\_economic\\_union\\_the\\_view\\_from\\_moscow403](https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_russia_and_the_eurasian_economic_union_the_view_from_moscow403)>.

<sup>75</sup> Simultaneously, Putin's Russia will both obfuscate its interventionism and assert that multiple shameless U.S. interventions into sovereign states—Iraq, Libya, Syria, etc.—during the post-Cold War era make the United States ill-positioned to offer criticism.

<sup>76</sup> It was Chaing Kai-Shek's China—and Mao Zedong's civil war rival—that was awarded a seat on the United Nations Security Council that the People's Republic of China finally inherited in 1971.

<sup>77</sup> The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) "is a multilateral development bank with a mission to improve social and economic outcomes in Asia. Headquartered in Beijing." See "About AIIB Overview—AIIB," available at <<https://www.aiib.org/en/about-aiib/index.html>>; David Dollar, "The AIIB and the 'One Belt, One Road,'" *Brookings*, June 21, 2015, available at <<https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/the-aiib-and-the-one-belt-one-road/>>.

<sup>78</sup> "Russia," *Interpol*, available at <<https://www.interpol.int/en/Who-we-are/Member-countries/Europe/RUSSIA>>; Matt Apuzzo, "Interpol Rejects Russian as President, Electing South Korean Instead," *New York Times*, November 21, 2018, available at <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/21/world/europe/interpol-russia-south-korea.html>>; Amy Mackinnon, "The Scourge of the Red Notice," *Foreign Policy*, December 3, 2018, available at <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/12/03/the-scourge-of-the-red-notice-interpol-uae-russia-china/>>; Robbie Gramer, "China and Russia Take the Helm of Interpol," *Foreign Policy*, November 10, 2016, available at <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/11/10/china-and-russia-take-the-helm-of-interpol/>>.

<sup>79</sup> For a review of these economic system traits, see Charles P. Kindleberger, *World Economic Primacy: 1500–1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 225.

<sup>80</sup> Joel Gahrke, "State Department Preparing for Clash of Civilizations with China," *Washington Examiner*, April 30, 2019,

available at <<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/defense-national-security/state-department-preparing-for-clash-of-civilizations-with-china>>; Edward Wong, “U.S. Versus China: A New Era of Great Power Competition, but Without Boundaries,” *New York Times*, June 26, 2019, available at <<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/26/world/asia/united-states-china-conflict.html>>.

<sup>81</sup> Mazarr et al., *Understanding the Emerging Era of International Competition*, 32–33.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>84</sup> See Graham Allison, “The New Spheres of Influence: Sharing the Globe with Other Great Powers,” *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2020).

<sup>85</sup> For more details on the limits to greater Sino-Russian strategic cooperation, see Robert Sutter, *China-Russia Relations: Strategic Implications and U.S. Policy Options*, NBR Special Report #73 (Washington, DC: National Bureau of Asian Research, September 2018), available at <[https://www.nbr.org/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/publications/special\\_report\\_73\\_china-russia\\_cooperation\\_sep2018.pdf](https://www.nbr.org/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/publications/special_report_73_china-russia_cooperation_sep2018.pdf)>.

<sup>86</sup> Of particular note, Beijing and Moscow have been careful not to use the word *ally* in regard to each other until relatively recently. Russia began using it quite casually, but China has not gone along. Beijing continues to avoid the term at an official level, preferring official wording about an “all-encompassing partnership and strategic interaction.” See Vasily Kashin, “Tacit Alliance: Russia and China Take Military Partnership to a New Level,” Carnegie Moscow Center, October 22, 2019, available at <<https://carnegie.ru/commentary/80136>>.

<sup>87</sup> Colum Lynch and Robbie Gramer, “U.S. and China Turn Coronavirus into a Geopolitical Football,” *Foreign Policy*, March 11, 2020, available at <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/11/coronavirus-geopolitics-china-united-states-trump-administration-competing-global-health-response/>>.

<sup>88</sup> For a brief review of contemporary Great Power competition in space—a topic not addressed in great detail in this volume—see the paragraph in chapter 1.

<sup>89</sup> For greater detail, see Justin Sherman, “How the Internet Is Taking Center Stage in Great Power Competition,” *New America*, February 7, 2019, available at <<https://www.newamerica.org/weekly/edition-235/internet-great-power-world-order-china/>>. Also see chapter 6 in this volume.