

Field artillery cannoneer with 3rd Battalion, 12th Marines, 3rd Marine Division, emplaces M777A2 Howitzer during Artillery Relocation Training Program 21.1, at Combined Arms Training Center, Camp Fuji, Japan, April 26, 2021 (U.S. Marine Corps/ Michael Jefferson Estillomo)



The New Era of Great Power Competition and the Biden Administration

Emerging Patterns and Principles

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The administration of President Joseph Biden began in early 2021 amid daunting domestic challenges and an evolving era of Great Power competition (GPC). This era—

emerging since 2008, evident since 2014, and on full display since 2017—features a three-state GPC where the United States, China, and Russia joust for international status and power, and

where the trajectory of relative power from a long-dominant America to either rival remains incomplete and far from certain.¹ Russia and China now compete openly with the United States and often one another. In the case of Vladimir Putin's Russia, its contemporary power capabilities are mainly reimagined, repurposed military and reenabled propaganda implements from the days of the Soviet Union rather than anything new.² In the case of China, truly historic economic growth is catalyzing new wealth and imagination, generating an array of power capabilities that enable broad competition with the United States and growing influence with other states.³

Several recent articles in *Joint Force Quarterly* have explored the war planning, operational, and tactical implications of GPC for elements of the U.S. military.⁴ Moreover, a Secretary of Defense National Security Essay award winner published in *JFQ* 99 (4th Quarter 2020) sketches four strategic objectives for the budding competition with China.⁵ These articles took *the fact* of GPC as a jumping-off point for analysis—a worthy approach. An alternative starting point considers the critical dynamics of contemporary Great Power competition framed against historical GPC patterns, principles, and implications.

This article proceeds from that starting point. It offers a collection of observations about the evolving new era of Great Power competition that extend and expand on the insights about past and contemporary GPC found in *Strategic Assessment 2020: Into a New Era of Great Power Competition* (NDU Press, 2020).⁶ These extended observations include an assessment of the Biden administration's emerging approach to geostrategic competition among the three contemporary Great Powers, and particularly with China. The article frequently provides readers with note references from *Strategic Assessment 2020* that provide richer detail about the analysis and conclusions found throughout that edited volume.

The article situates major contemporary GPC dynamics in the context of

past periods of multilateral Great Power rivalry. It addresses the question of whether ongoing Great Power transition must result in direct military clash and analyzes the prospects for GPC to allow for patterns of collaboration and cooperation to develop.

The article then evaluates the trajectory of American strategic thinking about Great Power competition from the Trump into the Biden administrations. It concludes that the latter's early 2021 plans retain the former's national security strategy diagnosis that the geostrategic environment is now one of GPC, but with a different policy approach for American success therein. The final section summarizes and applies four historic GPC principles critical to Biden administration success in the competitive Great Power dyad with China:

- firmness with flexibility
- partnerships, alliances, and alternative geometries
- leaders vs. peoples and the poison of mass denigration
- playing for time.

The article concludes with a view that emerging Biden administration policy plans for Great Power competition generally align—and especially in its focus on the Sino-American competitive dyad—with the historical best practices for a multipolar GPC era, noting that the challenge now lies in the execution of the new administration's strategic approach.

Essential Outlines

Contemporary GPC is unique, but not unprecedented. Multipolar Great Power competitions have occurred throughout modern history, and frequently during the past 500 years.⁷ Each of these past eras contributes important insights about the dynamics of contemporary GPC. At the same time, contemporary dynamics exert their own pull on the choices and risks faced by the modern Great Powers: the United States, China, and Russia.⁸ These factors include but are not limited to the impact of modern economic advancements, the importance of new technologies as means of competition, and the influence of war-

fighting risks on contemporary societies.⁹ Finally, modern Great Power competition already is changing the major patterns of geostrategic interaction.

Essential Elements. The presence of three contemporary Great Powers makes today's international system a multipolar one. The United States stands atop the triumvirate, with China a rising competitor and Russia vying for top-level prestige while facing clear signs of decline. In the aggregate, the evolving strategic aims of China and Russia are incompatible with those established by American power in the post-World War II era; this has produced the return of a historically dominant pattern of Great Power competition. China is the Great Power best poised to displace America from its long-dominant power position.¹⁰ As Secretary of State Antony Blinken put it in his early March 2021 foreign policy speech:

*The challenge posed by China is different. China is the only country with the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to seriously challenge the stable and open international system—all the rules, values, and relationships that make the world work the way we want it to, because it ultimately serves the interests and reflects the values of the American people.*¹¹

Although China does not have a roadmap for global dominance as some Western analysts have wrongly asserted, Beijing has a proactive perspective on what a new global order might look like, one loosely captured in its concept of a “community of common destiny.”¹² While a net power comparison between the United States and China indicates that its power transition timeline is longer than some now fear, the Sino-American competitive dyad is likely to be the dominant Great Power rivalry into the future.¹³

Russia is an urgent, but transient, security risk for the United States and China with the potential to do enormous military damage to the world if miscalculation leads to military clash.¹⁴ Putin's Russia practices a reactive, disruptive

Map. First and Second Island Chains



Source: *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2012).

strategy aimed to pacify its immediate borders (a loosely formed “Eurasia focus”) and to question contemporary international institutions and processes that

it perceives as a threat to the power of President Putin and his kleptocrat-dominated illiberal democracy.¹⁵ Unlike its predecessor, the Soviet Union, with its

positivist strategic aim of promulgating global communism, contemporary Russia is a Great Power competitor without a viable vision for a truly global world

order or the necessary power to generate one.¹⁶ China and Russia may engage in tactical entente to erode American power, frustrate U.S. actions and preferred institutions, and question norms and rules they deem threatening. However, their long-term interests diverge too much for a durable partnership and Washington must not misunderstand their tactical cooperation against the United States on specific issues as some form of deeper, durable anti-American strategic alliance.¹⁷

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

The United States and China have primary interests in the Indo-Pacific region that conflict. The importance of those interests to both countries makes the region a central venue for Great Power competition. The U.S. Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision is not compatible with China's aspirations for increasing control within its First Island Chain and wider Chinese regional aims sometimes espoused as a community of common destiny.¹⁸ Here, the Sino-American competition could turn toward confrontation or a military clash if careful diplomacy is not exercised.¹⁹

China has economic dominance in markets and investment across most of the Indo-Pacific region. It also has eroded the U.S. military advantage in potential locations of military confrontation near its shores and inside the First Island Chain.²⁰ The United States retains an overall advantage in military technology and power projection across the wider Indo-Pacific, commercial financial dominance, and a resonant ideology and ability to communicate it, along with a regional political and military alliance structure unmatched by China.²¹

Russia has a primary interest in Europe, with special sensitivity to sovereignty at its near abroad, including the former Soviet Union provinces. American and European diplomacy will

remain challenged to stanch Russian misadventures without generating overt confrontation or clash.²² While Europeans mistrust Russia generally, their perception of Russia as a security threat varies greatly. Europe alone cannot defend member states from Russia. Should the United States move to depart the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Europe may intensify accommodation with Russia, and even with China.²³

Two nontraditional competitive venues, space and cyberspace, are those where all three Great Powers have primary strategic interests engaged and growing.²⁴ There is high risk that intensifying competition in space could lead to greater confrontation there. Agreement on some viable rules and norms for collaborative use and cooperative actions in space could reduce the growing risks of confrontation and miscalculation leading to clash. Likewise, the absence of cooperative rules and norms in cyberspace has contributed to a darkening turn toward a confrontational dynamic.

Relevant History and Contemporary Dynamics. The contemporary era is a multipolar one characterized by heightened competition between more than two Great Powers. This makes it like most eras of GPC over the past 500 years, but distinct from the most recent period of Great Power competition: a bipolar Great Power rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union that played out over a 45-year Cold War. In past multipolar Great Power competitions, rivalrous dyads ebbed and flowed. These dyads normally involved a rising power and a dominant one, raising the strategic question about the inevitability of relative power decline by the dominant state and a power transition between them. Great Power transition challenges rising states with the dilemma of how to assert their relative power gains without provoking outright clash with the dominant state. Transition also confronts the dominant, but relatively declining, state with the vexing question of whether its rising challenger can be accommodated in a manner that avoids destructive military clash and an unacceptable change in the status quo. These transitions play out over decades and centuries, not years.²⁵

Although three-quarters of Great Power transitions since 1500 have featured a destructive period of war between the contestants, this outcome is not foreordained.²⁶ Great Power competitors joined in a relative power transition can culminate their interactions with accommodation or acquiescence short of war. But the deck is stacked against such a benign endstate. Peaceful Great Power transition outcomes require hard work and astute leadership. When one or both sides in a relative power transition dyad recognize a shift in the relative alignment of economic and military power moving decisively against it, it is much more inclined to risk a preemptive conflict than when it perceives a stable power status quo. For the most part, the United States and Soviet Union perceived a relatively stable power balance during the Cold War, and that intense bipolar era of Great Power competition ended peacefully. The evolving Sino-American competitive dyad features an obvious power transition with worries, jealousies, and recriminations between the two reminiscent of past Great Power transition rivalries that culminated in Great Power war.

Too often, Great Power leaders misperceive relative power, eschewing detailed, empirical assessments of power to inform decisionmaking and strategic planning. Even when accurate assessments of relative decline or vulnerability are made, domestic or bureaucratic interests may retard the agile adaptation necessary to mitigate risks of Great Power war.²⁷ Thus, success in Great Power competition requires extraordinary political leadership in both international statecraft and generating domestic renewal and adaptation.

The Sino-American competitive dyad is likely to be a dominant Great Power rivalry well into the future.²⁸ It is the modern competitive dyad most fraught with the dangerous dynamics of Great Power transition, although any misstep leading to accidental war with Russia would be enormously destructive and consequential, especially if Russia escalated to a nuclear weapons threat or use in order to end a conventional conflict. While some Western pundits stoke fears



Sailors chart course of delivered ordnance for Naval Surface Fire Support during exercise Talisman Sabre 21, Coral Sea, July 18, 2021 (U.S. Navy/Daniel Serianni)

of an imminent and disastrous power shift in favor of China on the horizon, a net power comparison between the United States and China indicates that the power transition timeline is longer than some now fear.²⁹ Properly understood, this elongated timeline affords China and the United States time to better appreciate the risks of unbridled rivalry and seek a path of modulated competition with elements of confrontation and collaboration underpinning the search for mutually acceptable strategic outcomes.

The Biden Administration

The Trump administration was the first in Washington to fully acknowledge the end of America’s “unipolar moment” after the Cold War and that the world had entered a new era of Great Power competition.³⁰ Its December 2017 National Security Strategy (NSS) jettisoned the legacy American foreign policy premise of engagement, enlarge-

ment, and cooperation with all states of the world—an approach that had dominated American thinking since the 1991 end of the Cold War and over a two-and-a-half decade period of unrivaled U.S. military and economic power.³¹ In many ways, the Trump national security team fully acknowledged what had been increasingly obvious in the period from 2008 to 2015: there was a de facto competition ongoing between the United States, China, and Russia whether Washington admitted it or not. The Trump administration’s 2017 NSS—followed by the Department of Defense National Defense Strategy of 2018—moved American strategic thinking about interstate relations and international systems into one of fully acknowledged Great Power competition.³²

Taking the stage in January 2021, the Biden administration did not have to agree with its predecessor’s geostrategic

diagnosis or approach. The Trump administration’s new national security framework had been accompanied by a lot of public criticism of previous American foreign policy and security thinking, especially the Barack Obama administration’s approach toward China while Joe Biden had been the Vice President with a large foreign policy profile.³³ Some analysts thought it possible that the new administration might choose to steer away from both the Trump administration description of the international security environment and its policies for securing American interests in that environment.³⁴ But key members of candidate Biden’s foreign policy team—including those who were prominent administration officials under President Obama such as Jake Sullivan and Kurt Campbell—signaled that the Biden administration largely agreed with the Trump administration’s diagnosis of the new international environment, although

not with the manner in which the Trump team pursued policies for it. In late 2019, Sullivan and Campbell wrote of the Sino-American relationship in terms that mirrored the Trump administration's diagnosis: "Historically, the [United States] has sought to cooperate first and compete second with China. Beijing, meanwhile, has become quite comfortable competing first and cooperating second . . . this must reverse."³⁵

At the same time, they also wrote that Sino-American competition could be firm and competitive but with less impetus toward conflict and confrontation with Beijing than during the Trump years: "Despite the many divides between the two countries, each will need to be prepared to live with the other as a major power . . . competition [cannot] force [China's] capitulation or even collapse . . . instead competition must seek coexistence on terms favorable to U.S. interests and values."³⁶

In late 2020, the President-elect named Jake Sullivan as the new administration's National Security Advisor and Kurt Campbell to become the National Security Council Senior Advisor for the Indo-Pacific region. Biden also named former Obama administration Deputy Secretary of State and longtime close Biden foreign policy advisor Antony Blinken as his nominee for Secretary of State. Together, these three men led the rapid promulgation of a Biden foreign policy approach and interim national security strategy. They rolled out both on March 3, 2021. In a speech titled "A Foreign Policy for the American People," Secretary Blinken stipulated eight Biden administration priorities for American foreign policy and diplomacy in support of U.S. national security in a new era. Blinken began by acknowledging the change in strategic environment since the Obama administration, stating:

Yes, many of us serving in the Biden administration also proudly served President Obama—including President Biden. And we did a great deal of good work to restore America's leadership in the world. . . . Our foreign policy fit the moment, as any good strategy should.

But this is a different time, so our strategy and approach are different. We're not simply picking up where we left off, as if the past four years didn't happen. We're looking at the world with fresh eyes.³⁷

The Secretary of State then highlighted three of the eight foreign policy priorities as vital for American success in the evolving era of Great Power competition: revitalize ties with American allies and partners, secure U.S. leadership in technology, and manage the challenging relationship with China.³⁸ Blinken wove these three priorities together in a way that affirmed Biden administration agreement with the Trump 2017 NSS diagnosis of a world enmeshed in Great Power competition but with a different set of policy priorities for competition than those pursued during the Trump administration:

China is the only country with the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to seriously challenge the stable and open international system—all the rules, values, and relationships that make the world work the way we want it to, because it ultimately serves the interests and reflects the values of the American people.

That requires working with allies and partners, not denigrating them, because our combined weight is much harder for China to ignore. It requires engaging in diplomacy and in international organizations, because where we have pulled back, China has filled in. It requires standing up for our values when human rights are abused in Xinjiang or when democracy is trampled in Hong Kong, because if we don't, China will act with even greater impunity. And it means investing in American workers, companies, and technologies, and insisting on a level playing field, because when we do, we can out-compete anyone.³⁹

Later, on the afternoon of March 3, 2021, the Biden National Security Council released online its Interim National Security Strategic Guidance (INSSG), which reflected the eight priorities announced by Secretary Blinken that morning. It also affirmed a

Biden administration strategic approach anchored in acceptance that changing relative power and interests among the United States, China, and Russia placed Washington in an era of Great Power competition with two strategic rivals:

We must also contend with the reality that the distribution of power across the world is changing, creating new threats. China, in particular, has rapidly become more assertive. It is the only competitor potentially capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to mount a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system. Russia remains determined to enhance its global influence and play a disruptive role on the world stage. Both Beijing and Moscow have invested heavily in efforts meant to check U.S. strengths and prevent us from defending our interests and allies around the world.⁴⁰

The INSSG went on to promise American strategic focus on collective action with fellow democratic states to assure a favorable international power distribution that defends U.S. strengths and safeguards American friends and partners, sustains the liberal and open international order while addressing its flaws, and secures American leadership in the ongoing technological revolutions.⁴¹

The cross-threaded themes found in "A Foreign Policy for the American People" and the INSSG established a U.S. view that the fundamentally changed nature of the international system—one of GPC—would remain for the coming 4 years. The Biden administration would not go back on the Trump diagnosis of a new era of Great Power competition. However, the Biden administration would end the Trump administration's "America first" policies for GPC that had often resulted in "America alone," instead pursuing a vigorous program of competition with China and Russia, working closely with allies and partners, and with specific attention to reinvigorating American competitiveness and the attractiveness of American partnership.

With continuity in geostrategic diagnosis but an altered framework for policy approaches, the Biden administration affirmed that the United States is engaged in an evolving geostrategic era of multipolar Great Power competition. The Biden administration also appears to understand the unique imperatives associated with the timelines and the multifaceted nature of Sino-American GPC. As stated by Secretary Blinken in March 2021, “Our relationship with China will be competitive when it should be, collaborative when it can be, and adversarial when it must be. The common denominator is the need to engage China from a position of strength.”⁴²

The U.S.-China Competitive Dyad and the Important Role of Alliances and Partnerships

An America that competes smartly with China in an era of multipolar Great Power competition must understand both the value of time and where it can leverage its major advantages. The United States retains a commanding advantage in military power, although not to the degree it had 20 years ago.⁴³ But its global military advantages can be offset if China (or Russia) is able to pick favorable physical and political ground for a short, decisive military conflict.⁴⁴ The Biden administration must acknowledge this and compensate for it. America’s ideology resonates well globally and especially in the Indo-Pacific.⁴⁵ Similarly, its ability to promulgate information and sustain support remains superior to China’s, despite Beijing’s serious efforts to articulate and reinforce a clear global message—a message often undercut by the fact that it features Chinese Communist Party (CCP) talking points inconsistent with Chinese actions at home and abroad.⁴⁶ China is upping its efforts to use political and diplomatic tools to undercut U.S. alliances and partnerships internationally and especially in the Indo-Pacific region, but Washington retains strong ties and bonds established over decades that are not easily destroyed.⁴⁷ At the same time, China has significant economic advantages over the United

States, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. Beijing can mobilize direct trade and investment resources and provide countries with valued opportunities for growth that the United States cannot alone match.⁴⁸

America’s relative advantages in ideas, information dissemination, political and military alliances, and conventional military power when applied away from regions of local Chinese advantage inform where the United States can build on strength. Yet American weaknesses in relative economic strength compared to China or the conventional military capabilities to defend allies and partners near China informs America about how it must proceed for competitive success. The United States will succeed in competition with China over time by working with friends and partners and avoiding the strategic error of posing stark, binary choices to would-be partners and friends.

Four Competitive Principles for the Biden Administration

A study of historic Great Power dyadic rivals offers several principles that can enable effective American competition with China while minimizing the prospect of Great Power transition collapsing into Great Power war.⁴⁹ Four of these historical principles stand out: firmness with flexibility; partnerships, alliances, and alternative geometries; leaders vs. peoples and the poison of mass denigration; and playing for time.

Firmness with Flexibility. First, to be successful the dominant Great Power must demonstrate firmness with flexibility. It must clearly signal the strategic aims it will defend at all costs and then offer the prospect of dialogue on those it may be willing to negotiate. While firm on its nonnegotiable aims, it should be flexible in finding issues and venues where win-win outcomes are possible. For example, at the turn of the 19th century, the United Kingdom (UK) accepted American primacy in the western Atlantic as a better path to sustaining high seas primacy on vital routes for its Middle Eastern and Asian colonies—and preferable to naval confrontation in recognition of growing American power. At the same

time, the rising United States came to accept the once-abhorrent British monarchy in recognition of growing political enfranchisement for a great number of UK citizens.⁵⁰ Is there such trade room today for the United States and China to agree on rules for collaboration in space and cyberspace while at the same time negotiating over reduced CCP domestic economic and human rights constraints?

Flexibility must be paired with firm resolve. Strong security arrangements, backed by formidable U.S. military power, might harden feelings of antagonisms and suspicion, but they are indispensable to preserving the peace with China.⁵¹ If the CCP expects resistance from the United States and several mid-sized U.S. security partners, it is unlikely to instigate a fight for regional hegemony in the near term.⁵² There is a discernible degree of caution in China’s behavior that is wary of demonstrated strength and exploits perceived weakness.⁵³ The Biden administration and its Indo-Pacific partners must stand firm in resistance to China’s illegal maritime claims by demonstrating the will to operate in international waters and airspace with Freedom of Navigation Operations and other joint activities. They also must stand firm with Japan on disputed islands. At the same time, the United States must demonstrate flexibility and adaptability in defense activities within the First Island Chain. It should proceed with a mobile and unpredictable basing posture for American forces. Washington also should work with Taiwan on development of weapons and tactics for self-defense that emphasize the advantages of smaller, smarter, and cheaper.⁵⁴ This kind of flexibility is not the same as ceding de facto spheres of influence to China with the First Island Chain or elsewhere in the Pacific.⁵⁵ Instead, it is an acknowledgment that basic premises about sticking with allies and partners can remain firm even as tactics and techniques adapt.

The United States also can firmly support democratic institutions, individual liberties, and human rights in its alliances and in its interactions with China while demonstrating flexibility in pursuing aspirations for Chinese political



Gunner's Mate Seaman stands optical sighting system watch in combat information center as guided-missile destroyer USS *Mustin* conducts routine operations in Taiwan Strait, August 18, 2020 (U.S. Navy/Cody Beam)

reform. After first defending allies and partners from encroachment of Chinese authoritarian tendencies, America can demonstrate flexibility and patience in modeling patterns of individual liberty, freedom of information, and political participation to the people of China. During the Cold War, U.S. efforts to strengthen noncommunist elements within the Soviet bloc often met frustration in the near term. Western radio transmissions were blocked and censored, humanitarian assistance was refused, greater transit and tourism opportunities were blunted, and people-to-people programs declined. But over the long term—and especially after the Helsinki Accords of 1975—these activities gave hope to those laboring for a freer future behind Moscow's Iron Curtain. American support for democracy and liberty in regions around the world during the 1970s and 1980s made the global ideological climate steadily

less friendly to the Soviet Union's repressive regime.⁵⁶ This kind of a Cold War competitive mindset is applicable for competition with China today and must be melded with modern, collective approaches that portray Chinese political and ideological representations as inappropriate. Now, as then, a large amount of America's appeal is the power of an uncensored world.⁵⁷

Partnerships, Alliances, and Alternative Geometries. History demonstrates that the dominant Great Power must look to build and maintain durable, reciprocal interstate alliances that provide would-be partners with alternatives to the either-or choices posed by a hard-charging rival.⁵⁸ Great Britain was right to seek strategic partnerships and allies in its rivalry with Napoleonic France, parlaying these alliances into first containment of the threat and later its defeat. Napoleon took a less collaborative and ultimately

failed approach of largely relying on territorial conquest and installation of family members in positions of political power to expand French national power and aspects of the French Revolution.⁵⁹

Today, the United States has a far greater base for building economic and military partnerships than any Great Power in modern history. It also confronts a rising Great Power in China with little experience or inclination in this area. The United States has invested in critical global alliances and partnerships over the years for precisely this kind of moment.

The Biden administration has an enormous opportunity to reframe longstanding American alliances and to construct alternative economic, diplomatic, and political "geometries" with an array of partners to give them alternatives to Chinese enticements and blandishments. The principles laid out in the administration's "A Foreign Policy



Special address by Vladimir Putin, as part of Davos Agenda and chaired by Klaus Schwab, on January 24, 2021, in Geneva, Switzerland (World Economic Forum/Pascal Bitz)

for the American People” and the INSSG indicate that the Biden team understands this.⁶⁰ But the administration has its work cut out. Many of America’s eager partners are today apprehensive about the recent unpredictability of U.S. foreign policy conduct. They want and value American partnership but have been in a state of deep worry for much of the past 5 years. They want a United States that views commitment to rules-based international order and institutions to be less like self-imposed shackles and more like a truly competitive advantage.⁶¹ To be fully competitive with China, American policy must overcome such partner apprehension and practice a competitive foreign policy that views alliances as assets to be invested in rather than costs to be cut.⁶²

Leaders vs. Peoples and the Poison of Mass Denigration. Third, successful Great Power competition, short of direct military clash, is extremely unlikely

if the rivals descend into a poisonous, open, and reciprocal denigration of each other’s people. The choice to criticize the government of a rival state while distinguishing it from the people is not as risky—although a tightrope must be walked to maintain the difference. Once the British and Imperial German press went after the character of the other’s societies, the march toward World War I accelerated.⁶³ So, too, World War II in the Pacific loomed ominously once the United States and Tojo’s Japan devolved to mutual societal recrimination played out in newspapers and journal articles.⁶⁴ But the American government’s conscious Cold War effort to distinguish the Soviet Union’s communist party from the Russian people, reserving greatest criticism toward the party and offering outreach to its people, generated a far different result. American leaders are likely to compete best with China while

clearly distinguishing between its pointed criticism of CCP leaders and its feelings for the Chinese people.

The Biden administration can and must do better at this than its predecessor. To reduce the risk—and to channel political and ideological competition appropriately—the United States should focus legitimate criticism on the CCP leadership and its policies in a manner that counters Chinese narratives feeding nationalist xenophobia. The line between criticizing the CCP and Chinese society is a fine one to walk—and will require calibration. But it can be done in a thoughtful way. For example, U.S. and partner scientists’ questioning CCP transparency in practices and statements about research laboratory safety in China as they investigate the origins of COVID-19 as a matter of global health is legitimate and targeted inquiry and criticism.⁶⁵ Publicly labeling COVID-19 as the “Chinese

Virus” or the “Kung Flu,” while insinuating that the CCP is hiding something about lab safety, is not.⁶⁶

A responsible American program of communication should concentrate on countering CCP-driven disinformation.⁶⁷ It also should speak and act publicly in a manner that counters the self-motivated CCP domestic narrative that only the CCP stands between China and chaos.⁶⁸ At the same time, the United States should try to maximize positive interactions and experiences with the Chinese people. The United States and its free-and-open partner states should consider issuing more visas and providing paths to citizenship for more Chinese, with proper security safeguards in place. Chinese who engage with citizens of free countries are the ones who are most likely to question their government’s policies either from abroad or when they return home. In this approach the United States would do what it did with expatriate Russian communities during the Cold War: view Chinese expatriate communities as valuable citizens while discriminating between Ministry of State security agents for expulsion.⁶⁹

Play for Time. Finally, some argue that time works in favor of the rising Great Power in a competitive dyad, putting the dominant Great Power at dire risk if it does not take swift confrontational action while its relative power is high. But this thesis rests on at least two dubious assumptions: that the rising power’s ascent is likely to be rapid and that the rising power will continue to ascend in a mainly linear fashion and not confront problems or challenges on the way. In the present moment, the critical factors confronting China at home and abroad make time work in favor of the United States.⁷⁰

First, America has its own domestic inconsistencies and challenges, many of which were on prominent display during a very turbulent 2020, but these pale in comparison to those certain to play out within China over the coming couple of decades. The CCP faces multifaceted challenges to safeguard both its political position and an unending Chinese economic rise that seems critical to CCP

legitimacy. These multifaceted challenges include rampant environmental degradation, rising income inequalities, a rapidly aging and less productive population, chronic worry about abuses of political power, widespread corruption, restive domestic regions including Tibet, Xingxang, and Mongolia, and a poor record on human rights.⁷¹ As China’s economy shifts toward more reliance on domestic economic consumption, its economic growth decelerates, and its national debt continues to grow, these many domestic challenges are moving to the fore.⁷²

Second, China faces serious unresolved challenges along its own borders, rendering its ability to dominate the Indo-Pacific region questionable in the near term and pushing off into the future any serious move by Beijing to reorder international norms and institutions along China’s model. China’s neighbors include formidable economic and military powers, such as Japan, South Korea, Australia, and India. Each of them is increasingly apprehensive about China’s strategic ambitions, and they are deepening security ties with each other and the United States in ventures such as the “Quad” in response.⁷³ Beijing’s ham-handed efforts to crush democratic resistance in Hong Kong and nationalism in Taiwan have stiffened regional headwinds for Chinese messaging.⁷⁴

It is unwise for the United States to assume that China will succumb to these challenges, for that could enable complacency and distract vital attention to a serious Great Power rival. At the same time, a U.S. conclusion that China is destined for global dominance—especially in the near term—is both unsupported by the facts and likely to generate strategic overreaction.⁷⁵ China’s economic rise will make it a long-term challenge for the United States to manage rather than one to be conquered or converted.⁷⁶ The United States and China are destined for a lengthy, uneasy coexistence, not decoupling or appeasement.⁷⁷ Thus, as American resilience and regeneration to confront a great challenge emerges anew, a U.S. strategy—one featuring a competitive mindset—that plays for time as China’s contradictions grow seems

best suited for successful contemporary Great Power competition.⁷⁸ The Biden administration’s March 2021 INSSG demonstrates an understanding of these geopolitical realities of contemporary GPC and has presented a new array of policies to meet them:

The most effective way for America to out-compete a more assertive and authoritarian China over the long-term is to invest in our people, our economy, and our democracy. By restoring U.S. credibility and reasserting forward-looking global leadership, we will ensure that America, not China, sets the international agenda, working alongside others to shape new global norms and agreements that advance our interests and reflect our values. By bolstering and defending our unparalleled network of allies and partners, and making smart defense investments, we will also deter Chinese aggression and counter threats to our collective security, prosperity, and democratic way of life.⁷⁹

It remains to be seen how well the Biden administration can put these principles into practice in the face of domestic political headwinds and distracting international challenges.

The Way Forward

Knowing the historic imperatives of Great Power competition and four major principles informing what the United States should do to succeed in a new era of GPC is not the same as knowing how to move forward properly. The Biden administration faces a historic challenge of galvanizing American resolve to compete with other international Great Powers after decades of competitive atrophy.

In today’s new era of multipolar Great Power competition among the United States, China, and Russia, the Sino-American dyad is the rivalry of greatest significance. This contest features an ongoing power transition—always a dangerous dynamic of international politics in modern history. China is clearly growing in relative economic power, but the United States is a dominant state with clear comparative advantages—“high

Sailors from USS *Germantown* signal MH-53 Sea Dragon, attached to Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron 14 (HM-14) Detachment 2A, while conducting Deck Landing Qualifications, East China Sea, June 6, 2021 (U.S. Navy/Yeltsin E. Rodriguez)







EA-18G Growler attached to Shadowhawks of Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 141 launches from flight deck of USS *Ronald Reagan*, South China Sea, June 14, 2021 (U.S. Navy/Quinton Lee)

cards” in its hand—that it can build on to advantage.⁸⁰ Alliance maintenance and cultivation is the most critical card. Firm and flexible confrontation when necessary and collaboration with China where possible is the second. Avoiding a regressive game of reciprocal societal invective is the third. And playing the long game—playing for time—is the fourth.

The December 2017 NSS properly recognized the Russian and Chinese challenges for what they were and formalized what had been a de facto new era of Great Power competition for several prior years. In its first months in office, the Biden administration has accepted the Trump geostrategic diagnosis but offered an altered suite of U.S. foreign policy and national initiatives to meet the challenges of GPC. There is goodness in this overdue bipartisan American recognition of a competitive geostrategic environment. Yet the way forward to successful

competitive policies still could go wrong if America devolves into confrontational hysteria and overreaction against Beijing. Overreaction in Washington could lead to high cards played badly. China’s recent behavior is galvanizing opposition among countries that do not want to be vassal states.⁸¹ A rejuvenating United States, with reframed domestic priorities and renewed focus on well-established and well-treated allies and partners, will have a clear advantage in what is likely to be a drawn-out era of multipolar Great Power competition featuring a rivalrous dyad with China. JFQ

Notes

¹ For an operational definition of a *Great Power* and the criteria met by China, Russia, and the United States today that make them the three modern Great Powers, see Thomas F. Lynch III, “Introduction,” in Thomas F.

Lynch III, ed., *Strategic Assessment 2020: Into a New Era of Great Power Competition* (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 2020), 1–15, available at <<https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2404286/1-introduction/>>.

² For a review of contemporary Russia’s strategic focus and its tools for engaging in Great Power competition (GPC), see Thomas F. Lynch III and Phillip C. Saunders, “Contemporary Great Power Geostrategic Dynamics: Relations and Strategies,” and Thomas F. Lynch III and Phillip C. Saunders, “Contemporary Great Power Geostrategic Dynamics: Competitive Elements and Tool Sets,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 58–67 and 92–100, respectively. These chapters are available at <<https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2404308/3a-contemporary-great-power-geostrategic-dynamics-relations-and-strategies>>; and <<https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2404316/3b-contemporary-great-power-geostrategic-dynamics-competitive-elements-and-tool/>>, respectively.

³ For a review of contemporary China’s strategic focus and its tools for engaging in

GPC, see Lynch and Saunders, “Contemporary Great Power Geostrategic Dynamics: Relations and Strategies,” and Lynch and Saunders, “Contemporary Great Power Geostrategic Dynamics: Competitive Elements and Tool Sets,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 53–57, 59–67, 84–92, 96–100.

⁴ Lauren A. Courchaine, Alexis G. Grynkwich, and Brian D. Courchaine, “Structuring for Competition: Rethinking the Area of Responsibility Concept for Great Power Competition,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 98 (3rd Quarter 2020), 4–9; Lloyd Edwards, “Balancing Competition with Cooperation: A Strategy to Prepare for the Chinese Dream,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 98 (3rd Quarter 2020), 80–87; Brandon J. Archuleta and Jonathan I. Gerson, “Fight Tonight: Reenergizing the Pentagon for Great Power Competition,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 100 (1st Quarter 2021), 81–87.

⁵ Kaleb Redden, “Competition Is What States Make of It: A U.S. Strategy Toward China,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 99 (4th Quarter 2020), 40–56.

⁶ For a detailed listing of these major insights, see “Major Findings on Contemporary Great Power Competition,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, xv–xxvii, available at <<https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2404283/major-findings-on-contemporary-great-power-competition/>>.

⁷ See Thomas F. Lynch III and Frank G. Hoffman, “Past Eras of Great Power Competition: Historical Insights and Implications,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 17–25, available at <<https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2404297/2-past-eras-of-great-power-competition-historical-insights-and-implications/>>.

⁸ See Lynch, “Introduction,” *Strategic Assessment 2020*, for an operational definition of *Great Power* and the criteria met by China, Russia, and the United States today making them the three modern Great Powers.

⁹ This article has insufficient space to effectively address the importance of technological advances emanating mainly from the fourth industrial revolution on modern economic progress and warfighting risks in GPC. For a detailed review of these, consider T.X. Hammes and Diane DiEuliis, “Contemporary Great Power Technological Competitive Factors in the Fourth Industrial Revolution,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 105–117, available at <<https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2404319/4-contemporary-great-power-technological-competitive-factors-in-the-fourth-indu/>>; T.X. Hammes, “Key Technologies and the Revolution of Small, Smart, and Cheap in the Future of Warfare,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 121–137, available at <<https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2404322/5-key-technologies-and->

the-revolution-of-small-smart-and-cheap-in-the-future-of/;>; Thomas F. Lynch III, “Conclusion: Realities, Imperatives, and Principles in a New Era of Great Power Competition,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 319–324, available at <<https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2405118/15-conclusion-realities-imperatives-and-principles-in-a-new-era-of-great-power/>>.

¹⁰ Lynch and Saunders, “Contemporary Great Power Geostrategic Dynamics: Relations and Strategies,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*.

¹¹ Antony J. Blinken, “A Foreign Policy for the American People,” speech, Department of State, Washington, DC, March 3, 2021, available at <<https://www.state.gov/a-foreign-policy-for-the-american-people/>>.

¹² For a conspicuous example of uncorroborated and suspect claims that China has a master plan for global dominance, see Michael Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China’s Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2015). For a more nuanced view of China’s strategic narrative and the range of aspirations inherent in China’s “community of common destiny,” see Lynch and Saunders, “Contemporary Great Power Geostrategic Dynamics: Relations and Strategies,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 53–57. Also see Phillip C. Saunders, “Implications: China in the International System,” in *The Chinese People’s Liberation Army in 2025*, ed. Roy Kamphausen and David Lai (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, July 2015); “China’s Concept of the World Order: Theory and Practice,” *Strategic Survey 2019: The Annual Assessment of Geopolitics* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, October 2019), 27, 390–398; Nadège 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/>>; 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.

¹³ See Aaron L. Friedberg, “Competing with China,” *Survival* 60, no. 3 (2018), 7–64.

¹⁴ This conclusion is based on detailed analysis affirming that Russia clearly is a contemporary Great Power (contrary to those who argue otherwise) because its limited economic and ideological power attributes and potent but declining military, diplomatic, and communications tools make Moscow most capable of achieving foreign policy outcomes in its near-abroad. It also has a nontrivial ability to project power for influence in the Middle East, the Arctic, and cyberspace. But Moscow’s unambiguous relative economic decline along with ideological and political challenges make its Great Power status far from certain in

the mid to long term. Find details in Lynch and Saunders, “Contemporary Great Power Geostrategic Dynamics: Competitive Elements and Tool Sets,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, especially 92–96, 99.

¹⁵ Lynch and Saunders, “Contemporary Great Power Geostrategic Dynamics: Relations and Strategies,” Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 65–67.

¹⁶ For details, see 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, June 20, 2019), available at <<https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/06/20/thirty-years-of-u.s.-policy-toward-russia-can-vicious-circle-be-broken-pub-79323>>.

¹⁷ See “Major Findings on Contemporary Great Power Competition,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, xvii; 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>; 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>>; Robert Kaplan, *The Return of Marco Polo’s World: War, Strategy, and American Interests in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Random House, 2018), 215–218.

¹⁸ For an overview of the key elements of the U.S. Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision from an American perspective, see *A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision* (Washington, DC: Department of State, November 4, 2019), available at <<https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Free-and-Open-Indo-Pacific-4Nov2019.pdf>>. Some Western analysts believe that community of common destiny expresses Beijing’s long-term vision for transforming the international environment to make it compatible with China’s governance model and emergence as a global leader. Others view it as much less deterministic or threatening, assessing China’s main motive as one of sustaining a favorable external environment for China’s economic development in the first two to three decades of the 21st century or a “period of strategic opportunities.” For a comparative evaluation of China’s ambiguous call for a community of common destiny, see 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), available at <<https://tnsr.org/2018/11/xis-vision-for-transforming-global-governance-a-strategic-challenge-for-washington-and-its-allies/>>; Denghua Zhang,

“The Concept of ‘Community of Common Destiny’ in China’s Diplomacy: Meaning, Motives and Implications,” *Asia and the Pacific Policy Studies* 5, no. 2 (March 2018), available at <<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/app5.231>>.

¹⁹ Lynch and Saunders, “Contemporary Great Power Geostrategic Dynamics: Relations and Strategies,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 59–65; Thomas F. Lynch III, James Przystup, and Phillip C. Saunders, “The Indo-Pacific Competitive Space: China’s Vision and the Post-World War II American Order,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 211–213, available at <<https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2404551/9-the-indo-pacific-competitive-space-chinas-vision-and-the-postworld-war-ii-ame/>>.

²⁰ Lynch, Przystup, and Saunders, “The Indo-Pacific Competitive Space,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 204–207.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 197–211.

²² Lynch and Saunders, “Contemporary Great Power Geostrategic Dynamics: Relations and Strategies,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 50–52, 58–59.

²³ Steven Philip Kramer and Irene Kyriakopoulos, “Whither Europe in a New Era of Great Power Competition? Resilient but Troubled,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 262–265, available at <<https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2404614/12-whither-europe-in-a-new-era-of-great-power-competition-resilient-but-troubled/>>.

²⁴ Lynch and Saunders, “Contemporary Great Power Geostrategic Dynamics: Relations and Strategies,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 64–67.

²⁵ Lynch and Hoffman, “Past Eras of Great Power Competition,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 18–20.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 22–25.

²⁷ Aaron Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895–1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 14–17, 286; Lynch and Hoffman, “Past Eras of Great Power Competition,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 36–39.

²⁸ China does not possess and is unlikely to attain sufficient power assets in the coming decade to enable a strategy of remaking the international order in its favor before domestic risk factors collapse Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rule—even if that was its actual strategy. See Lynch and Saunders, “Contemporary Great Power Geostrategic Dynamics: Competitive Elements and Tool Sets,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 97–99. For an opposite view that asserts China possesses a global grand strategy aspiring for leadership of a new tributary system soon to be resourced through a massive effort organized under three overlapping policies, carrying the names “Made in China 2025,” “Belt and Road Initiative,”

and “Military-Civil Fusion,” see H.R. McMaster, “How China Sees the World: And How We Should See China,” *The Atlantic*, May 2020, available at <<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/05/mcmaster-china-strategy/609088/>>.

²⁹ Michael Beckley, “The Power of Nations: Measuring What Matters,” *International Security* 43, no. 2 (Fall 2018), 22–25; Lynch and Saunders, “Contemporary Great Power Geostrategic Dynamics: Competitive Elements and Tool Sets,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 96–97.

³⁰ For a discussion of the unipolar moment and its impact on American post-Cold War strategic thinking, see Charles Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment,” *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 1 (1990), 23–33.

³¹ See Anthony Lake, “From Containment to Enlargement,” remarks, Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies, Washington, DC, September 21, 1993, <<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/lakedoc.html>>.

³² See *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The White House, December 2017), available at <<https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.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>>.

³³ For examples and analysis of such criticisms, see Eliot A. Cohen, “A Reckoning for Obama’s Foreign-Policy Legacy,” *The Atlantic*, May 15, 2018, available at <<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/05/lessons-obama-era-foreign-policy-officials-should-learn-from-trump/560387/>>; Aaron David Miller and Richard Sokolosky, “Trump Isn’t Just Reversing Obama’s Foreign Policies. He’s Making it Impossible for His Successor to Go Back to Them,” *Politico*, April 23, 2019, available at <<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2019/04/23/trump-obama-foreign-policy-226708/>>; Michael Warren, “Trump’s Obama Obsession Drives His Foreign Policy,” CNN, January 8, 2020, available at <<https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/07/politics/trump-obama-obsession-foreign-policy/index.html>>.

³⁴ See John Haltiwanger and Sonam Sheth, “Biden’s Foreign Policy Will Be ‘Day and Night’ from Trump’s But He Faces Massive Challenges, Veteran Diplomats Warn,” *Business Insider*, November 24, 2020, available at <<https://www.businessinsider.com/biden-foreign-policy-will-mitigate-trump-damage-but-have-challenges-2020-11>>; Kylie Atwood and Nicole Gauoette, “How Biden Plans to Undo Trump’s ‘America First’ Foreign Policy

and Return U.S. to World Stage,” CNN, October 30, 2020, available at <<https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/31/politics/biden-foreign-policy-plans/index.html>>.

³⁵ Kurt M. Campbell and Jake Sullivan, “Competition Without Catastrophe: How America Can Both Challenge and Coexist with China,” *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2019), available at <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/competition-with-china-without-catastrophe>>.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Blinken, “A Foreign Policy for the American People.”

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance* (Washington, DC: The White House, March 2021), 7–8, available at <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/03/interim-national-security-strategic-guidance/>>.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 7–22.

⁴² Blinken, “A Foreign Policy for the American People.”

⁴³ Lynch and Saunders, “Contemporary Great Power Geostrategic Dynamics: Competitive Elements and Tool Sets,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 80–81, 86–88, 93–94, 97–99.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁴⁵ Lynch and Saunders, “Contemporary Great Power Geostrategic Dynamics: Relations and Strategies,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 82, 84; Lynch, Przystup, and Saunders, “The Indo-Pacific Competitive Space,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 200–202.

⁴⁶ Lynch, Przystup, and Saunders, “The Indo-Pacific Competitive Space,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 202–204.

⁴⁷ Lynch and Saunders, “Contemporary Great Power Geostrategic Dynamics: Relations and Strategies,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 89–91.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 84–86; Lynch, Przystup, and Saunders, “The Indo-Pacific Competitive Space,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 207–211.

⁴⁹ For an overview of these main principles based upon comparative historical case studies, see Lynch and Hoffman, “Past Eras of Great Power Competition,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 36–38.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ 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/>>.

⁵² Many Chinese leaders cannot believe that the Obama administration did not react more strongly to the 2010 seizure of Scarborough Shoal and 2014 arming of it despite Chairman Xi Jinping’s promise to Obama that year that China had no intention of doing so. These

Chinese officials indicate that a firm U.S. and allied response can moderate intemperate Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific region. See Evan Osnos, “The Future of America’s Contest with China,” *The New Yorker*, January 6, 2020, available at <<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/01/13/the-future-of-americas-contest-with-china>>.

⁵³ Denny Roy, “China Won’t Achieve Regional Hegemony,” *The Washington Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2020), 105–106.

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⁵⁶ Edel and Brands, “The Real Origins of the U.S.-China Cold War.”

⁵⁷ Osnos, “The Future of America’s Contest with China.”

⁵⁸ Choosing proper allies also was a competitive mindset success for the United States during the Cold War. See Stephen M. Walt, “Yesterday’s Cold War Shows How to Beat China Today,” *Foreign Policy*, July 29, 2019, available at <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/07/29/yesterdays-cold-war-shows-how-to-beat-china-today/>>.

⁵⁹ Michael Broers, “Pride and Prejudice: The Napoleonic Empire Through the Eyes of Its Rulers,” in *Napoleon’s Empire: European Politics in Global Perspective*, ed. Ute Planert (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 307–317; Michael V. Leggiere, “Enduring Strategic Rivalries: Great Britain vs. France During the French Wars (1792–1815),” in *Great Strategic Rivalries: From the Classical World to the Cold War*, ed. James Lacey (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 289–390.

⁶⁰ See Blinken, “A Foreign Policy for the American People”; *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance*.

⁶¹ “Don’t Be Fooled by the Trade Deal Between America and China,” *The Economist*, January 2, 2020, available at <<https://www.economist.com/leaders/2020/01/02/dont-be-fooled-by-the-trade-deal-between-america-and-china>>.

⁶² Campbell and Sullivan, “Competition Without Catastrophe,” 110.

⁶³ Lynch and Hoffman, “Past Eras of Great

Power Competition,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 29.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 34, 37.

⁶⁵ See the ongoing zoological debate about theories of accidental release of COVID-19 from a laboratory in China and the continuing frustration by scientists and investigators that important information is being shrouded by the Chinese government, in Jesse D. Blum et al., “Investigate the Origins of COVID-19,” *Science* 372, no. 6543 (May 14, 2021), available at <<https://science.sciencemag.org/content/372/6543/694.1>>.

⁶⁶ Ravi Chandra, “Calling COVID-19 a ‘Chinese Virus’ or ‘Kung Flu’ Is Racist,” *Psychology Today*, March 18, 2020, available at <<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-pacific-heart/202003/calling-covid-19-chinese-virus-or-kung-flu-is-racist>>.

⁶⁷ For details on the organizations involved in international propaganda and influence activities, see appendix I in Larry Diamond and Orville Schell, eds., *China’s Influence & American Interests: Promoting Constructive Vigilance* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2019), 133–141. Some former policymakers specifically focus on the Chinese Ministry of State Security, the United Front Work Department, and the Chinese Students and Scholars Association as ones for attention to counter CCP-driven propaganda. See H.R. McMaster, “How China Sees the World.”

⁶⁸ Osnos, “The Future of America’s Contest with China.”

⁶⁹ Proper “safeguards” for Chinese student, teacher, and research visas should include tight limitations on Confucius Institutes in the United States to eliminate their revealed role in espionage, monitoring, and thought-policing on behalf of the CCP. The ideas for an American strategy valuing the Chinese people, while holding the CCP to account, include those found in McMaster, “How China Sees the World.”

⁷⁰ Strategic patience during the Cold War also was an American competitive mindset virtue. See Walt, “Yesterday’s Cold War Shows How to Beat China Today.”

⁷¹ See Minxin Pei, “China’s Coming Upheaval,” *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2020); “Revised Demographic Forecasts for China: Key Takeaways,” *Economist*, July 2, 2019; William H. Overholt, *China’s Crisis of Success* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

⁷² See William H. Overholt, “The West Is Getting China Wrong,” *East Asia Forum*, August 11, 2018, available at <<https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/08/11/the-west-is-getting-china-wrong/>>; Yasheng Huang, “China Has a Big Economic Problem and It Isn’t the Trade War,” *New York Times*, January 17, 2020.

⁷³ See Derek Grossman, “The Quad Is Poised to Become Openly Anti-China Soon,” RAND blog, July 28, 2020, available at

<<https://www.rand.org/blog/2020/07/the-quad-is-poised-to-become-openly-anti-china-soon.html>>; James Holmes, “Can the Quad Transform Into an Alliance to Contain China?” *The National Interest*, March 21, 2021, available at <<https://nationalinterest.org/feature/can-quad-transform-alliance-contain-china-180786?page=0%2C1>>; “Why India Must Exercise the Quad Option,” *The Times of India* (Mumbai), October 15, 2020, available at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/78676596.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst>.

⁷⁴ Ali Wyne, “How to Think About Potentially Decoupling from China,” *The Washington Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (2020), 41–64.

⁷⁵ For similar conclusions, see Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “Power and Interdependence with China,” *The Washington Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (2020), 13; Wyne, “How to Think About Potentially Decoupling from China,” 50–52.

⁷⁶ Osnos, “The Future of America’s Contest with China”; Martin Wolf, “The Looking 100-Year U.S.-China Conflict,” *Financial Times*, June 4, 2019.

⁷⁷ Osnos, “The Future of America’s Contest with China.”

⁷⁸ For a detailed assessment of options for a U.S. strategic mindset for competition with China, see Frank G. Hoffman, “U.S. Strategies for Competing Against China,” in Lynch, *Strategic Assessment 2020*, 289–308, available at <<https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2404635/14-us-strategies-for-competing-against-china/>>. For an overview of some of the Biden administration planned initiatives to renew and improve American productivity and poise it for vigorous, successful technological and strategic competition with China into the future, see *Fact Sheet: The American Jobs Plan* (Washington, DC: The White House, March 31, 2021), available at <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/31/fact-sheet-the-american-jobs-plan/>>.

⁷⁹ *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance*, 20.

⁸⁰ See Nye, “Power and Interdependence with China,” 16.

⁸¹ McMaster, “How China Sees the World.”