

There are common conclusions between this engaging pair of authors. Both suggest that the introduction of autonomous systems is unlikely to change the nature of war. It is axiomatic to the U.S. military that war's essential nature is immutable, while the character of warfare (how war is conducted) is always changing. Scharre notes that the increased reliance on drones, uncrewed systems, and swarms reduces the role of humans at some levels of war. Yet humans will still initiate war, set out the policy aims, develop strategies, employ machines, make decisions, and even fight. Not surprisingly, Payne agrees. He does not envision the human element of war disappearing any time soon. "Even if machines make more decisions at the tactical level," Payne concludes, "war will remain something that is done by and to humans" (84).

Four Battlegrounds and *I, Warbot* are each outstanding, but together they offer complementary insights. Both authors raise the kind of hard questions and uncomfortable issues that we must face as this technology evolves. Both books will improve readers' AI literacy and deepen their critical thinking about how we approach AI in our respective domains. Accordingly, both books are highly recommended to the joint community and the larger strategic studies field on both sides of the Atlantic. The introduction of AI-enabled support has huge potential benefits to training for war; in the conduct of warfighting; and many support functions including intelligence, logistics, and cyber security. But real progress will be made only by seeking to employ AI responsibly, with rigorous attention to validation, and a healthy appreciation for how brittle the technology is today. This pair of books offers a valuable guide to the revolution that will increasingly define our economies and security in the coming years. JFQ

Frank G. Hoffman is a Distinguished Research Fellow in the Center for Strategic Research, Institute for National Strategic Studies, at the National Defense University.



America's Great-Power Opportunity: Revitalizing U.S. Foreign Policy to Meet the Challenges of Strategic Competition

By Ali Wyne
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Reviewed by Thomas F. Lynch III

America's *Great-Power Opportunity* is a lucid, thoughtful assessment of the problems and the possibilities with the geostrategic formulation of Great Power competition (GPC). Ali Wyne frames a narrative that captures well the major debates from 2017 through 2022 surrounding whether GPC is a proper framework for understanding America's evolving geostrategic posture and how Washington's global strategy should respond. Wyne adds value to the prolific number of publications on GPC during 2021 and 2022 by recommending that Washington accept the new norm of competitive geopolitics with a positivist rather than a reactive strategic agenda. For Wyne, *America's Great-Power Opportunity* is to move beyond strategic reflexiveness

toward its two Great Power rivals while reaffirming America's global democratic example and evolving the present global order with greater ownership and participation from allies and partners.

Wyne's thrust in *America's Great-Power Opportunity* differentiates between GPC as a description of geostrategic reality and as a policy prescription for American strategy to prevail in such a reality. He comes down generally in favor of the former but deeply worried about the latter.

Although unduly tepid in his determination, Wyne correctly tells us that GPC is an apt descriptor for contemporary global politics, getting much right about today's world order, one that starkly changed over a decade from about 2008 to 2017. Strategic competition between rivalrous powerful states is a norm of human history. The period from 1992 to 2008 was a historic anomaly where preeminent American power dominated state-to-state relations and allowed Washington to alternatively woo or coerce mainly collaborative interstate dynamics. Over time, American power has relatively declined, and rivals Russia and China have grown in stature and assertiveness.

Moscow and Beijing now seek to translate Great Power capabilities in the pursuit of self-interested rules, norms, and procedures that do not align with those established and adhered to by Washington and its partners since World War II. Wyne tells us that this return to a new geopolitical normal is properly captured in the descriptive framework of GPC. Even though he occasionally slips when writing that America remains the lone world superpower, Wyne mostly accepts that the December 2017 National Security Strategy of the United States of America got it right when it advanced GPC as the new geostrategic reality, supplanting over three decades of American strategic focus on engaging the world for the purpose of enlarging the zone of liberal democratic states.

At the same time, Wyne worries that the GPC framework may be a setup for bad American strategy. He states that too many Americans focus on the word *competition* leading to a pair of dangerous

strategic premises: excessive external focus and hyper-reactivity to Great Power rival initiatives and provocation. Indeed, some proponents of GPC have written that proper American strategy must be focused intensely on and react to the moves by China and Russia as though parry-and-thrust competition is an imperative in and of itself. Wyne properly cautions that a more judicious balance for American strategy is necessary:

While Washington will increasingly have to contend with and manage the challenges posed by a resurgent Beijing and a revanchist Moscow, it should not pursue a foreign policy that is driven by or beholden to their actions. It should instead articulate a forward-looking conception of its role in the world, identifying cases where circumscribed competition with China and Russia might further that vision (19).

Wyne also contends appropriately that Cold War analogies for future competitive American geostrategy and foreign policy are misleading. He offers nine critical factors that make them wrong. Among the nine is the fact that the economies of the Cold War superpowers were barely interactive, while the American and Chinese economies are today intertwined to a degree unrivaled in recent human history. So too is Wyne's observation that the Cold War featured binary policy calculation—"I win, you lose"—while today's GPC is multipolar and the power losses by one are not automatic gains for the others. Modern Great Power rivalry is a far more complex and nuanced strategic challenge.

A worthy American competitive strategic framework, Wyne writes, requires a renewal within America paired with humble but persistent leadership of a broad array of like-minded states, capable of resisting Russian or Chinese blandishments or coercion. He argues for Washington first to shore up its own longstanding competitive advantages in technological innovation, finance, and entrepreneurship as a haven for ambitious immigrants and as a beacon of democracy. He calls domestic renewal a precondition for effective GPC, not a mere afterthought. Wyne also points to

America's clear post-World War II advantage in forging alliances and coalitions, observing that proper American Great Power strategy must rejuvenate existing alliances and forge new strategic partnerships. America, Wyne notes, will develop partnerships durable enough to withstand the challenges of long-term rivalry by inviting strategic partners to have a say in updating key elements of the global order, building a system better able to withstand the stresses of globalization while simultaneously blunting the actions of Russia and China that threaten world stability and peace.

As 2023 unfolds, the Biden administration is pursuing much of the agenda prescribed in *America's Great-Power Opportunity*. The Biden October 2022 National Security Strategy largely adopted the Trump administration's framing of GPC as a proper description of the new geostrategic reality. The Biden team also has championed domestic American renewal as a precursor for enhancing and expanding alliances and partnerships around the world that work to secure liberty, freedom, and peace while confronting coercive techniques and tactics practiced from Moscow and Beijing. In this sense, the United States already is approaching contemporary GPC as an opportunity, not just a challenge.

But the road ahead for America in this new era of GPC is far from smooth or certain. Historically, Great Power rivalries last for decades, not years. The costs, burdens, and challenges of day-to-day competition against powerful rivals often acting without moral or ethical constraints will be grinding for Americans. Moreover, the need to strike compromises with unsavory partners and allies will grate on the American polity. The risks from weariness and competition fatigue will be a persistent refrain—one already evident in early 2023 with calls by some vocal politicians to disengage from financial and material support of Ukraine in its just war against invading Great Power neighbor Russia.

Throughout its 246-year history, America's approach to foreign policy and international affairs arguably has been characterized best by University

of Pennsylvania political scientist Walter McDougall in his book *Promised Land, Crusader State* (Houghton Mifflin, 1997)—one of "exceptionalism." McDougall demonstrates that this populist foreign policy framework of exceptionalism has led Americans to a binary strategic approach that either rejects any direct engagement with messy GPC entanglements or pursues crusaderism-as-strategy where Americans engage globally with muscular unilateralism to project U.S. standards and ideals onto other countries. Neither of these traditional alternatives is particularly appropriate for the moment. Both Wyne and the Biden administration appear to understand the need to break from past American foreign policy proclivities, but can Americans be persuaded to come along?

America's Great-Power Opportunity thoughtfully appeals for a more nuanced American understanding of our new era of multi-state GPC and a mature foreign policy approach to it. Logical and appealing, Wyne's call for competitive maturity begs a crucial question: Is such maturity feasible given the American strategic tradition? We all must hope so. JFQ

Thomas F. Lynch III is a Distinguished Research Fellow in the Center for Strategic Research, Institute for National Strategic Studies, at the National Defense University.