Schar School of Policy and Government
CENTER FOR SECURITY POLICY STUDIES
George Mason University

GLOBAL SECURITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Edited by Ali Mammadov

Center For Security Policy Studies, George Mason University

GLOBAL SECURITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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**Curated and edited by Ali Mammadov based on selected writings by CSPS fellows, 2017–2025.*

To the Schar School community,

whose commitment and scholarship inspires this work.

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Foreword by Professor Ellen Laipson, Director, CSPS

It is my pleasure to introduce this special volume of writings by the student Fellows of the Center for Security Policy Studies. The Center is part of the Schar School of Policy and Government, and provides students with diverse opportunities out of the classroom to explore different aspects of security studies and careers in the field. The Center holds crisis simulations twice a year, staff rides to historic battlefields, visits to major national security institutions, a speakers series, and a research forum for works in progress.

The blog series is designed to challenge students to write analytically in short form about critical issues in the field. Readers will see the diverse topics that captured our Fellows' imaginations over the past decade, from an abiding interest in US policy choices and strategic thinking, to the policies of great power competitors, to how technology is changing the threat environment and the nature of conflict, to cross cutting issues of public health, climate and terrorism. I hope that readers will see the serious research capabilities of our students, and the clarity with which they identify the most compelling international security issues and consider possible policy responses.

I am grateful to Ali Mammadov, a PhD student at the Schar School and a Fellow of CSPS. In his capacity as editor of the blog series, he took the initiative to assemble this volume. I am impressed with his dedication and leadership and am especially pleased that this volume is being released on the tenth anniversary of the Center, and of the MA program in International Security.

Professor Ellen Laipson

Director, Center for Security Policy Studies

Director, International Security MA Program

Thinking Clearly in an Unclear World

Introduction by Ali Mammadov, Managing Editor, CSPS

Each era grapples with its own forms of uncertainty. Yet there are junctures in history when ambiguity becomes systemic, when the traditional frameworks of power and diplomacy seem no longer to apply. We are, unmistakably, in such a moment. The architecture of the post-Cold War order is eroding. Strategic alignments have grown fragile. The instruments of statecraft are being redefined in the shadow of technological acceleration and geopolitical disruption. In this climate, clarity of purpose and thought is not merely desirable, it is indispensable.

Periods of profound transition often reveal the need for new paradigms of leadership and analysis. The architects of order, those who perceive patterns within complexity and forge coherence from chaos, do not emerge in moments of calm. They are shaped by uncertainty. They are distinguished not by conformity, but by the capacity to reinterpret reality, to ask essential questions, and to challenge assumptions once taken as dogma. In our time, the imperative is clear: we require minds capable of such discernment and innovation.

This book, *Global Security in the 21st Century*, aspires to contribute to that tradition.

It assembles selected essays authored by current and former Fellows of the Center for Security Policy Studies between 2017 and 2025. These writings do not conform to a singular doctrine or agenda. Rather, they represent a mosaic of intellectual engagement, united by a common seriousness of purpose and a shared recognition that strategy is inseparable from critical inquiry. They are the product of a setting that values rigorous analysis, principled debate, and exposure to the pressing dilemmas of world politics.

In compiling and editing this collection, I assumed a role that was both curatorial and interpretive. The task was not simply to present these essays, but to structure them in a way that reflects the evolving contours of global security, which was a deeply instructive process. Each contribution offered a vantage point from which to examine the strategic condition of our time. Some

illuminated enduring questions; others proposed novel frameworks. All exemplified a level of reflection that transcends the episodic nature of daily commentary.

To that end, the book is organized into three thematic sections:

- **American Foreign Policy** examines the role of the United States within an increasingly fragmented international system, interrogating the tensions between its responsibilities and its interests.
- **International Security** surveys developments that shape the global order independent of American primacy, underscoring the multiplicity of actors and agendas that define today's strategic environment.
- **Modern Threats** addresses domains of contestation that defy conventional classification, from cyber conflict and terrorism to global health and environmental risk.

Together, these sections reflect an evolving conversation about the nature of security itself. They offer hypotheses, cautionary insights, and at times imaginative departures from the orthodoxy of strategic discourse.

To the contributors, I extend my profound appreciation. Their discipline of mind and seriousness of commitment are evident in each line. To the broader CSPS community, thank you for sustaining an intellectual environment in which such work could take form.

And to the reader: I hope you find in these pages not only information, but provocation, challenge, and inspiration. The world will not wait for us to catch up. But we can, through reflection and clarity, prepare ourselves to meet it.

Ali Mammadov
Managing Editor, Center for Security Policy Studies
Political Science PhD student, Schar School

I. American Foreign Policy

Vietnam: Increasing U.S. Relations and Deterring China

Kathleen Lackey, 2018

It was not all that long ago that the United States fought a brutal war with Vietnam, with heavy casualties on both sides. Now, the U.S. and Vietnam have growing strategic ties, built upon mutual economic and security interests. Vietnam is one of the world's fastest-growing economies, with bilateral trade between the U.S. and Vietnam growing to more than $54 billion in 2017.

In a significant development earlier this month, a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier, the USS Carl Vinson, along with two other Navy vessels visited a Vietnamese port for the first time since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. Although this is the first aircraft carrier and largest U.S. military presence in Vietnam since the war, this is not the first time the U.S. military has been back. In late 2016, two U.S. ships – the submarine USS Frank Cable and destroyer USS John S. McCain – visited Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam.

U.S. operations in the South China Sea are common, Colonel Robert Manning III said, "they demonstrate our commitment to regional prosperity and stability." While it may be routine for U.S. carriers to cross the South China Sea, the embrace of the U.S. is a symbolic move by the Vietnamese to counterbalance China. Not only is this visit a sign of the strengthened ties between nations, but it is an effort to stem expansionism by China in the South China Sea (or what the Vietnamese call the East Sea).

China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Brunei all have conflicting claims over territory in the South China Sea. This centuries-old territorial dispute has steadily increased in recent years with growing development and militarization in the region. Just this week, China announced its biggest military spending increase in more than three years. While Vietnam has been focusing its recent military modernization on select capabilities to designed to deter China. Many fear this could result in a potential flashpoint with serious global consequences.

Despite the maritime territorial dispute, Vietnam has been cautious to not evoke an overreaction by the Chinese, and reasonably so. Vietnam is significantly smaller than its northern neighbor, and many Vietnamese still recall their nation's tumultuous history with China.

Additionally, Vietnam and China have close economic ties that further complicate the situation. Economic dependence makes matters particularly difficult for Vietnam, as they would suffer far more in the event of political instability given the country's smaller size and relative power. It is unclear exactly how far Vietnam is willing to go as it seeks to deter China. Vietnam will likely continue to strengthen its strategic global ties with partners like the U.S., while also continuing to modernize its armed forces in hopes of deterring a major conflict.

In the Shadow of Russia: NATO, the Baltics, and the United States

Courtney Kayser, 2018

CSPS Student Fellow Courtney Kayser interviews Dr. Colin Dueck, Dr. Michael Hunzeker, and Dr. Alexander Lanoszka on their recent work in the Baltic States to assess the present security concerns presented by Russia.

This past summer, two Schar School professors traveled to the Baltic states to assess their security concerns regarding Russian intervention. Dr. Colin Dueck traveled on behalf of the Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA), and Dr. Michael Hunzeker and his co-author, Dr. Alexander Lanoszka, did so on behalf of the Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) at the US Army War College. Dr. Dueck specializes in foreign policy, international relations, and US politics and is a professor at the Schar School of Policy and Government. Dr. Hunzeker, likewise from the Schar School, studies international security and military innovation. Dr. Lanoszka researches alliance politics and nuclear strategy at the City University of London. Dr. Lanoszka is also a regional expert on Central and Northeastern Europe.

For one and two weeks respectively, both Schar School professors traveled to the capitals of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, interviewing diplomatic and military officials, along with academics. Dr. Hunzeker was also able to visit Poland on his tour, while Dr. Dueck interviewed non-government organizations and private citizens alongside government officials. On behalf of the Center for Security Policy Studies (CSPS), I interviewed both Dr. Dueck and Dr. Hunzeker about their trips, and from these talks, several common themes arose.

1. The Legacy of Ukraine

Although the Russian Federation has a history of intervening in the affairs of the states near abroad, the annexation of Crimea in 2014 caused the international community to shift its focus back to the Kremlin and Eastern Europe. Russian reasons for annexing the peninsula included geopolitics (continued access to Sevastopol) and protecting ethnic Russian populations. The two separatist regions in Eastern Ukraine also have large Russian-speaking populations. The Baltic states and Poland have all expressed concern over Russia's increasingly aggressive behavior in the region, given their shared history of rule by the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, their inability to survive a Russian offensive without aid if one were to occur, and the large ethnic Russian populations in the Baltic region. In Dr. Dueck's interviews, many officials viewed Ukraine as the front line of their conflict with Russia, and many officials spoke of future partnerships with Ukraine. Many were aware of Russian actions in Ukraine and the response from NATO and other states would set the precedent for the future of Russian hybrid warfare.

2. The Baltic States are Not Identical

Although it is common to discuss the Baltic states as a unit, the Russian Federation poses different security threats to each of the states. For instance, due to Kaliningrad, a Russian exclave, being located on its Western border, Lithuania is more concerned about a potential Russian land grab. In Dr. Dueck's interviews, Lithuanian officials requested the most American ground troops. Estonian and Latvian officials, however, would prefer air and naval support. Estonian officials, in particular, were interested in naval support due to its coastlines and the ease with which it can be cut off from the mainland.

In Latvia, there are active pro-Russian parties that regularly receive seats in parliament. In 2014, the center-left party, Harmony, secured the largest share of the vote and the most seats in the Latvian parliament; Harmony has a formal cooperation agreement with Putin's party, United Russia as well. Both Estonia and Latvia have large Russian minorities, accounting for roughly 25 and 27 percent of their populations respectively. Ethnic Russians account for only about 6 percent of the Lithuanian population. Of the three Baltic states, Latvia is the most reliant on Russian energy sources and the Russian-controlled electric grids. The power of pro-Kremlin groups in Latvia translates to less aggressive policy positions towards the Russian Federation compared to Estonia and especially Lithuania. In Dr. Dueck and Dr. Hunzeker's interviews, Latvian officials are outliers, as the only ones who did not wish to have more troops stationed in their country. Additionally, Latvia has no draft and no popular defense force initiatives like its peers. While constrained by its domestic audience, Dr. Hunzeker argues that Latvia could still be the location of a Russian land grab if one were to occur, as its defense forces are less prepared by nature and would serve to cut the Baltic states in half, making a coordinated response more difficult.

3. Credible Deterrence and Continued American Support

In Dr. Hunzeker's interviews, officials were concerned with the credibility of American commitments to Baltic defense. Both reassurances and threats rely on clarity to allies and enemies to be credible, but this is not seen in many American and NATO pronouncements. For instance, are the NATO troops in the Baltics there as a tripwire – placed there to ensure a larger response after a Russian incursion – or are these troops a legitimate fighting force meant to stop a potential incursion as it transpires? The multinational Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), consisting of about 5000 troops, could either function as a tripwire or act as the spearhead of the response force. To be effective, tripwires must be distinguished from a fighting force. Yet, according to Dr. Hunzeker, we do not know which function the VJTF serves, and if we do not know, neither do Kremlin officials.

Compounding the lack of clarity as to what purpose the forces in the Baltic states will serve is the fact that many officials doubt continued American attention. The United States has many strategic interests across the globe, and while Russia presently holds the attention of US officials, this is not guaranteed to be the case indefinitely. Georgia and Ukraine, who both have experienced Russian-backed separatist movements, quickly dropped out of the media's eye. Russia's cyber harassment against the Baltic states does not receive media attention, and American officials could easily be distracted by other crises that are perceived to have a greater bearing on US security interests. The fear of losing Washington's attention was brought up in both interviews, and this fear is one of the factors why many Baltic leaders are keen on securing the stationing of American troops in the region. Russia enjoys the geographical advantage, so if American and NATO officials are not vigilant, they could easily be at a disadvantage if an armed conflict were to occur.

4. Baltic Coordination and Belarus

One of Dr. Hunzeker's recommendations for US officials is to encourage greater multilateral coordination among the Baltic states. There is a lack of regional defense policies that holistically address Baltic security, and adding regional centers for lessons learned could vastly improve Baltic security. Presently, American and other NATO forces consistently perform exercises in the region, but local units are not learning from one another or sharing the lessons from various exercises with the other Baltic states. The US military has extensive experience with establishing lesson learned centers and could easily port these methods over to the Baltics. Poland is also well positioned to take a leading role in regional initiatives, a position aided by the fact that the majority of American troops in the region are stationed in Poland. There was also talk in Dr. Dueck's interviews of treating the wider Baltic sea region as a security unit, bringing in Sweden, Finland, and Denmark. While coordinating between these new states would certainly be more difficult, for while Denmark is a NATO member, Sweden and Finland are not. Yet, these states all border the Baltic Sea, which is key for Russian naval power projection in Northern Europe.

Regional initiatives also must consider Belarus. If there were to be any armed conflict, the Russian Federation would need to coordinate with their neighbor, and this coordination should be easy to spot if NATO officials are watching for it. There is also evidence that Belarusian officials are not in lock-step with their Russian counterparts, especially after 2014. While Belarus has been closer to Russia in the post-Soviet era policy-wise than Ukraine, both states occupy a similar type of space, attempting to balance Western and Russian influences. There is space, Dr. Dueck argues, for Baltic officials to explore diplomatic relations with Belarus. It is also feasible, Dr. Hunzeker asserts, to tailor deterrence threats specifically towards Belarus to dissuade Belarusian officials from collaborating, or at least resist collaborating, with the Kremlin.

The future of Baltic security and the role of the US will be determined through the careful assessment of these factors. While a potential Russian land grab is certainly one of the more extreme possibilities, it is also one of the least likely. Rather than outright attack, the Baltic states face near constant, low-level harassment from the Russian Federation, usually in the form of cyber-attacks. Still, it is important that officials continue to pay attention to the region, especially given their inability to counter a Russian offensive without outside support. Greater understanding of the nuances of the internal politics of the Baltic states is crucial for developing regional coordination and establishing credible deterrence. But, to craft credible deterrence American and NATO officials must be clear on the exact purpose of the forces they deploy and remain attentive to the evolving security arrangements in the region. There are opportunities and means to improve the region's security without directly antagonizing the Russian Federation, but exploiting these will require the issue to not be a 'back burner' issue for American officials.

"Gone" Yesterday and Here Today: The Status of Guantánamo Bay

Mary Frances Woods, 2018

As with any transition to a new presidential administration, there come many changes. The status of the detention facilities in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba (Guantánamo Bay) is no exception. Throughout his time in office, President Barack Obama conveyed his intent to close Guantánamo Bay and made substantial efforts in achieving that objective. However, in his first State of the Union address, President Donald Trump appears to depart from that approach. Specifically, he announced that he "… just signed an order directing Secretary Mattis to reexamine our military detention policy and to keep open the detention facilities at Guantánamo Bay."

The order to which President Trump was likely referring is Executive Order 13823 (E.O.), "Protecting America through Lawful Detention of Terrorists," signed in January 2018. E.O. 13823 states, in part, that the Secretary of Defense shall, "recommend policies to the President regarding the disposition of individuals captured in connection with an armed conflict, including policies governing the transfer of individuals to U.S. Naval Station Guantánamo Bay." E.O. 13823 further states that, "the United States may transport additional detainees to U.S. Naval Station Guantánamo Bay when lawful and necessary to protect the Nation."

Although it would appear President Trump's contemplation of new detentions is a substantial departure from President Obama's policy, that may not necessarily be the case. In early 2016, President Obama announced that the Department of Defense was providing Congress with a plan to close "Guantánamo once and for all." The "Plan for Closing the Guantánamo Bay Detention Facility," proposed, amongst other things, a detailed process on how the United States disposes of the remaining detainees, including 1) transfer to a different country; 2) prosecution in military commissions; and 3) continued law of war detention.

However, President Obama's 2016 plan did not seem to exclude the possibility of future detentions. Specifically, the section, "Disposition of Future Detainees" stated, in pertinent part: "The Administration approaches new captures on a case-by-case basis with a range of options, including prosecution in the military commission system or in Federal court; transfer to another country…; or law of war detention, in appropriate cases." President Obama's plan also suggested that current detainees designated for continued law of war detention could be transferred to facilities in the United States, "should Congress lift the ban" on such transfers.

As a result, it could be interpreted that under President Obama's plan, if appropriate facilities were developed within the United States, new detentions could be contemplated. For example, the plan

indicated that "the Department of Defense determined that, with modifications, a variety of Department of Defense, Bureau of Prisons, and state prison facilities could safely, securely, and humanely house Guantanamo detainees for the purpose of military commissions and continued law of war detention." Therefore, in comparison, President Trump's ostensible contemplation of future detentions is not necessarily in opposition to President Obama's policy, except for the detention location.

Additionally, one other important aspect of E.O. 13823 is that it apparently retains the process for determining the disposition of detainees as identified in Executive Order 13492, "Review and Disposition of Individuals Detained at the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base and Closure of Detention Facilities," that President Obama issued in January 2009. E.O. 13823 further states, in part, that, "any detainees transferred to...Guantánamo Bay after the date of this order shall be subject to procedures for periodic review established in Executive Order 13567...to determine whether continued law of war detention is necessary to protect against a significant threat to the security of the United States." Issued by President Obama in 2011, Executive Order 13567, "Periodic Review of Individuals Detained at Guantánamo Bay Naval Station Pursuant to the Authorization for Use of Military Force" identified a process for periodic review of those detainees "(i) designated for continued law of war detention; or (ii) referred for prosecution." Therefore, although President Trump has indicated that Guantánamo Bay will remain open, many of the processes for periodic review and detainee disposition enacted by President Obama remain in effect.

In conclusion, although President Trump's decision to keep Guantánamo Bay open and the possibility for future detentions may appear to be a departure from President Obama's policy, as discussed above, the issue is very nuanced and complex. As a result, since the current United States policy on detentions is under review, the implications of future detentions at Guantánamo Bay remains uncertain.

Posse Comitatus and the President

David Mendes, 2018

Since the passage of the Posse Comitatus Act in 1878, federal law has restricted the use of the military to enforce the law. However, many exceptions have been created by Congress and the courts which have allowed U.S. Presidents to use troops to quell disorder or enforce federal law when a state cannot, or will not. In October of this year, the Trump Administration deployed the U.S. military to the U.S.-Mexico border in support of Customs and Border Patrol ("CBP") based on the perceived threat to national security posed by a migrant caravan of several thousand Central Americans, many of them women and young children.

The use of the active duty military in this way has raised questions about if the deployment violates the Posse Comitatus Act. The general consensus has been that so long as the active duty military is not used to enforce the law but merely to support CBP to do so, the Act has not been violated. However, the deployment may further signal a willingness by this Administration to use the military in an expanded domestic role. This begs the question of how the military may be used in the context of the Administration's immigration policies given the limitations of the Act.

Posse Comitatus (Latin for "power or force of the county") has its historical origins in England and was a commonly exercised power of local sheriffs from the time of Alfred the Great. Under the common law, the local county sheriff could draw upon the able-bodied males of his county to pursue criminals, keep the peace, or enforce civil process.

Following the end of the U.S. Civil War, "Radical Republicans" in Congress attempted to reform the South and passed laws intended to guarantee by law, equality and freedom for all persons regardless of race. In the face of resistance by Southerners to enforce civil rights and reconstruction laws, federal officials were often unable to summon a citizen posse comitatus and instead summoned the federal posse comitatus by placing Union soldiers directly under the control of civilian law enforcement. Southern members of Congress were resentful of the federal posse comitatus and wary of future uses to impose Northern ideals and views on Southern Society. They introduced and passed the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878, which banned use of the military as a posse comitatus without prior approval by Congress.

Since the adoption of the Act, Congress has expressly authorized by statute over twenty exceptions to the Posse Comitatus Act to allow the military to be used to enforce civil laws. Congress has also created several allowances for military forces to share information, including intelligence and equipment with civilian law enforcement agencies, provided the military itself is not actively

enforcing the law on behalf of civilian law enforcement agencies. The Insurrection Act provides the clearest legal exception to the bar on use of the military to enforce the law. The Insurrection Acts, now codified in Title 10 of the U.S. Code, delegate from Congress to the President the authority to call out the military in times of insurrection or civil disturbance.

The Trump Administration has reacted strongly to sanctuary cities and has sought to pressure them into renouncing their status and aid Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE") to identify, detain, and deport persons without legal status. Over three hundred cities and four states across the nation have self-proclaimed themselves as sanctuary cities or sanctuary states.

A sanctuary city, as a matter of local policy, does not cooperate with federal law enforcement with regard to immigration removal and deportation activities. In practice, this means the when a person without legal immigration status comes into local custody, the local law enforcement agency does not notify Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE"). Additionally, if ICE learns the person(s) without legal status are in local custody they often issue a detainer request, asking the local agency to hold the person until ICE can come to the jail and take the person into federal custody. Many sanctuary cities refuse to comply with detainer requests and will only hold the person without legal status as long as the underlying reason for their detention warrants.

Both Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy drew on their authority under the Insurrection Act to federalize soldiers of the National Guard and mobilize federal military units to enforce desegregation of schools in the South. Hypothetically, the Trump Administration could seek to use military forces to enforce immigration deportation and removal orders under the Insurrection Act, assuming that the cities "will not" enforce federal law. The Trump Administration could argue that this use is no different than the Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations use of the same authority to integrate the South in the face of local and state government opposition.

President Trump has indicated that he intends to hire thousands of new ICE agents as a deportation force. Use of sworn federal law enforcement agents would avoid any need to circumvent the Posse Comitatus Act. However, with Democrats controlling the House of Representatives it seems far less likely that Congress will budget and appropriate the funds needed to expand ICE. With the Trump Administration's focus on deporting undocumented immigrants and the recent deployment of the military to the U.S.-Mexico Border, it is potentially plausible the military could be used to speed deportations in sanctuary cities and states.

The United States Should Not Forget About Africa

Tyler Stone, 2019

Compared to other potential security threats to the United States, like Russia, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East, U.S. involvement in Africa does not garner much media attention. Despite this, it is in American interests to continue its efforts to stabilize the continent.

On October 18, 2019, CSPS hosted an event, entitled "Africa's Security Challenges: Is the Situation Improving?" where Dr. Philip Martin, Assistant Professor of International Security at the Schar School, and Eric Schmitt, a senior writer for The New York Times, discussed the challenges of security on the African continent. According to Dr. Martin, Africa is a much more stable region today than it was in the 1980s and 1990s due to fewer active civil wars. While intrastate conflict has declined, the threat of serious terrorist activities has risen.

Despite the collapse of the Caliphate in late 2017, the Islamic State still has a large presence in Africa, and an estimated six thousand ISIS fighters were spread throughout the continent in 2018, with over half being located in West Africa. Dr. Martin mentioned that many other terrorist groups, such as Al Shabaab in Somalia, have attempted to legitimize their rule in rural areas. The groups have achieved success by providing basic services where the central governments have failed. This poses additional problems for demobilization and reintegration programs for former terrorists when the government retakes these regions is a major problem. Unintegrated former members retain ties to terrorist groups in the region, and this makes the resurgence of violence more likely.

While the threat of terrorism has been on the rise in Africa, the United States is trying to withdraw its military footprint in the region. Without international support, many of these smaller governments lack the resources to counter terrorism, and as Mr. Schmitt and Dr. Martin note, these conflicts can spill over borders into neighboring states. Niger, for example, is seeing spillover effects of terrorism from Libya, Mali, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso. States who manage to control internal threats to security may not be quite so capable at addressing threats posed by non-state actors who cross their borders due to violence in neighboring states.

Therefore, a continued American presence is key to avoid repeat violence and assist local governments in creating stability. Mr. Schmitt explained how the United States is valued when it works with local governments in Africa, but he notes that the U.S. should focus on both security and development in the regions that once held terrorists. Global competitors of the U.S., Russia and China, are already focusing heavily in the region, with Russia assisting in security efforts and China economically developing the continent. Neither China nor Russia are concerned with

human rights, meaning that African states have little incentive to change their present policies about human rights. In the future, these states' policies may be closer ideologically to Russia and China, making work with the U.S. more difficult.

The United States is at risk of continuing to fall behind Russian and Chinese efforts in Africa, while allowing terrorism to grow, causing further destabilization in the continent and enabling terrorist groups to establish safe havens. While these conflicts and terrorist activities in Africa do not receive as much media attention as their counterparts in the Middle East, the region is still vital to the U.S. interests and security. If the United States begins to further withdraw from Africa, it could further destabilize the region and result in some states forming closer bonds with Russia and China. The concern here is that the United States will be isolated from African states as they continue to develop economically and politically. This would put those countries in the Russian or Chinese spheres of influence, which could threaten U.S. policies in Africa and damage U.S. security in the long-term.

Battle Off Samar and the Ascendancy of the Aircraft Carrier

Tyler Stone, 2019

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in 1941, the objective was to destroy the American battleships, as naval war planners considered the battleship to be the capital ship of the navy. However, the Battle of Midway and Coral Sea demonstrated the aircraft carrier's ability to project force at much greater distances than surface ships. In the Battle of Leyte Gulf, the carrier solidified its position as superior to the battleship.

In late October 1944, the U.S. invaded the Philippines to retake them from the Japanese Empire in the Battle of Leyte Gulf. By the time the invasion was underway, the United States achieved air and naval supremacy over Japan, having destroyed most of the Japanese Navy and Air Force. To further solidify this naval supremacy, US Admiral William "Bull" Halsey decided to engage Japanese aircraft carriers rather than defend American Task Units in the area. However, the Japanese carriers, lacking in trained pilots, were sent on a suicide mission to distract a major portion of the American fleet away the Philippines. This strategy would give the remaining Japanese surface fleet the ability to target American landings.

On October 25, 1944, a portion of the Japanese fleet, composed of four battleships, including the largest battleship ever built, the Yamato, six heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, and eleven destroyers, began to move towards the island of Samar. The Japanese fleet encountered American Task Unit 77.4.3, Taffy 3, which was composed of six escort carriers, three destroyers, and four destroyer escorts. The escort carriers' aircraft lacked anti-ship weapons, since they were armed for close air support and anti-submarine missions. Additionally, the destroyers lacked any long-range firepower that could take out larger Japanese ships. The only arsenal that could damage the larger Japanese ships were torpedoes, which had to be launched at a much shorter range compared to Japanese guns.

Although outnumbered and out gunned, the American destroyers engaged the Japanese fleet long enough for the five of the six escort carriers to retreat to safety. The carriers also deployed their fighters to harass the Japanese ships and break their formations. After two hours of combat, the Japanese admiral decided to retreat to Japan, where most of the fleet would remain until the end of the war.

While not considered a major turning point of the war, the United States lost five times more sailors and airmen in the Battle off Samar than at Midway, largely due to Admiral Halsey's decision to pursue the Japanese carriers rather than defending the American fleet. Halsey's decision

highlights the new view that carriers were the essential ships in the navy, instead of the battleships. To defend himself, Halsey wrote that the only way the Japanese fleet could threaten the landings was "to rendezvous with the [Japanese] carriers."

This would be the first time an American carrier was sunk by a surface ship, but the Yamato and other three battleships could not break through a weak defensive line made up of destroyers and carriers. In The Last Stand of the Tin Can Sailors, James Hornfischer explains that constant air attacks eventually made the Japanese fleet turn back, writing "in the face of continuous and savage air assault [withdrawing] was perhaps the prudent thing to do." The American admiral at the Battle off Samar stated that "the main reason they [the Japanese fleet] turned north [retreated from the battle] was that they were receiving too much damage to continue."

With the success at Leyte Gulf, the United States solidified its naval supremacy in the Pacific Ocean for the last year of World War II. The Battle off Samar and many other battles in the Pacific showed how quickly warfare changed from having battleships as the capital ship in 1941 and 1942, to having aircraft carriers as the essential part of the fleet by 1944.

In today's policy discussions, there are people who believe that the aircraft carriers are now becoming obsolete. New technology and new weaponry could offset the current strengths that carriers have today, similar to how the carrier utilized advancements to quickly replace the battleship. The ability for aircraft carriers to hold off several battleships and cruisers that had much more firepower at the Battle off Samar would have been unbelievable merely two years earlier. The United States should be aware that doctrines that worked for decades may become obsolete in the next conflict quickly.

The Role of US Reserve Forces

Joe Petrucelli, 2019

Late in October, approximately 500 US troops of the 30th Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) entered eastern Syria to secure oil fields. This confusingly occurred just after US forces announced a withdrawal from Syria. While the US policy in Syria is its own question, this episode also brought the role of the reserves (briefly) into the spotlight. The 30th ABCT is a National Guard formation, mobilized as the rotational ABCT in Kuwait and, thus, was the only armored force the Army had in theater (which by itself says something about the role of the reserves). This event is indicative of a larger problem: the current use of reserve forces to substitute for day-to-day gaps in active capability is not a logical force posture.

The Reserve Component (RC) primarily consists of 818,000 personnel split across the four reserve forces and the two National Guard forces. Unlike the active-duty forces, reserve forces are not full-time, only "drilling" periodically (plus additional non-drilling, inactive reservists). These forces traditionally served as the strategic reserve for military forces, supplementing active-duty forces when mobilized but normally maintaining lower readiness levels.

The RC serves this role primarily because it is a much less expensive than comparable active duty units, being paid only about 62 days a year (about 15% of active duty pay) with lesser benefits. However, recently, the US has utilized the RC instead as an operational, not strategic, reserve, supplementing active duty forces on a day-to-day basis. As a point of comparison, reserve support in the Cold War era averaged less than one million days of duty per year but by 2003 the RC was providing 63 million days of duty per year. While this is largely a result of policy decisions and financial constraints associated with the "Global War on Terror," the role of the RC has not been seriously considered and its structure has not been realigned to reflect changes in its operational role.

Reservists are provided basic training opportunities and maintain the ability to mobilize in a relatively short time period. However, these forces suffer from obvious readiness gaps, since they are part-time and their intermittent training opportunities prevent sustained unit-level readiness. Additionally, a variety of administrative, statutory, and cultural factors make integration with active duty forces difficult, at best, further limiting their readiness.
Given these limitations, how can the RC best integrate into the overall defense strategy? Wholesale structural changes to the RC are unlikely in the near term. However, there are broad areas where the RC can effectively support defense priorities within the current structural constraints, by

providing capacity as a strategic reserve, providing capabilities not needed on a daily basis, and leveraging unique individual skills RC members possess.
First, the RC should prioritize its role as a strategic reserve. Some number of reserve combat units should be maintained in lower readiness conditions, as intended, able to spin up relatively quickly in the event of a major war and to reconstitute losses from a major conflict. This is the traditional role of a reserve force, and backfilling active units engaged in the early stages of conflict is vital for long-term resiliency.

Second, the RC can maintain capabilities not required on a day-to-day basis. Units as varied as chemical weapons troops, logistics, riverine forces, and civil affairs are not needed on day one of a conflict, but may be needed at some point. The RC can add value by focusing on those mission sets where the time to mobilize a reserve unit is not a negative.

Lastly, the RC can focus on employing the individual skills its members possess, augmenting active units in a conflict, especially in areas where existing day-to-day capacity may not be sufficient. Many prior service members have significant military experience and are well positioned to augment staff or supplement understrength active duty units. Additionally, many reservists have civilian careers in medical, logistics, and law enforcement, skills that transfer into military roles with minimal retraining.

Our current use of the reserves results from a strategic mismatch between resources and missions that is unlikely to be resolved anytime soon. While fully shifting to an operational reserve model is a possible policy choice, a true operational reserve would come with increased costs, thereby reducing the primary benefit of the RC. There is no realistic policy discussion on dramatically shifting the reserves from the legacy strategic reserve structure. Instead, living within the current structure, the RC can add value in the areas discussed above, supplementing active duty forces in key areas without seeking to carry out active duty missions.

“Peace Be Upon You”: Key Considerations for U.S. - Taliban Peace Negotiations

Angela Gill, 2020

Besides COVID-19, the topic on everyone’s minds is – or perhaps should be – the peace negotiations between the United States and the Taliban. Though the prospect of peace is potentially encouraging, the United States must tread carefully to ensure that the Afghan government maintains its legitimacy in the process, and that the Taliban, Afghan government, and Afghan people fully trust the U.S. commitment to stay, which will also have important regional ramifications.

The United States has been fighting the Taliban since 2001, when it invaded Afghanistan because the Taliban government willingly harbored terrorists responsible for the September 11 attacks. Though the overthrow itself was relatively quick, U.S., NATO, and Afghan forces have been fighting the Taliban in an insurgency that has waxed and waned over nearly two decades, with a surge of U.S. troops in 2009 and a NATO transition to Resolute Support in 2015 as NATO combat troops withdrew.

The Afghan peace process with the Taliban has endured several rounds but became more serious in 2018 with a shift in strategy as U.S. officials met face to face with Taliban officials for the first time. While the Afghan government encouraged the peace process, noting that a Taliban ceasefire was needed, it was not involved in the negotiations. The Taliban refused to negotiate formally with the Afghan government, and the recent election dispute makes fielding an Afghan government negotiating team difficult. However, its omission is potentially a crucial mistake, as it simultaneously legitimizes the Taliban, who refused to recognize the Afghan government, and delegitimizes the Afghan government, who are excluded from the process. Furthermore, the language of the document signed on February 29, 2020 explicitly notes the Taliban will begin intra-Afghan negotiations with “Afghan sides” (not necessarily the Afghan government) after a guaranteed timeline for withdrawal of all forces, including trainers, advisors, and civilian and support personnel. This language is troubling because of its ambiguity: it calls for the complete removal of U.S. support without enough conditionality or specificity regarding the expectations of the intra-Afghan negotiations.

These events have tremendous consequences in terms of regional stability as well. When the United States intervened in Afghanistan during the Cold War, it abruptly left, leaving Afghanistan to dissolve into violent chaos. The Taliban was able to produce a modicum of stability, which as far as

its neighbors were concerned was a good thing. In the present intervention, Afghanistan's neighbors must ask themselves a similar question: who can we rely on in the long term to maintain stability in Afghanistan? Hopefully the answer is the Afghan government, with the support of the U.S., NATO coalition forces, and regional allies. In the end, though, the Taliban was there before the intervention and will continue its presence after U.S. and NATO forces decide they have had enough.

Moreover, while twenty years seems like a long time, and Americans may want troops to come home, we must remember the lessons of Germany and Japan. One reason Germany and Japan and South Korea, for that matter, stand out as such successes is because we never left. We committed. As the U.S. transitioned from occupation to statebuilding to security assistance, the host governments could count on them. To be sure, the United States has assured the Afghan government that it will continue security force assistance and support building up Afghan security forces, though whether this will be possible if they remove all forces, including trainers and advisers, remains to be seen. However, it is not in the best interest of the Afghan people or their regional allies for the U.S. to withdraw troops because we think twenty years is enough or because it is good for a political campaign. Nor is it in the best interest of U.S. credibility for the United States to leave Afghanistan without the full participation of the Afghan government in the decision-making process.

These suggestions are not popular, I admit, but the United States must change its penchant for short-term, quick fixes if we are to convince our allies and enemies alike that we will not change course every election cycle. After all, we saw the ramifications of pulling out of Iraq prematurely: consolidation of power by Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri Maliki; oppression of Sunnis in the government and security forces; and ISIS taking control of one of Iraq's major cities, Mosul. We have seen the effects of relatively quick operations in regime changes (Libya), peace operations (Somalia), counterinsurgencies (Vietnam), and the like, and with few exceptions they have ended in increased chances of civil war, regional belligerence, and/or blowback. Twenty years may seem like enough, but it is slight compared to the 75 years we have supported Germany, Japan, and South Korea. Time will tell whether this peace process is effective; in the meantime, let us hope that in our rush to get out, we do not lose sight of the real goals: a stable, functioning Afghan state and allies who can trust the United States.

The U.S. - China Technological Competition: Cold War or Tension?

Caroline Wesson, 2020

The technology sector is tantamount for a nation to develop, sustain, and provide its own security. The current U.S.-China strategic rivalry has implications for the global technology industry. Following the escalation tensions between the U.S. and China, in part due to concerns over Huawei's links to the Chinese Communist Party, many began to claim that the U.S. and China had entered a technological cold war. It is important that before asserting the existence of a technological cold war, that we analyze what a technological cold war is, what one would look like, and what forces within the technology sector will affect it.

What is a technological cold war?

To understand if we should be concerned about the U.S.-China strategic technological rivalry we need to explore what a technological cold war is, and what it is not. A technological cold war begins with the decoupling, which in this case is defined as the disentanglement of technology sectors, and ends with fully separate spheres of technological progress and influence. Even with this definition, there are still questions surrounding what a technological cold war is, and what decoupling would entail. For instance, how much disentanglement of technological sectors is needed to declare a technological cold war? Are trade barriers enough, or do we need to see a reality in which technological progress is completely insular?

What would be the impact of a technological cold war? It is hard to say for certain, but to begin with, there would be impacts on the ability to wholly produce technological products in either country due to the fragmentation of supply chains. This would result in shortages of key products, like semiconductors, which are an input piece to nearly every piece of technology. Additionally, there could be a loss of interoperability between technologies originating from each locus. The most intangible impact would be a loss of innovative capabilities. Innovation, described as "creative destruction" by Schumpeter, has many inputs, is a non-linear process, and benefits from open collaboration between scientific communities from diverse backgrounds. A technological cold war, and the barriers erected to cause decoupling, would strain the innovative process and limit technological progress. These inefficiencies would have real life implications for the economic and societal development across the globe.

What is the current reality?

As tension mounts between the U.S. and China, media outlets have grasped for a way to describe their relations. Some have labeled the current technological relationship of trade, regulation, and research collaboration between the U.S. and China as a technological cold war. We should caution

the use of this terminology due to the lack of a clear definition for what constitutes a technological cold war and because of the nature of the technology industry.

The technology industry is as much a field of hard science as it is a creative industry. The field is collaborative, often with international teams. There are profound educational links between nations with top technological industries, with research collaborations and students studying abroad. This is especially true for the U.S. and China. In fact, educational and talent exchange is a big part of why the U.S. has maintained a lead in technology despite China's manufacturing capabilities.

A technological cold war would come at great expense to national income, economic growth, and private firms. A true technological cold war would limit firms from accessing markets in the rival nation, prevent certain products from export entirely, and decrease the attractiveness of rival nation products due to different standards and interoperability concerns. Additionally, there are several companies with corporate links across national borders and long-standing joint ventures. The ability to profit from the creation, manufacturing, and export of technological goods would be greatly impacted by a technological cold war.

In sum, buying into claims that a technological cold war is here or imminent is premature. There are powerful forces at play that may prevent a decoupling process from proceeding. If this tension between the U.S. and China persists it is possible that one, or both, nations could turn to erecting necessary policies to decouple the technology sectors for reasons of national security. We must wait for decisive policy action to be taken by either nation before we can say we are approaching a technological cold war between the U.S. and China.

COVID-19 Crisis and U.S. - R.O.K. Relations

Jin Seong Choi, 2020

In April, approximately 4,000 Korean employees were furloughed from their workplaces on U.S. military bases in South Korea due to the United States and South Korea failing to reach a consensus on 11th Special Measures Agreement (SMA), which was originally due on the last day of 2019. Following the incident, controversies over the scope of cost sharing of U.S. Forces Korea are on the rise. The main concern remains the delay in reaching an agreement in the SMA talks, as this could ultimately lead to the deterioration of the seven-decade-long alliance between the two countries, but other concerns also remain.

The U.S.-R.O.K. alliance has weakened significantly since President Trump walked into the White House. President Trump stated that Washington gets practically nothing from the U.S. Forces Korea compared to the cost. He further demanded South Korea to pay 4 billion dollars as a defense fee, a 300 percent increase from last year. With President Trump radically increasing the cost and Seoul being reluctant to pay such an amount, the current SMA negotiation seems to be the most difficult in the history of the U.S.-R.O.K. alliance.

The decision to furlough Korean workers in U.S. Forces Korea, which was made after the negotiation breakdown, is an unprecedented event, and it would be a potential threat to South Korean national security if continued, as it greatly degrades the spirit of the alliance and joint military readiness to fight.

The COVID-19 crisis is only making things worse, as every military training program and drill has been cancelled. Furthermore, it seems that the pandemic is contributing to the delay in SMA agreements. As face-to-face negotiations ceased due to the outbreak of the virus, bargaining online and over the phone has made it even more difficult to build relationships and render fruitful outcomes.

In the vortex of the SMA controversy and cancellation of joint military drills, there is the threat of South Korea's hostile neighbor – North Korea – taking advantage of the fracture in the alliance. 38 North, which provides analysis on North Korea and is owned by the Stimson Center, has detected that North Korea has been showing signs of submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) tests, using satellite photos of North Korean Shinpo Shipyard taken on April 5, 2020. North Korea's SLBM is known to be capable of flying to U.S. territory, and it is speculated that North Korea would continue provocations in the absence of reaction from the South.

Adding to the weakening military alliance between the U.S. and South Korea, the psychological ties between the two countries have also been derailed due to the COVID-19 crisis. The U.S. decision to furlough Korean workers on the U.S. military bases is provoking public resentment against U.S., and there are media outlets, especially leftist media, questioning whether the U.S. is truly into settling peace in the region. If the SMA delay is further protracted, it will harm the bilateral relationship built upon a strong alliance system and accelerate change in the geopolitical landscape. This would be a great loss to both countries' strategic interests as well as to the Northeast Asian regional security.

Nonetheless, the global health crisis has provided a clue on how to improve interstate relations. Maryland, one of the U.S. states that are devastated by the pandemic, obtained 500,000 COVID-19 testing kits from South Korea after Maryland's governor Larry Hogan and his Korean-American wife had a videoconference with South Korean President, Moon Jae-in. Moreover, countries that are seeing a significant decrease in the number of COVID-19 confirmed cases, such as South Korea and China, have been providing medical assistance and sanitary supplies to other parts of the world. Such humanitarian interactions between states in the era of pandemic could provide an impetus for establishing mutual trust, which is an essential element for instituting a more sustainable and enduring state-to-state relations.

The COVID-19 crisis has set up a testing ground for U.S.-R.O.K. relations; diplomatic negotiations have become more difficult to reach an agreement as they are held over the phone, and the military alliance are also facing problems such as disruption in military preparedness. At the same time, the crisis also gives an important implication that there definitely is room for improvement. With regard to the current situation, the United States lacks available COVID-19 testing kits and experiences skyrocketing numbers of confirmed cases while South Korea has successfully flattened the COVID-19 curve. It now seems to be a perfect time to regain the mutual trust that has been lost between the two countries. It is now in the hands of leaders of the United States and South Korea whether the challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis could be transformed into opportunities for consolidating the relationship.

Improving the American Debate on the Strategic Value of Alliances and Partnerships

Jim Cahill, 2020

One of the most visible U.S. foreign policy issues in recent times is the role that security alliances and partnerships should or should not have in promoting national interests. This national attention comes with the increasing risk of opinion polarization: the two sides of the political spectrum adopting entrenched positions without much strategic reflection. The opinion polarization is reflected in a recent Chicago Council on Global Affairs poll, which shows significantly different views between political parties – with 85% of Democrats and only 65% of Republicans, in favor of security alliances.

Opinion polarization increases the risk of miscalculation, as the pursuit (or retreat from) alliances and partnerships risks becoming an end in itself, rather than a component of a broader strategy. National security practitioners and voters should be aware of this risk, and strive to think deeper about the role that alliances and partnerships should optimally play in advancing foreign policy interests in various contexts.

Those in favor of alliances claim that they enhance states' readiness to respond to future national security crises and are a more efficient approach to national defense than going at it alone. Those that are opposed claim that alliances degrade states' freedom of action by potentially entangling states into conflicts that they would otherwise avoid.

As these opposing positions become further entrenched, the tendency to apply them as a boiler plate solution regardless of context increases. A boiler plate approach is dangerous because alliances are valuable in some strategic situations, and of little worth in others. Advantages and disadvantages vary depending on context. Instead of instinctively adopting partisan views, we need a more holistic approach to alliances. There is an abundance of theoretical research that supports the formation and implementation of more functional and strategically-minded foreign policy.

Internal versus External Balancing

Kenneth Waltz explains that the anarchic nature of international politics requires states to adopt "self help" balancing behaviors or live at the mercy of other states. Balancing behaviors come in two forms: internal or external. Internal balancing is the self-reliance based approach – enhancing one's own national defense capabilities. External balancing is the international cooperation based approach – seeking temporary alliances with other states that share a common threat or objective, thereby combining military power between the allying sides.

In up-front financial cost, internal balancing is the more expensive approach. A stand-alone security system is more costly than pooling resources with an ally or partner. External balancing, with its enticement of a lower sticker price, is less reliable because allies' national security interests are never perfectly compatible. So ultimately, external balancing may prove more costly than internal balancing in the long run if one does not carefully select their allies.

Entanglement Theory

Entanglement theory is the view that alliance commitments drag states into unwanted wars. George Washington's warning to "steer clear of permanent alliance with any portion of the foreign world" is illustrative, as is the U.S.'s deliberate avoidance of alliances up to the Second World War. Since 1945, the U.S. has followed an opposite approach, including through alliances with NATO, the Republic of Korea, Japan, and Australia. Have these alliances increased the risk of entanglement? Michael Beckley found in his analysis of 188 militarized interstate disputes that U.S. alliances have more often had the opposite effect of restraining U.S. interventions or preventing escalation.

Despite Beckley's rearward-looking findings, entanglement theory remains an important consideration moving forward. U.S. security alliances all originated in the Cold War strategic context. When the Cold War ended, these alliances were not disbanded as Waltz would have predicted. The critical question now is whether the alliances' guiding principles are adapting in pace with the strategic environment changes. If so, the alliances can continue to perform strategically. If not, then alliance commitments no longer strategically worthwhile could very well compel U.S. participation in costly interventions.

In a presidential election cycle as unpredictable and dynamic as this one, both the Left and Right have a tendency to drift toward entrenched, diametrically opposed positions. This is not unexpected. However, when it comes to the consideration of the strategic value of alliances, national security practitioners and voters must not fall for the bait.

Deeper strategic reflection is necessary because the next administration's approach to long-standing U.S. mutual defense arrangements will have large implications to U.S. and international security. Balancing and entanglement are two of many theoretical concepts that can help us think about alliance policy implications more holistically – and in doing so help improve the likelihood that the next President will possess the ability to objectively manage the challenges and opportunities inherent to alliances.

Expanding Partnerships in the Midst of Rising China

Rebecca Cooper, 2020

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has expanded its network of formal wartime alliances to include peacetime alliances and partnerships. While some policymakers and Americans, including President Trump, are strongly advocating for the United States to avoid entanglements in far-flung conflicts, it is now more important than ever to honor and strengthen our alliances and partnerships throughout the world in order to counter the growing influence of China.

Alliances of all types – be they military, financial and industrial – exist, ideally, to further the collective interest of all parties by combining their capabilities. While this may not always involve exactly equal contributions or capabilities, all parties benefit to some degree to the partnership. As stated in Jim Cahill's CSPS blog, Improving the American Debate on the Strategic Value of Alliances and Partnerships, there is a risk of entrapment or entanglement when engaging in partnerships, but the overall utility of these arrangements is ultimately still favorable to the United States.

One of the most visible signs of China's rising influence on the global stage is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a series of major infrastructure and development projects designed to connect Eurasian countries together. According to former US National Security Advisor John Bolton, China has been deliberately and aggressively undermining US interests and forcing partnerships to advance their global dominance. China is forging partnerships with countries, both willing and coerced through debts owed, that give China a strategic foothold across multiple regions.

Many policy makers believe that BRI is a direct attempt to expand their influence and undermine the United States and international institutions. The primary concern is that Chinese investments can generate economic dependence in many struggling countries which can then lead to political influence. Many countries are either unwilling or unable to decline such an enticing economic proposition, despite the many violations and abuses that accompany it.

Historically, the US has focused on maintaining Asian alliances to maintain a balance of military power in the Indo-Pacific; however, the United States must now offer existing and potential allies an economically appealing partnership to counter Chinese influence. Strengthening existing alliances and building new partnerships in areas of Chinese focus would give the United States a strategic 'leg up' by supporting the economic development of allies and reaffirming US commitment to the regions.

On the other hand, if countries feel as if the United States is abandoning their partnerships, or is no longer a credible ally or guarantor of their safety, they may choose to align themselves with China. The United States Department of Defense acknowledges that partnerships in these regions is a force multiplier for peace, and that building close relationships between militaries and economies will contribute to enduring trust and stability on the global stage. These partnerships can help ensure a peaceful transition to a bipolar system dominated by two great powers.

Many policy makers and prominent political figures are currently arguing that the United States should abandon many of its overseas alliances and adopt a more isolationist stance on the global stage. However, it is actually more important than ever to honor existing alliances and build future partnerships to ensure that the US can economically, as well as militarily, remain balanced in the context of a rising China. It is not a feasible option in the current global state and interconnected global economy for the US to return to isolationism.

Overall, the current alliances that the US has are a means of extending US influence, maintaining stability, and deterring rivals in different regions of the world. As the international community shifts to a bipolar system with the rise of China, these partnerships and alliances are more important than ever.

Unraveling Joe Biden's Approach to China

Tim Bynion, 2020

During presidential election years, it is rare to hear substantive discussions on foreign policy during debates between the major candidates. We did, however, get a brief discussion on foreign policy during last week's Vice Presidential debate between Vice President Mike Pence (R) and Senator Kamala Harris (D) when they were asked to define the nature of the United States' relationship with China. Unsurprisingly, the candidates failed to provide complete answers to this question.

While we have witnessed the Trump administration's antagonistic approach to China over the past four years, Senator Harris's remarks did not provide us with a clear picture of how a Biden administration would handle our relationship with China. Thus, it is important to explore Joe Biden's record on China in an attempt to evaluate how Sino-American relations might change if Biden is elected next month.

On his campaign website, Biden cites the threat of a rising China and states that the U.S. must "stand up to strongmen and thugs on the global stage to rally the world to meet these challenges." Other than this sweeping sentiment, his website fails to include a more detailed plan on how his administration would posture itself toward a rising China. However, one issue that distinguishes Biden from President Trump is the issue of trade. As a U.S. Senator, Biden was a leading advocate of creating a strong economic tie between the U.S. and China, saying in 2001 that "The United States welcomes the emergence of prosperous, integrated China on the global stage, because we expect this is going to be a China that plays by the rules."

Even as Vice President, Biden continued to embrace the notion that that the U.S. could eventually bring China into the liberal world order and transform it into a "responsible stakeholder" through trade and diplomacy. Granted, this view was held by most of the foreign policy establishment at the time, but the fact that Biden was one of its leading proponents means that we should critically examine his positions with the gift of hindsight.
In recent years, it has become clear that this approach has proven quite fruitless in changing China's behavior to our liking and interests.

While China has become integrated into the global economic market, it has not become a "responsible stakeholder" by any definition of the term. From China's continued aggression in the South China Sea, its repression of democratic movements in Hong Kong, and its ongoing brutality toward the Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, the prospects of the U.S. being able to transform China into a country that embraces liberal ideals have all but evaporated. Perhaps it is an

acknowledgement of this reality that led Biden to adjust his rhetoric on China during his latest presidential campaign. In a piece written for Foreign Affairs earlier this year, Biden argues the need for the U.S. to "get tough with China," and his plan to do is to "build a united front of U.S. allies and partners to confront China's abusive behaviors and human rights violations, even as we seek to cooperate with Beijing on issues where our interests converge, such as climate change, nonproliferation, and global health security." This approach offers a clear distinction from President Trump's approach to foreign affairs in which he has consistently denigrated U.S. allies and downplayed the need for international cooperation to achieve American interests. On this issue, Biden should be commended, as one of the most short-sighted aspects of Trump's foreign policy has been his willingness to demean democratic allies and devalue the liberal world order the U.S. worked to create after World War II.

However, we must also be careful to avoid thinking that restoring our relationships with allies will serve as a grand solution to every global problem that faces the U.S. Despite Biden's campaign rhetoric, it remains unclear how reaffirming our commitments to existing allies will lead to China changing its behavior in any substantive way. As the world's 2nd largest economy, China has extensive trading ties with countries across the globe, and some of its largest trade relationships are with U.S. democratic allies like South Korea, Japan, and Germany. While democracies like these often speak of the need to protect and promote human rights, the fact is that there has been little indication up to this point that they are willing to take concrete action to do so against rising global powers like China. Indeed, China was committing illiberal actions during the Obama-Biden administration, a time which Biden often invokes as an era where the U.S. had productive relationships with its allies.

While it is indeed crucial for the next president to reaffirm America's commitments to its democratic partners, we should not mislead ourselves into thinking that doing so will serve as a panacea for all of the world's problems, including human rights abuses by great powers. Taking a tough stance on China is a great way to score political points in a time when most Americans hold negative views on China, but the next president still owes the American people a realistic vision of what can be accomplished through diplomacy and alliances.

Battle Force 2045: Five Questions on Implementation

Joe Petrucelli, 2020

On October 6th 2020, the Secretary of Defense Esper unveiled the long-awaited Future Naval Force Study (FNFS). This study, led by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), replaced the Navy's Force Structure Assessment, which was previously rejected by the Secretary. This Battle Force 2045 study released by the Secretary proposed a massive expansion of the US Navy, growing to over 500 ships by 2045.

The specific recommendations of the proposed Battle Force 2045 are actually not too surprising and in line with other outside force structure recommendations. He called for a number of shifts, including reevaluating the role of large nuclear powered "supercarriers" and their air wings, procuring smaller platforms and more unmanned platforms.

The plan also calls for dramatically increasing submarine production to boost the Navy's current asymmetric advantage in the undersea domain. While this long-awaited study should be seen as a positive step for the Navy, there are a number of subjects worth further examination, among them: carrier force structure; unmanned systems basing requirements; force design flexibility; Navy-OSD dynamics; and the Shipbuilding Budget.

Carrier Force Structure

The number of nuclear carriers is the biggest unresolved items, as Battle Force 2045 does not commit to a number, instead a range of 8 to 11 (11 being the current force structure goal). If the force drops to eight carriers, it seems likely that the Navy could no longer maintain continuously deployed carriers in two theaters as it does today. Would this mean the Navy focusing on continuous carrier deployments in the Indo-Pacific with only periodic carriers in the Atlantic, a move to intermittent/surge deployment in both theaters, or something else? The FNFS does not address this at all, making it appear there is little analytic evidence for the number and type of carrier – logically any discussion of force structure should explain how these forces are operated in order to arrive at a defensible number.

Unmanned Systems Logistics and Basing

The Battle Force plan commits to procuring large numbers of unmanned (really remotely piloted) surface and undersea vehicles. While a worthy concept, this likely creates the need for extensive basing rights overseas, something that comes with a whole host of diplomatic implications not considered or addressed. The Navy could theoretically avoid overseas basing for these relatively short-ranged systems by procuring waterborne tenders and logistics support vessels to provide

at-sea basing, and while that is an option it may be a bit much to add even more ships to an already aggressive shipbuilding proposal. So the question remains if there are states in the Indo-Pacific region willing to host naval staging bases (and thereby make themselves targets).

Force Design

This force is clearly designed around a wartime conflict with China in the western Pacific. Beyond the question of whether this is the optimal naval force structure for such a scenario, the question remains if it is similarly suited against stressing scenarios and if it contributes to grey-zone deterrence and operations below the level of armed conflict. A fleet that is designed to win a Pacific war may not be the force that can sustain forward presence in defense of day-to-day deterrence. DoD seems to define force structure based on the most stressing military environment, which is certainly useful for that scenario. Should the DoD instead balance force sizing demands, considering both wartime surge and peacetime presence missions when defining the Navy's force structure?

Navy-OSD Dynamics

The manner in which the Navy force structure was rolled out was quite unusual, with the Secretary personally briefing the results without any Navy representation, civilian or uniformed. Typically force structure and acquisition fall to the services, which have the Title 10 "organize, train and equip" responsibility, and the Navy owes a Force Structure Assessment and a 30-year shipbuilding plan to Congress, both of which were delayed due to the ongoing debate at the OSD-level. Beyond just Navy-OSD dynamics, does this top-down approach indicate an increased centralization of authority at the OSD (and Joint Staff) level at the expense of the services? This may be a passing situation, brought about by unique political dynamics and personalities involved, but taking control over force design away from the service would indicate a significant step towards eliminating what little service independence remains.

Navy Shipbuilding Budget

The $20 Billion Question is how to pay for all of this, as expressed by the Navy's first and former Chief Learning Officer. While the Secretary included some vague promises to find extra funding for the Navy's shipbuilding budget in order to pay for all of these new ships, in practice these promised efficiency savings and taxes on other parts of DoD never seems to materialize. And, even if DoD throws boatloads of money at the Navy, it's not clear that the Navy is ready to actually start building the number of ships advocated.

This force structure proposal, released a month before an election, may be short-lived. At the same time, though, it is a daring proposal and one personally endorsed by the Secretary. This

authoritative statement provides invaluable ammunition for navalist in the budgetary battles likely to come, even if there is a change of Administration.

More significantly, the broad concepts of naval transformation proposed in Esper's speech appear in line with bipartisan thinking, particularly the focus on undersea and unmanned systems. While it seems unlikely that the Battle Force 2045 plan will be executed given the timing, implementing some of the underlying concepts and understanding the underlying dynamics will aid in transforming US naval power to remain relevant in the 21st century.

To the Victor Go the Spoils: Nation-building and the Legacy of Political Corruption

Angela Gill, 2020

Over the next few weeks, Americans will likely see significant changes in the top echelons of the administration, regardless of who wins the election. Yet, the average American probably does not give much thought to who occupies many of the appointed posts, with the exception of a few of the more visible ones. We largely assume political appointees have at least the requisite credentials to fill the roles, even if many get job offers to satisfy the president's or party's need to reward campaign contributors. We rarely consider this process as truly corrupt in the U.S., and the U.S. implemented this process in Afghanistan and Iraq in its statebuilding missions in the early 2000s. However, it has had serious implications for the legitimacy of the governments and their ability to maintain stability. As we advised on institution building and relied on foreign actors' advice, we inadvertently built political systems that entrenched corruption. These dynamics have resulted in significant negative ramifications for political stability.

As former National Security Adviser General Jim Jones (USMC, ret.) noted, in our haste to transfer authority in both Afghanistan and Iraq, we accepted whomever emerged as a leader and did not spend enough time ensuring the government was capable and legitimate. The repercussions of this strategy are real as they gave nascent and often unknown leaders, foreign-imposed legitimacy, yet less legitimacy where it mattered, in the state itself. For example, in an article for The Atlantic, assessing the prospects for the new Afghan government following the 2014 election, Mujib Mashal explains that Karzai never built trust in the cabinet given to him at the international conference in Bonn that established the new Afghan government after the initial defeat of the Taliban government. As a result, Karzai has had to balance power among political rivals and use a patronage system to garner loyalty.

Similarly, Iraq's proportional representation system, which was designed mostly by U.S.-trusted Iraqi exiles, not only enabled election winners to stack civil service positions with loyalists but also further exacerbated ethnic and sectarian differences. Since the system elects parties rather than individuals, it fails to hold politicians accountable and entices parties to build or consolidate support by handing out government jobs. Since the United States wanted to avoid lengthy statebuilding missions and had little knowledge of the internal dynamics within the countries, it had to rely on the expertise of individuals who were relatively unknown and needed to build loyalty and legitimacy. In short, both the design of the systems and the recognition bestowed by U.S. and foreign officials created a system whereby personal power was increasingly important, and the

manipulation of political appointments became the primary means of demonstrating and safeguarding this personal power.

This legacy of political corruption is hampering Iraq's economy and leading to massive protests. An ABCNews reportquoted one protestor saying, "Our demands are against corrupt parties in power and against the failed parliament." These protests came to a head in the so-called October Revolution in 2019 with calls to topple the government, leading to a government crackdown, the deaths of hundreds of Iraqis, and the resignation of the then-current Prime Minister Mahdi. Since the start of these protests a year ago, the new government has made many promises, including changing the electoral laws, but unless real change occurs, renewed protests marking the anniversary of last year's movement as well as the conditions that spurred them threaten to continue to destabilize Iraq.

In Afghanistan, this same scenario is impeding the ability of the government to consolidate peace with the Taliban. Although the United States helped the Afghan government broker a National Unity Government in 2014 to avoid complete chaos after disputed elections that year, the two candidates who agreed to share power have taken advantage of the vagueness of the agreement and stacked government and security positions with allies. Thus, even though the potential for political manipulation to end as new elections brought in new elected officials, new agreements still reinforced similar actions. As a Crisis Group article explains, "Political partisanship has permeated every level of the security apparatus…undermining their capacity to counter a growing insurgency." Moreover, the infighting threatens to weaken the peace process.

Though every country deals with various levels of corruption, the state-building processes in Afghanistan and Iraq have left a legacy that the U.S. understood to be a necessary evil in the beginning of the process. It was not anticipated, though, that this corruption would linger to such a degree that it would undermine American statebuilding and stabilization efforts entirely. In Iraq, political instability has enabled ISIS to resurge, Iran to increase its influence, and attacks against U.S. military personnel to increase. In Afghanistan, the failure to present a unified front against the Taliban undermines efforts to build peace and weakens efforts to rein in attacks against U.S. and partner security forces. Moreover, these realities coupled with the desire to withdraw troops leaves a real possibility of leaving failed or failing states — environments ripe for new or renewed issues to which the U.S. would need to respond. Ultimately, entrenched political corruption and the resulting political instability erodes U.S. strategic goals for both countries: stable, democratic states that can relatively manage their internal security and balance regional influencers such as Iran.

A Simple Strategy for Negotiating with North Korea in the Next Administration

George Hutchinson, 2020

In June 2018, for the first time ever, a North Korean leader met with a sitting U.S. President. Since the Singapore Summit, Kim Jong Un has made good on pausing nuclear and long-range missile tests. President Trump's unconventional "top down" approach may have succeeded at de-escalating tensions and creating breathing space for nuclear negotiations, but the issue of North Korean denuclearization remains on the table in an all too familiar state. As with previous agreements, North Korea's 2018 commitment only applied to pausing a portion of its overall proliferation program; while in reality, it has continued its efforts in earnest to improve and expand its nuclear weapons portfolio.

The U.S. positional negotiating strategy requiring complete, verifiable, irreversible dismantlement (CVID) up front in exchange for sanctions relief—defensible considering the U.S. policy on nonproliferation—has nonetheless failed to achieve an efficient rollback of Pyongyang's nuclear program and current U.S.-North Korea negotiations remain stalled. Based on past actions of the Kim regime and the new ICBMs recently revealed at a military parade, an incoming Biden administration should expect an immediate and direct challenge from North Korea meant to get the U.S. back to the negotiating table. In order to deal more effectively with North Korea, the new administration must develop an approach along four strategic lines.

First, prior to jumping into talks, fully comprehend North Korea's true negotiating objectives. "Denuclearization" is not a priority objective for North Korea. Prior to entering any new negotiations, the next administration should grasp the material and nonmaterial value that North Korea's nuclear program represents for the Kim regime. Kim Jong Un's nuclear weapons deterrent is the culmination of a 60-plus year science and technology grand legacy started by his grandfather, accelerated by his father, and then "perfected" by him. From this standpoint, it is vital the next administration understands that North Korea would never willingly relinquish all of its nuclear weapons—important to note prior to heading into negotiations.

Second, thoroughly grasp North Korea's motives and interests. The next administration will need to ensure it understands the full range of purpose that North Korea's nuclear program provides. Much of the literature on North Korea's nuclear motives focuses on regime survival. The weakness with over-reliance on this line of reasoning is that it fails to capture the full range of utility for North Korea's nuclear weapons. "Survival" only represents those needs at the very bottom of the utility range, when in fact, nuclear weapons provide much greater utility for North Korea. Nuclear

weapons give the country de facto "nuclear state" status, exaggerate its regional power and influence, and arm it with the potential to someday compel South Korea and radically alter the security balance in Northeast Asia. Even in a highly unlikely future scenario where the U.S. withdraws its forces from South Korea and is no longer present in the region, North Korea's nuclear weapons would still hold regional deterrence value against perceived threats from Japan, China and Russia.

Third, should the new administration choose to negotiate, it must "flip the script" and avoid the "uninformed buyer" role, where North Korea, as the seller, is put in the position of examining U.S. buyer proposals, only to ultimately conclude that the price (which always hinges on verification) the U.S. offers fails to meet the North Korean cost for denuclearization. U.S. and North Korean goals don't align on common interests, so making denuclearization the primary focus puts the U.S., which is blind as to the true extent of what it is attempting to buy, at a positional disadvantage. Moving forward, it will be necessary to flip the negotiating framework and put North Korea in the "buyer" role, where North Korea's goals and proposals must meet a cost for success that hinges on the progress it makes toward denuclearization. By doing this, it will be possible for some common interests, as implausible as that may seem, to emerge.

Lastly, the next administration should bolster its negotiating position by re-strengthening the U.S.-ROK alliance. The deadlocked U.S.-ROK defense cost-sharing talks (Special Measures Agreement), which triggered furloughs of South Korean employees assigned to U.S. Forces Korea, was altered in 2018 to require annual negotiations (versus every five years). This annual requirement should be abrogated and the process should be re-stabilized at longer intervals between negotiations. Moving forward, care should be taken to make cost-sharing negotiations less about transactional "wins" and more about reinstating a highly effective military alliance. Additionally, combined exercises, previously labeled "expensive" by the outgoing President Trump, should be fully re-instated to ensure the military readiness of the alliance.

By understanding the true objectives, motives and interests of North Korea's nuclear program and putting "buyer" onus on North Korea while re-strengthening the U.S.-ROK alliance, the new administration can expect more efficient outcomes when confronting North Korea over denuclearization.

Biden and China: Burgeoning Animosity

Dylan Crawford, 2021

Two years ago, then Presidential Candidate Biden seemed to disapprove of the Trump administration's stance on China, "Eat our Lunch?" he joked, "They're not competition." Yet President Biden recently stated the opposite in strikingly similar words; that our lunch was at risk from the Chinese, "if we don't get moving". This reversal in concern is reflected in the Biden administration's developing policy on China, which seems to be heading towards a more aggressive posture than that of the Trump administration's. Evidently, there seems to be bipartisan consensus that China is no longer a candidate for friendship but a competitor to be subdued.

When President Biden entered office one of his first actions was to rescind many of his predecessor's executive orders, including one targeting the Confucius Institute's presence in American universities. This step was interpreted by opponents as the first among many concessions to Chinese influence, but instead will likely soon be replaced by a more comprehensive bipartisan bill. Criticisms gave the executive order in question more weight than it deserved- it only called for universities to reveal their ties publicly rather than initiate an effort to combat Confucius Institute influence.
The true first step in Biden's approach to China was demonstrated not by action but inaction: leaving the Trump administration's tariffs on China in place. Biden left sanctions on Huawei similarly untouched after entering office and has actually moved towards a stricter attitude. Biden also announced his agreement with Trump's departing policy shift to allow U.S. government officials to visit Taiwan formally. Combined with the inaugural invitation Biden extended to Taiwan's de facto ambassador, the U.S.-Taiwan relationship is closer than ever to full diplomatic recognition.

The next sign of a punishing China policy was Biden's nominations for high level administration positions. For example, Biden's pick for CIA director—William Burns—told the Senate that he would recommend shutting down the aforementioned Confucius Institute. More important is Biden's Trade Representative Katherine Tai, whose selection was doubtless a slap in the face for China considering she is ethnically Taiwanese. Having served as chief council for China trade enforcement, she brings experience with China combined with expertise in law. Whereas Trump attempted to leverage trade to pull concessions in unfair trade practices, Biden seems to be setting a foundation to sue those like China who would violate U.S. trade law.

The Biden administration has also escalated criticism surrounding China's human right's abuses, focusing on the treatment of Uighurs in Xinjiang while bringing attention back to Hong Kong and

Tibet. These judgements contributed to an exceedingly hostile first official meeting between the Biden administration and Chinese representatives in Anchorage. Another cause for the animosity might have been the U.S. leveling of sanctions against Chinese officials, or China's likely retaliatory sanctions on U.S. officials. Regardless, if the Chinese representatives' mood reflects Beijing's, then it is clear that China is already frustrated by the new administration.

Feelings of resentment also likely stem from Biden's maintenance of sanctions on Iran—which was once a leading energy supplier for China—and his deployment of two aircraft carrier strike groups to sail through the South China Sea. Taken together, the Biden administration has built upon Trump-era policies to thoroughly constrict China economically, diplomatically, and militarily. While the pressure has drawn the ire of the Chinese Communist Party, this does not imply that the Biden administration should loosen their approach. On the contrary, it implies that the policies are working. Given this, there is not only no reason to stop but also incentives to continue a campaign of pressure until Chinese indignation gives way to acquiescence on contentious issues.

China has been open about having their eyes on 'our lunch' for years and the U.S. has, until recently, done little to dissuade their desire. Relations with the Chinese Communist Party were made in hopes that friendship would lead China away from human rights abuses and authoritarian control but have failed to do so. If the carrot will not work, then it is time for the stick. The alternative is to let China continue to undermine the rules based international order with impunity as they have been doing for decades. President Biden is in a position to leverage his international popularity and China's record low international standing to turn partner states against China. To this end, combating China's vaccine diplomacy should be the next step of the Biden administration's punitive campaign, which should continue until China's threat to Taiwan, unfair trade practices, and human rights abuses come to an end.

The Strategic Trade Catch-22: Balancing Technological Protection and Market Competition with China

Noah Zoroya, 2021

The Department of Commerce (DOC) Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) faced sharp criticism last summer over its longtime failure to produce a list of "foundational" technologies as mandated by the 2018 Export Control Reform Act (ECRA). "It's been three years, and we've done almost nothing," blasted Derek Scissors, a China economics expert with the American Enterprise Institute. BIS has not yet even agreed on a definition of foundational technologies; but presumably they are ubiquitous technologies – like semiconductors – critical to national security, coveted by adversaries, and not generally subject to US export control laws. As BIS drags its feet, China continues its campaign to steal sensitive US technology. This problem is more complex than bureaucratic negligence, however; it highlights unresolved issues plaguing US strategy to maintain technological superiority. It begs the question: how does the United States balance its obligation to protect its technical edge over China while also maintaining access to essential Chinese markets upon which US technology firms depend?

The bipartisan US-China Economic and Security Review Commission captures the anxiety around DOC's slow rollout of ECRA: "Congress entrusted the U.S. Department of Commerce with implementing its intent for strengthening U.S. export control laws, but the Department of Commerce has, to date, failed to carry out its responsibilities."

ECRA promotes anti-proliferation of dual-use items (goods with civilian and military applications), thus advancing an array of US foreign policy objectives – from combatting terrorism to furthering human rights. However, ECRA's central focus is countering China's efforts to acquire US technology and intellectual property.

US-China trade interdependence poses a difficult export control dilemma. Historically, the US always honed export controls to comport with its foreign policy agenda. From the fascist powers of the early 20th century to the USSR, the US government consistently restricted US private industry from selling dual-use items to overseas adversaries. Simultaneously, the United States led the development of international regimes designed to slow the proliferation of nuclear, chemical, biological, and conventional weapons. Today is different. Many US high-technology firms depend upon profits reaped from China's market – an adversary – to fund further Research and Development (R&D).

The US semiconductor industry embodies this export control catch-22. John Verwey, a trade analyst with a focus on microtechnology, highlights that "in the past five years, the market for semiconductor manufacturing equipment in China has grown from 5 percent of the world's total spending to over 25 percent. It is impossible to divorce the health of the U.S. semiconductor equipment industry from access to Chinese markets." US semiconductor firms – which invest on average 18 percent of their revenue into R&D – stand to lose billions if they face restricted access to Chinese markets. Furthermore, when DOC solicited US high-technology firms for feedback on foundational technology policy, many pointed out that Chinese buyers would simply pivot to third party sellers in Europe and Japan, thus undermining the fundamental point of export controls: preventing proliferation. Any short-term benefits from controlling foundational technologies and closing China's access come at the expense of long-term sector viability.

China is moving aggressively to close its technology gap with the US. It has poured billions into R&D. In 2017, Chinese President Xi Jinping launched the Central Commission for Military-Civil Fusion Development that requires all Chinese entities (including private firms) to turn over pertinent intellectual property to the government for military development. US trade controls, which undermine the competitiveness of US firms, are no match for China's science and technology enterprise.

Rather than implementing clumsy export control policies that stunt innovation, the US government should look to best China by fostering a fertile US science and technology enterprise. The most important step is to put more resources toward R&D. By catalyzing US technological breakthroughs, we can remain well ahead of China. Congress is beginning to move in the right direction. The Senate passed a China competitiveness bill in June, which allocates $200 billion for R&D programs. Unfortunately, since June, the bill has sat idle in the House. Another beneficial move is to promote policies that strengthen US high-technology firms. In the short term, BIS should heed private sector recommendations to narrowly define "foundational technologies." Allowing unfettered overseas exports to China of ubiquitous goods already available from third-party sellers boosts private sector profits, thus furthering private sector R&D. Sell baby sell.

China aims for a self-sufficient semiconductor industry over the long term. If the US focuses on technological advancement, rather than instituting clumsy export controls, we can preserve our technological edge over China – like running faster to win.

The Attack on Ukraine: Domestic and International Pressures on America's Response

Tim Bynion , 2022

The ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine has shocked the world and led to condemnation from across the political spectrum. Vladimir Putin's unprovoked attack on a neighboring country led to near unanimous condemnation from Western countries, and his actions will likely further isolate Russia within the international community. Despite this international backlash, Russia continues its assault all across Ukraine, which means many are now looking to the United States and President Biden in his position as "leader of the free world" to see what steps the U.S. and its NATO allies will take next. Since international politics is a two-level game, it is necessary to examine the domestic political restraints on Biden's actions as well as his views on America's position in the international community to understand how the U.S. will react to the invasion in the weeks to come. Specifically, Biden's efforts to rebrand the U.S. as a defender of global democracy are severely hampered by an American public seemingly uninterested in reclaiming that title.

On the domestic side, President Biden suffers from lackluster approval ratings from the American public. Beginning around late August 2021, more Americans indicate disapproval than approval of Biden's job as President, with approximately 54% of Americans disapproving of his administration today. Therefore, Biden's actions toward Russia should be examined in the context of a leader attempting to bolster his and his party's image leading up to the midterm elections in November 2022. Adopting a strong stance against Russia could be politically beneficial for the President, as 85% of Americans view Russia unfavorably, and this disdain is bipartisan, with 88% of both Democrats and Republicans holding that view. Despite partisan polarization across most issues in American politics today, Democrats and Republicans also feel similarly about how the U.S. should respond to Russia's attack on Ukraine. Among both Democrats and Republicans, 84% support increased sanctions on Russia, but partisans draw the line at direct military intervention, with 56% in each party opposed. To date, President Biden's actions align with public opinion, as he implemented economic sanctions while emphatically stating that American troops will not be sent to Ukraine. Absent a direct attack on the U.S., it remains unlikely that Americans' opinions on the use of military force will change regardless of how the situation in Ukraine unfolds. Therefore, we should not expect a major change in course from the Biden administration.

That being said, we should also remain cognizant of the international pressures on the U.S. to counter Russia's aggression and how Biden may perceive these pressures. Throughout his campaign for president and subsequent time in office, President Biden emphasized the U.S. commitment to NATO in the wake of former President Trump's repeated criticisms of the long-standing military alliance. Biden routinely states that he sees NATO as "critically important for U.S. interests" and views Article 5 as a "sacred obligation." Since Ukraine is not yet a NATO member despite its efforts to join the alliance, the U.S. is not obligated to come to its defense. Yet, the invasion raises larger questions about the level of Russian aggression that the U.S. will allow without increased repercussions. Biden sees strong U.S. leadership as essential to protecting freedom, democracy, and human rights around the world from authoritarian regimes like Russia, and the attack on Ukraine poses the greatest test of his presidency to that commitment. However, domestic political pressures may stand in tension with Biden's stated commitments to protecting democracy outside of U.S. borders, and his administration's actions in the coming weeks will shape how both Americans and the international community perceive his priorities.

In summary, those who wish to understand how the Biden administration is approaching the attack on Ukraine need to consider both the domestic and international pressures that shape the President's decision making. While economic sanctions do not appear to be slowing Russia's attacks on the Ukrainian people, Biden has few other policy options that are acceptable to the American public. Unless the ramifications of the invasion begin to affect Americans' everyday lives more directly, we should not expect a major shift in public opinion. What remains to be seen is how exactly this crisis will impact Biden's efforts to rebrand the U.S. as the world's foremost promoter of freedom and democracy. Images of unnecessary war and suffering across Ukraine with little direct international intervention may do lasting damage to these efforts.

American Values and Great Power Competition

Joshua Stone, 2022

In his inaugural Cold War address, President Harry Truman proclaimed that "the United States and other like-minded nations find themselves directly opposed by a regime with contrary aims and a totally different concept of life...[Authoritarianism] is based on the belief that man is so weak and inadequate that he is unable to govern himself, and therefore requires the rule of strong masters. Democracy is based on the conviction that man has the moral and intellectual capacity, as well as the inalienable right, to govern himself with reason and justice." Today, authoritarianism has found a global foothold again, and democracy, sacrificed so greatly for, is under threat—yes, we are in the early days of a cold war.

Competition for primacy between the United States, Russia, and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is straining conventional security dilemmas. Scholars of great power competition presuppose these challenges are for rational-seeking security. This assumption is half wrong to a fault. If China and the United States only seek rational security, then why are two nuclear powers engaging in such risky brinksmanship over Taiwan? Why would Russia invade Ukraine when Vladimir Putin knew the West would come to her aide, entrapping Putin's army in protracted warfare? Because what's at stake is bigger than material power. What's at stake is a shared conception of the world we all participate in creating.

Political scientists often debate how and to what extent opposing concepts like ideas and material interests affect state behavior. Presently, the United States and her partners are acting on those material interests by deterring offensive conduct exhibited by Russia and the CCP. The U.S. and her allies are attempting to deliver on their word that cooperation and rules of conduct among states facilitated by the Liberal International Order (LIO) works. Now, the U.S. must reactivate Truman's programmatic support policies, like the Marshall Plan, by instrumentalizing America's values proposition through foreign policy: the world is better off with U.S. investments and common defense against tyranny.

Like the end of the Cold War, this modern chapter of great power competition will close when authoritarian regimes that try and engineer society in their own image come into closer ideational alignment with the LIO. The question of our time is whether they will, and to what degree these powers will transform. Will China, Russia, and other dictatorial regimes reform to adopt a more liberal conception of governance and international conduct? Or will the United States compromise democracy and the rule of law–priceless interests—to resemble the identity of its rivals? Unfortunately, the outcome seems to be finding itself somewhere in the middle; a dialectic turn

that will never satisfy the ideational appetites of free peoples around the world. This is where we find ourselves now. Not merely in a categorical competition for technological and economic power, but a paradigmatic shift for ontological security—the severity of security dilemmas between great powers are largely being regulated by ideas.

This is why the great power competition of our time feels so chaotic and intense. During a cold war, psychological struggles predominate the social landscape, and cultural and governance norms are far more messy, more emotional, and more irrational than rational security dilemmas. Why has the world experienced a reversion to nationalism? Because what's at stake is not just the preservation of a territorial homeland, but each nation's "way" of life. Suppression of the global spread of China and Russia's authoritarian models, in as much as the U.S. can, rests in her ability to win the psychological contest—to achieve ideational victory. To do so, the U.S. is continuing to instrumentalize grievances over human rights conduct and condemn China and Russia's ambitions as predatorial and unreliable. Now America needs to further promote its values through foreign policy beyond Ukraine, invest in the world, protect the vulnerable, and give other nations a clear vision; a real opportunity to succeed with America's help. Securing liberty and justice, and creating peace comes at a cost and requires credibility.

To this end, the U.S. government should strive for perfection and live up to its own standards of conduct. The American people need their elected officials to restore some degree of honor to the practice of politics. Most Americans know honorable politics when we see it and citizens follow the examples available to them. What American citizens are witnessing in their domestic politics just isn't cutting it. The success of a great power today rests in its capacity to be loved more than feared. Fear will work to dissuade opposition in the short run, but sympathy and common values with a great power can deliver sustained legitimacy and with it, long-term global security, stability, and prosperity. The competition the U.S. confronts is for hearts and minds, not just bullets and butter.

Politics Beyond the Water's Edge: The 2024 United States Presidential Campaign May Prove Decisive for Ukrainian Sovereignty

Brad Duplessis, 2023

The decisive battle for Ukraine is likely to begin next February in Iowa when voters take to the polls for the first primary of the 2024 presidential campaign. Former President Donald Trump and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis currently lead early polling to secure the Republican nomination—both view continued support for Ukraine as not being in America's vital national interest. This is problematic for three major reasons. First, the Russo-Ukrainian War appears to be closer to its beginning than its end as there currently is little incentive for negotiation. Second, there is uncertainty as to whether Washington will provide aid to Kyiv for the long-term; and if the timing and scale of aid provided will affect battlefield conditions. This uncertainty favors Russia—Russia's larger population and economic base allows Moscow to absorb losses of manpower and materiel that Kyiv simply cannot. Third, after being skewered for its chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Biden administration's support for Ukraine is a striking foreign policy success that has not only checked Russian aggression, but revitalized the European security architecture. Russian combat losses have resulted in Moscow drawing on outdated equipment and turning to like-minded nations to augment its equipment losses and source its ammunition requirements. Coupled with a sanctions regime that has yet to take a deep bite out of the Russian economy, it is clear that Moscow will struggle to regenerate lost combat capability for the foreseeable future.

Russian forces have underperformed in Ukraine, clearly demonstrating a conventional force of quantity, not quality. Ukrainian forces have proven their valor and competence, holding off the world's second largest army from taking Kyiv in the opening salvo of the war—and stabilizing their lines as the fighting shifted to the east and south where Russian-backed separatists have been entrenched since the 2014 invasion of "little green men." Western nations would not have coalesced around Ukraine's struggle without Washington's strong leadership.

Security Assistance: What is it Good For?

Former President Trump has long questioned the utility of U.S. security agreements. The former president recently told a popular conservative television and radio host that he would negotiate a peace deal resulting in Russia taking over portions of Ukraine. Former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, an advisor to the Ukrainian government, views a potential Trump return to lead the Republican Party as potentially eroding bipartisan support for further Ukrainian security assistance. Governor DeSantis recently joined the fray, labeling the conflict as a "territorial dispute" between the two states and not in America's vital interests. DeSantis then proceeded to

tick off several challenges he viewed as more important, including countering China's growing economic and military power.

This is a false dilemma—Washington can do both. Supporting Ukraine helps counter China by demonstrating American commitment to its partners and the norms of the international system while simultaneously revitalizing a dormant defense industrial base that will be required in any future high-end military confrontation. Indeed, the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment posits that just-in-time logistics will fail in high end competition. The Russo-Ukrainian War has laid bare the challenges in surging defense production rapidly amidst crisis.

The Influence of Elite Messaging and Public Opinion

Political scientists have long studied how elite messaging influences public attitude formation. In The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion, John Zaller found that citizens are reliant on others for information about the world, and as such, often turn to political elite cues to form opinions. Additionally, citizens are much more likely to follow the cues of a leader who shares their ideological and partisan viewpoints. This phenomenon is observable regarding popular support for Ukrainian security assistance.

Trump and DeSantis' views are not an anomaly, but indicative of mainstream Republican discourse across the electorate. According to the Pew Research Center, there is a growing partisan divide regarding U.S. support for Ukraine. A month into the conflict, 42 percent of Americans believed that the U.S. was providing too little support to Ukraine—Republicans were the largest constituency espousing this belief. In contrast, Pew's January 2023 survey shows declining support for Ukrainian assistance from both Republicans and Democrats. Examining the responses along partisan political lines presents a more complete story. Democrats witnessed a 10 percent increase in those believing Washington is providing too much support for Ukraine; and a 15 percent decline in those stating the U.S. should do more to support Ukraine than a year ago. Republican differences are much starker. 40 percent of Republicans now believe the U.S. is providing too much support for Ukraine—a 31 percent increase from last year—and a 32 percent decrease in those stating the U.S. is not providing enough support to Ukraine. Additionally, echoing former President Trump and Governor DeSantis, Republicans are less likely than Democrats to view the Russo-Ukrainian War as a major threat to the United States.

In summary, the "Party of Reagan " opposes aid to Ukraine while the military power of the Soviet Union's successor state is being badly degraded on the battlefield. Surprisingly, the two leading candidates for the party's 2024 presidential nomination view this as not aligning with the national interest. Trump and DeSantis currently have the support of approximately 70 percent of

Republican voters; and therefore, outsized influence in shaping the party's policy position moving forward.

The Utility of Security Assistance

Washington has provided Ukraine $32.2 billion of security assistance since Russia's February 2022 invasion while European Union and NATO member states have provided approximately $17 billion. Ukrainian armed forces have increasingly demonstrated the ability to absorb and employ advanced weapon systems, allowing Kyiv to mitigate Ukraine's relative lack of military mass. This cannot be overstated. Receipt of increasingly advanced equipment has proven critical to halting the momentum of Moscow's military campaign.

To be clear, security assistance is no panacea, but it levels the playing field. In certain cases—such as the fielding of long-range artillery; unmanned aerial systems; air defense systems; advanced main battle tanks; and fighters such as the MiG-29s that Poland and Slovakia recently pledged to deliver to Ukraine—more modern equipment is one way to turn unfavorable loss exchange ratios on its head. Specifically, the aforementioned equipment allows Ukrainian forces to be better protected, while detecting and engaging Russian ground maneuver forces, logistics units, and staging areas at increased ranges. In short, predictable security assistance has the potential to allow Ukrainian forces to regain the initiative and mitigate Russia's two major advantages—mass and time.

Although analysts rightfully point to Russia's high casualty rates and exponentially high loss of equipment, there is no evidence these factors will change Putin's calculus, and thus draw him to the negotiating table. According to estimates, Russia has lost upwards of 200,000 troops during its offensive compared to 120,000 Ukrainian troops being either wounded or killed. The numbers, however, only tell part of the story.

Moscow's overreliance on non-Russian minorities and conscripts from the poorer, more distant regions of Russia has led to "cannon fodder" tactics, which Russian commanders have employed to degrade Ukrainian capacity and capability. In contrast, Ukrainian leaders report that combat losses are beginning to impact troop quality, thus degrading military effectiveness at a crucial time when leaders in Kyiv are planning a spring counter-offensive. Republican leaders explicitly questioning the utility of America's investment in Ukraine plays into Putin's hands.

To establish conditions favorable to either a defeat of the Russian armed forces, or a position of strength from which Ukraine can negotiate an end to hostilities commensurate with its security requirements, the United States must commit to long-term guarantees of further lethal aid to Kyiv. The two Republican frontrunners for the party's 2024 nomination decry the loss of American prestige while touting Beijing as Washington's greatest global threat. This may be true, but it

obfuscates the linkage between support for Ukraine and countering China, presenting the false dilemma of an either or proposition. Failure to support Ukraine calls into question America's commitment to its global partners and destroys the norms undergirding legitimate state behavior. Russia must not be able to dictate terms to its neighbors simply because it possesses the power to do so. China is no doubt taking notes.

Strengthening Alliances in the Indo-Pacific

Nicholas Davidson, 2023

A mere five years ago, US allies in the Indo-Pacific (namely South Korea, Japan, and the Philippines) had reason to fear abandonment by their once-close partner. While the outgoing Obama administration carefully fostered relations with our allies, closing out with something like a victory lap in the last year of his term, the incoming Trump administration did not necessarily build upon that foundation. The fickle nature of Trump's relationship with the Indo-Pacific led US allies to forge their own path. This power gap allowed the region's dominant power, China, to tighten economic ties with South Korea and Japan, while continuing to antagonize the Philippines in the South China Sea. With lessened US involvement, these core allies were looking at a future where the US was absent. Current US policy changes are fighting back against that future, where increased tensions between it and China are causing allies to balance against Beijing.

Over the past few years, US allies in the Indo-Pacific struggled with the issue of abandonment by their partner. In 2019, the US government blindsided South Korea with a demand to share the costs of maintaining the joint forces operation in the country after making off-handed remarks about withdrawing troop support entirely. While the Trump administration was ramping up its defense posture in the region, Japan simultaneously appreciated the effort while it worked quietly to explore other options critical to its armed forces. The Philippines, too, considered rescinding its Visiting Forces Agreement, a keystone treaty that facilitated US military and contractor personnel working in the island nation. While none of these alone constituted a major downturn in US influence in the region, collectively they signaled that cracks might be beginning to form in formerly air-tight partnerships.

This is not the case anymore. Tensions between China and the US are escalating with what is being dubbed the "Chip War." Initiated by the Biden administration, US export controls are targeting China's semiconductor development and manufacturing capabilities. As a follow-up to the Trump-era ban on electronic components built by Huawei and ZTE, the Department of Commerce updated its guidelines to limit sales of high-end chips to China. Additional limitations were set in the 2023 NDAA, which prohibits federal government agencies from entering contracts with companies who use electronics or semiconductors from China, although those limitations will take effect in 2028. These limitations target big tech manufacturers, many of whom hold sizable contracts with the US government that they would sorely miss. Some US allies are working with the federal government in limiting chip exports to China, as well. In conjunction with the CHIPS and Science Act, which aims to boost domestic semiconductor manufacturing, the US is clearly signaling to China that it intends to continue cutting China out of a high-tech future.

Amidst the rising tensions between the US and China over semiconductor posturing, the United States has emboldened its allies. Despite its many missteps, the Trump administration did do its part in initiating disengagement from China, beginning in 2018 with import tariffs on Chinese products. The Biden administration has continued this policy, but has also spurred closer cooperation with its allies in the Indo-Pacific region. It secured an agreement with Japan to restrict high-tech exports to China and, along with South Korea and Taiwan, formed the "Chip 4 Alliance" or "Fab 4" to further cooperation among the world's leading chip manufacturers. The Philippines, in stark contrast to their stance in 2020, are now inviting the US to increase its military presence. Although not permanent, an increased American presence in the country will help to counter the pressure China has been applying in the South China Sea. This circling of the wagons by the United States and its Indo-Pacific allies clearly signals its resolve to counter China in the coming decade.

Effective Bulwarks or Pillars of Sand? Benefits and Risks of the Twin Pillars Policy

Steven Wachter, 2023

For much of the 1970's the United States sought to protect its interests while avoiding direct intervention and new commitments in the Persian Gulf by acting through regional partners. Known as the Twin Pillars Policy, the US relied on Iran and Saudi Arabia to protect American interests while it was overstretched and faced challenges around the globe. While the policy proved effective in the early 1970s, it also had inherent challenges and risks that made relying on the Twin Pillars Policy indefinitely unwise and ultimately led to its failure.

Like the late 1960s, policymakers today must formulate a strategy to defend US interests and achieve their aims while facing resource constraints, competing priorities, and a public wariness of overseas commitments. While the Nixon Administration adopted the Twin Pillars Policy, the Biden Administration may be tempted to adopt a similar strategy. The Biden Administration's recent National Security Strategy suggests that this might be their inclination when it calls for empowering allies and partners in the Middle East while reducing the region's demands on US resources. This may also underlay their current push for an Israeli-Saudi peace deal and diplomatic normalization. As a result, the US role in the Middle East could shift from direct regional engagement to instead supporting regional partners, with Israel, Saudi Arabia and the UAE in the forefront as they take the lead as a loose coalition to uphold the regional order, linked by their alignment with the US and a shared concern over the threat posed by Iran. Before committing to this policy, US policymakers should recall the costs and benefits of the Twin Pillars Policy when considering the rebalancing of US engagement across multiple regions.

Pursuing an approach analogous to the Twin Pillars Policy may appear attractive. In its early years, the policy enabled the US to traverse a trying period of the Cold War with its core interests intact at an acceptable cost. Its successes included frustrating Soviet inroads into the Middle East, Iran checking Soviet-backed Iraq, preserving the Arab Gulf Monarchies, and defeating a communist-backed revolt in Oman. These were not trivial accomplishments and supported the US' primary interests of ensuring regional stability, limiting Soviet influence, and ensuring western access to the Gulf's energy sources.

However, the Twin Pillars Policy had inherent challenges and risks that must be considered. The most significant challenge is that the more the US relies on a partner, the more autonomy and leverage that partner will have. This should give modern policymakers pause; while the US may avoid the costs of regional intervention, it may come at the price of US influence in resolving

regional issues and the full consideration of its views. The extent of this challenge will vary with the degree the US is reliant on its regional partners but will be ever-present since even if the US and its partner's interests and preferences converge, they will almost certainly not entirely overlap. Even with a high degree of convergence, the US should not be shocked if a partner sacrifices US interests or preferences when they differ from their own. The greater the US reliance and the longer it is extended, the larger the risk that US policy aims, interests, and preferences may be compromised by partners pursuing theirs.

For example, in the 1970s the Iranian Shah was not the "unconditional ally" that Nixon and Kissinger believed him to be, but harbored his own goals that sometimes ran counter to Washington's. One notable dispute centered on the Shah's pursuit of an Iranian nuclear program in the face of US opposition, with the Ford Administration's reliance on Tehran leaving it few effective means to address the situation. Similarly, the Carter Administration, like its predecessors, largely refrained from criticizing the Shah's human rights record in order to help secure Iran's cooperation as a regional partner and out of a desire for Iran's aid in lowering oil prices. In cases across administrations, US policymakers were forced to compromise on issues of significant concern lest they risk Iran's role in the Twin Pillars Policy.

The Twin Pillars Policy's most serious risk was its reliance on regional allies and their political leaderships. This was demonstrated in 1979 when the policy collapsed alongside the Shah's regime in what historian Gregory Gause describes as "...an unmitigated disaster for the United States, the most damaging single blow to American interests in the Middle East in the post-World War II period." This left the US strategically exposed in the Persian Gulf and Washington scrambling to develop the capabilities to respond to the crisis itself and to defend its broader regional interests.

In sum, the Twin Pillars Policy was an effective short-term strategy to protect American interests in the early 1970s at a time of strategic overstretch while facing a global array of challenges. However, as time went on, the risks associated with the Twin Pillars made it an increasingly questionable strategy. As the US gradually recovered from its overextended geopolitical position and the strains of the Vietnam War receded the risks and costs of the Twin Pillars Policy should have been reevaluated. The policy had protected US interests in a period of crisis but as time went on the significant reliance on regional partners added to their autonomy, decreased US leverage, and eventually left the US strategically vulnerable in 1979. Should modern US policymakers choose to pursue a similar strategy, they would be wise to carefully mitigate against the inherent risks by retaining at least some US capability to act independently in the region. Above all, they should remember that despite being useful situationally it proved unwise to rely so heavily on regional partners indefinitely.

India-Canada Tensions- Impact on US Security Interests

Anirudh Prakash , 2023

Over the past month and a half, tensions between India and Canada have escalated dramatically. On September 18th, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau delivered a surprising statement in Parliament that accused New Delhi of spearheading an assassination against Hardeep Singh Nijjar—a Canadian-Sikh—in Vancouver. A tit-for-tat diplomatic expulsion ensued, with Ottawa expelling an Indian high commissioner and New Delhi expelling the Canadian intelligence station chief. India suspended visas for Canadians and Canada considered reducing their diplomatic staff in light of safety concerns. This latest spat has created a major diplomatic row between two enduring partners, leading bilateral relations to their lowest point in years. The United States, at this point, has been mum on this issue. With Canadian membership in NATO and Indian participation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), these developments are a national security concern for the United States and thus serve as a wake-up call for Washington to emphasize further cooperation on such matters.

Over the course of 2023, India-Canada relations were relatively steady. Seeking to diversify the Canadian economy, Trudeau saw India as a critical partner under Ottawa's Indo-Pacific strategy, considering the country's growing economic and political rise as well as demographic importance in the region. However, from mid-September relations have soured. In early June, Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar warned of a movement of Sikh separatists known as the Khalistanis. Days after those warnings, Canadian Sikh Hardeep Singh Nijjar was shot dead in front of a Sikh temple, or gurdwara, in Vancouver. Following Trudeau's statement, Five Eyes—an intelligence-sharing alliance between the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada—informed the Canadians of details that linked the assassination to the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), India's premier espionage agency. These revelations have forced Washington to walk a tightrope between its allies, as Canada is a NATO partner and India is a counterweight against China in the Indo-Pacific. Not only are Indo-Canadian relations spiking, but the national security interests of the US are being put at risk.

At the moment, the United States has yet to speak out formally on this issue. President Biden reportedly spoke to his Indian counterpart privately about the killing, but the Biden administration has notably refrained from publicly issuing a strong statement of any kind. Even if Washington has privately shared intelligence with the Trudeau administration per its role in Five Eyes, it has remained quiet on the issue. This is a national security concern for the White House's alliance strategy and in order to mitigate it, the Biden administration must be willing to cooperate with both stakeholders in investigating the issue. American law enforcement agencies should coordinate

with Canadian Security Services, facilitated alongside the State Department. Moreover, for this effort to gain traction, it is important for the President to also get India on board as they are in the spotlight for this case. India still denies their involvement in the transnational killing. Ottawa continues to point to India as a potential suspect; however, considering India's response toward the incident, it still continues to be unlikely for New Delhi to cooperate in the short term.

The latest diplomatic tussle has been another headache for Washington. Considering the two strategic partners, the United States continues to be enmeshed with questions surrounding whether to stand by Canada for their statement, whether to stand up to India should those allegations be true, or vice versa. Regardless, given how close Washington's NATO partnership is to Canada and how reliant the United States continues to be on India for balancing against China, a measured yet firm stance from the White House on this issue is a good bet both for those critical alliances overseas as well as for our country's national security.

The U.S. Must Rethink its Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy

Dharma Bhatt, 2024

Since its independence, the United States has maintained some manner of presence within the Indo-Pacific region. Throughout various administrations, the Indo-Pacific has had a place in the development of American foreign policy; however, the order of importance has fluctuated. The Biden administration has laid out strategic areas of focus in which the U.S. will engage. The focus of promoting and maintaining a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP) is just one of the administration's strategies to maintain U.S. influence in the region. Currently, it serves as a primary framework for policy development and decisions. The U.S., however, must improve the FOIP initiative by providing clarity as to what it really is and take action to increase cooperation on a variety of issues with Indo-Pacific states.

Despite having a general direction through FOIP as to how the U.S. should engage with countries in the Indo-Pacific, a significant amount of ambiguity still needs to be clarified. This is especially true with member states of the Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN). This ambiguity stems from the misconception that FOIP serves as a premise to solely counterbalance China's influence in the region, especially given that the U.S. position towards China has hardened over the sovereignty of Taiwan and the South China Sea in recent years.

FOIP may be perceived as a method of containment rather than a genuine method of promoting freedom and openness in the region. Hence, ASEAN members hesitate to incorporate the concept into their policy framework. Due to this, the members adopt hedging strategies to avoid taking the side of the U.S. or China and risk their neutrality on topics of interest such as trade and security. For example, Malaysia considers China one of its largest trading partners. They would be loath to take part in an initiative that could compromise their trade relations with the second-largest economy in the world, which also happens to be a neighboring state. As such, the neglect of economic engagements under FOIP and the risk of stroking unnecessary tensions comes down to the broad definition of FOIP and the need for more clarity associated with it. Other non-ASEAN member states, such as South Korea, do not wish to fully entangle themselves in this great power struggle, even though they wish to lower reliance on Chinese imports.

Rhetoric by U.S. officials is insufficient to clarify FOIP in the minds of regional actors. It also comes down to policies enacted or showing genuine intent in regional development to support prosperity, not just to garner support against China. The U.S. needs to engage deliberately with Indo-Pacific nations on a bilateral basis before shifting to a multilateral basis, as this provides opportunities to work one-on-one on issues of trade, energy, and infrastructure development

projects. Security-wise, the U.S. has worked excellently with Indo-Pacific countries through joint exercises, security agreements, and its commitment to maritime navigational rights.

The U.S. needs to have a more appealing and concrete economic strategy that provides access to American investments. Some options include deepening trade with ASEAN, specifically a free trade agreement with the organization directly or with individual member states, which would significantly increase foreign direct investment in those countries. Even working towards ensuring a secure and robust supply chain through cooperation with Indo-Pacific states provides the opportunity for trade and economic security through turbulent geopolitical situations.

The increasing significance of the Indo-Pacific in both the economic and security realms is undeniable. As such, the U.S. must exhibit sincere interest and steadfast commitment to Indo-Pacific countries and should not merely fall under the category of forming coalitions to counter China. Especially with ASEAN, member countries may find themselves more open to discussing the FOIP initiative without the risk of damaging their relations with China. The U.S. has the chance to collaborate with Indo-Pacific countries on issues on a bilateral or multilateral basis. However, to garner support for FOIP, there must be a clarified commitment by the U.S. The overall nature of U.S. engagement with these countries can be tied to their individual relationships with China, and the U.S. should consider this a factor when determining its approach with these countries.

Maritime Security: The Cornerstone of the Quad's Strategic Focus

Dharma Bhatt, 2025

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, also known as QSD and more commonly called the "Quad," is a security partnership between Australia, India, Japan, and the United States. Since its origin as a joint humanitarian effort in response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the Quad has evolved into an intergovernmental platform for addressing modern Indo-Pacific security concerns, such as maritime security challenges. As tensions escalate, the Quad should emphasize maritime cooperation and security efforts to align with its intent on maintaining regional stability.

In recent years, the Quad has increased collaboration between member states through infrastructure development, economic cooperation, climate change, health security, and humanitarian assistance. Despite the importance of these issue areas, maritime security should take precedence as it directly addresses significant regional threats. Particularly in the wake of various acts of Chinese aggression in the South China Sea (SCS), such as territorial violations, naval confrontations, and the militarization of disputed islands, prioritizing maritime security is crucial to counter these threats to regional stability.

Although Quad member states may have differing priorities in areas such as climate or economic cooperation, maritime security is the shared interest that unifies them against a shared security challenge. China's persistent threats and activities around Taiwan and the SCS make maritime security a point of urgency. Emphasizing maritime security, such as through freedom of navigation voyages, provides the Quad with legitimacy against aggression while bolstering its ability to serve as a stabilizing influence in the region.

The Quad's Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) showcases how concentrating on maritime security could benefit Quad members and their regional partners. The IPMDA framework is a significant step in supporting and building regional capacity in maritime security by enhancing surveillance and security innovation. By moving forward with similar initiatives, the Quad could reinforce its position as a leader in Indo-Pacific security, thus offering regional allies and partners practical tools to counter illegal operations and respond to acts of coercion. Focusing on strengthening this sector will not only secure vital sea lanes in maintaining the status quo but also increase trust among Quad members.

Prioritizing strategic maritime security can lead to opportunities for the Quad to engage with other Indo-Pacific nations facing similar security challenges. For example, countries like Vietnam and the Philippines are interested in maritime security due to territorial disputes with China and concerns

over illegal fishing. Recently, the Philippines has also sought to increase maritime cooperation, given the recent Chinese actions of ship ramming, usage of water cannons, and other unsafe naval maneuvers against Filipino assets.

While the Quad's expanded agenda and goals enhance its appeal as a cooperative framework, a broad focus across many areas may impact its effectiveness in adequately addressing regional challenges. Unlike security arrangements such as NATO, the Quad lacks a formalized mandate and relies on the resolve of its members, as some states in the region do not want formal treaty commitments due to their dependence on China. As such, Quad acts as a middle ground for cooperation on mutual interests as an informal grouping. For example, India seeks to counter China's influence in the region but does not want to fully antagonize China.

However, an additional emphasis on maritime security offers Quad members, including India, a tangible and impactful way to cooperate on maritime security without the commitment to a formal alliance. Recent initiatives include personnel from Australia, Japan, and India taking part in training exercises on a U.S. Coast Guard vessel in 2025. This focus aligns with the Quad's activities, and the current regional landscape allows for a flexible and practical approach to cooperation.

The Quad security partnership continues to gain strategic importance as geopolitical tensions increase in the Indo-Pacific region. While the Quad has expanded its focus to include healthcare cooperation, technological innovation, economic resilience, and disaster relief, the core theme of maritime security remains critical to maintaining regional stability. A stronger emphasis on maritime security would allow the Quad to establish itself as a vital component in Indo-Pacific security, thus building a security framework that supports lasting peace in the region.

The Greenland Dilemma: Balancing Independence, Security, and Foreign Influence

Abby Bell, 2025

Although Greenland's independence movement is not new, it has been gaining momentum over the last two decades and has recently benefited from the international spotlight brought about in part by President Donald Trump's comments about annexing the island "one way or the other." The world's largest island is a semi-autonomous Danish territory that hosts a population of approximately 56,000 people, 88% of whom are indigenous Greenlanders. Though currently politically aligned with Europe as a Danish territory, an independent Greenland would be a potential target for regional competition with Russia and China due to its natural resources and strategic Arctic location. While independence does not seem likely in the near term, the West should consider actions to help integrate an independent Greenland into Western security and economic frameworks to strengthen regional Arctic stability and help counter any adverse Russian or Chinese influence.

Greenland shares a long history with Denmark, first becoming a Danish colony in 1775 and then a territory after 1953. It gained limited self-rule in 2009 in all areas except for foreign affairs, defense, and monetary policy. It now also has the legal right to declare independence after holding a referendum. A 2025 poll revealed that 84% of Greenlanders want independence from Denmark, up from 67.7% in 2019. All six main Greenlandic political parties support independence, but they differ in timing and approach. The island's March 2025 parliamentary elections exemplified these tensions: the first-place party, Demokraatik, advocates for a gradual approach to independence while Naleraq, the party that placed second, supports independence as soon as possible. In addition to Trump's annexation comments, rising nationalism has also been fomented by a recent spotlight on Danish scandals against Greenlanders in the 1950s-60s. Greenland's Prime Minister Múte Egede in January 2025 affirmed that "We do not want to be Danish, we do not want to be American. We want to be Greenlandic." While Danish leaders have repeated that Greenland "is not for sale," Copenhagen has also stated it respects Greenlanders' right to decide their own future. However, Greenland's bid for independence is hindered by its financial dependence on a $500 million annual subsidy and economic support from Copenhagen as well as concerns about a decline in the standard of living without Danish subventions. Greenland needs to achieve economic self-sufficiency prior to any declaration of independence, making independence unlikely in the immediate future.

However, as Greenland moves towards independence, there are a few geopolitical actions that Western nations would be wise to consider in order to enhance regional Arctic security and

stability. First, NATO should provide Greenland with a path to eventual membership to strengthen the Arctic military and defense postures of both the island and NATO amid increasing Russian and Chinese military activity in the region, especially given the rapidly melting sea ice. Greenland also occupies a strategic position between North America and Russia, which would make it a valuable ally for the U.S. and Canada. It also makes up part of the Greenland-Iceland-U.K. (GIUK) Gap which could serve as a naval chokepoint to prevent Russia's Northern Fleet from reaching the Atlantic in the event of a conflict between Russia and NATO. Second, Western countries and businesses should invest in Greenland soon to help further its economic development and stability and tie its economy to the West. Promoting Greenlandic tourism and partnering to sustainably develop Greenland's mining industry to access its vast mineral deposits are advantageous. This and encouraging the development of strong trade ties with Europe could facilitate Greenland's entry into the E.U., further integrating Greenland's economy with Europe and the West. Investment and the development of trade ties would also help counter potential Chinese economic influence. Beijing may view an independent Greenland as a target to gain an Arctic foothold, as China harbors growing regional ambitions in the Arctic and has a history of leveraging economic investment to spread its influence and further its own geopolitical goals (i.e. its Belt and Road Initiative). Ensuring the integration of an independent Greenland into Western security and economic frameworks would be essential to countering Russian threats and Chinese influence in the Arctic.

Greenland's growing independence movement merits active planning from Western nations because a new Arctic nation has the potential to impact Arctic security. While economic self-sufficiency remains a barrier to the island's sovereignty, should Greenland eventually achieve independence, engagement from the West could help ensure the new nation's stability by encouraging its integration with Western institutions? Such engagement would also reduce Greenland's vulnerability to potential Chinese and Russian pressures. As the Arctic's importance in global and regional security increases, a sovereign Greenland has the potential to attract attention from governments that seek to reshape regional power dynamics. This makes it important for Western nations to engage with Greenland both in its current status and in the event it pursues independence.

Get In The Water: Deterring Chinese Aggression Against the Philippines

Ian M. MacLeod, 2025

The South China Sea (SCS) is subject to a long-standing dispute between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and several of its neighbors, including the Philippines, a long-standing ally of the United States with which it has a mutual defense treaty. In 2012, coinciding with the accession of Xi Jinping to the role of "paramount leader", the PRC began dredging sand up from the bottom of the ocean to convert disputed reefs and atolls into artificial islands to reinforce its expansive maritime claims, covering almost the entirety of the SCS. It soon converted these new islands into military outposts complete with runways, hangers, and harbors, as well as military radar, close-in weapons systems, and anti-ship missiles. At the same time, PRC maritime forces regularly harass Southeast Asian fishermen and Chinese fishermen engage in destructive fishing practices that endanger the coral reefs that the region's fish stocks depend upon.

But recently the PRC has made increasingly aggressive moves against the Philippines. In June 2024, the Chinese Coast Guard seized two rigid inflatable boats being used by the Philippine Navy (PN) to help resupply an outlying Philippine military outpost – an old tank-landing ship the PN intentionally ran aground in 1999 to reinforce Manilla's maritime claims. During the confrontation, the Chinese Coast Guard also detained the boats' complements of Philippine sailors, injuring several in the process. While the PRC has previously interfered in the resupply of this particular outpost – located just off the coast of Palawan – it had never detained Philippine military personnel before then – a clear escalation.

This aggression coincides with the accession of President Bongbong Marcos in the Philippines, whose administration is increasingly concerned by Chinese actions in the region, shifting from the previous Duterte Administration's more neutral attitude. Since taking office, the Marcos Administration has sought to strengthen the alliance between the US and the Philippines, expanding US access to Philippine military bases across the archipelago. Just a few months before the incident in June, President Marcos warned that any action that resulted in the death of Philippine service personnel would require him to invoke his country's mutual defense treaty with the United States. The timing of this aggression is unmistakable, coming so close after President Marcos's redline.

The PRC's use of "grey zone" tactics against the Philippines undermines the credibility of the US commitment to the country. The primary response of the United States to these actions has taken the form of the US Navy's Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPS), aimed at challenging

China's maritime claims, which insists that foreign militaries do not have the right to transit the SCS without its permission. These operations, while positive, have faced aggressive and reckless behavior by Chinese maritime forces, endangering the safe navigation of US naval vessels. And because they are primarily directed towards reinforcing the US military's freedom of navigation, they have not deterred China's provocative behavior towards the Philippines at all. Therefore, the US must reinforce its commitment to the Philippines, and demonstrate its willingness to take on risks, to deter aggression by the PRC.

As such, the US should consider conducting a joint amphibious exercise alongside the Philippines at Scarborough Shoal as a logical next step to the limitations of the FONOPs. Scarborough Shoal is claimed by the PRC, despite being directly off the coast of the Philippines, and was the site of an armed standoff between both countries in 2012. Since then, Chinese naval forces have effectively occupied the surrounding waters. As such, the Scarborough Shoal is symbolically potent, and reasserting the sovereignty of the Philippines over the formation, with the support of the United States, would send a clear signal to both China and other Southeast Asian countries regarding the resolve of the United States.

Taking advantage of the annual Balikatan military exercises held by the Philippines and the US, an expeditionary strike group (ESG), composed of American and Philippine ships, could be tasked with carrying out the exercise. This ESG would also be instructed to prevent any third party from interfering with the successful completion of the exercise. Given Scarborough Shoal's proximity to Luzon—home to several Philippine military bases now accessible to the United States—the U.S. would hold a clear military advantage in the area. This is especially true during the Balikatan exercises when around 12,000 US military personnel are stationed around the archipelago. Under these conditions, the PRC is unlikely to take military action to prevent such an exercise. Therefore, the US could demonstrate its commitment to uphold treaty obligations, thereby enhancing deterrence without risking significant harm to its forces.

II. International Security

China's Soft Power in Kyrgyzstan

Wendy Chen, 2018

China's rapid growth in recent years has drawn the attention of other regional and world powers. China's skyrocketing GDP has caused many in the West to speculate that it will supplant the United States as the world's leading superpower. What's more, China does not only manage to develop quickly but is also lauded and respected by many other economic powerhouses and smaller countries: one of them being Kyrgyzstan.

Located in the resource-rich area of Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan holds a key strategic position at the crossroads of the Middle East, Russia, and China. As such, many countries have shown special interest in Kyrgyzstan's disposition towards them. Over the past few decades, the US has provided considerable military, economic, and other humanitarian assistance to the region through a bilateral cooperation treaty in 1993. In 2001, Kyrgyzstan also allowed the U.S. to open the Transit Center (a US military base) at Manas. However, the U.S.'s investment in Kyrgyzstan has borne little fruit, as favorability ratings towards the US remain low. For example, from 2014 to 2018, data collected by the International Republican Institute, shows the percentage of Kyrgyzstanis who hold a positive view of the US shifted from only 35% to 42%. Meanwhile, over the same time period Kyrgyzstanis' favorability rating of China increased from 54% to 70%.

China's high favorability rating can be explained in part by its shift in policy toward Central Asia since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Indeed, many neighboring powers have become increasingly interested in the newly-independent Central Asia areas. Beijing's "One Belt, One Road" policy, which from China's focus shifted from military readiness to economic collaboration in Central Asia, has been praised by the Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev. This shift has allowed China to become one of the main economic partners of Kyrgyzstan. In fact, China has supplanted Russia, as the largest source of foreign investment in Central Asia. This investment, while multifaceted, is exemplified by China's focus on hydropower.

Of the total foreign direct investment into Kyrgyzstan, China's contribution accounts for over 50% in the recent years. Kyrgyzstan and China have many collaborative projects including the China-Kyrgyzstan railway project and Issyk-Kul ring road that have created a great number of jobs

in Kyrgyzstan. China's interest in improving infrastructure in Kyrgyzstan is driven in part by its desire to expand access for Chinese exports to the nations of Central Asia. Also, improved transportation infrastructure will facilitate the flow of much need fossil fuels and natural resources to China from resource rich Central Asia.

Through the "One Belt, One Road" initiative, China is seeking to establish free trade zones all over Central Asia (including Kyrgyzstan) which, once established, will boost trade and generate more wealth for the Chinese economy. Kyrgyzstan and China "have signed more than ten investment agreements (worth approximately $1.812 billion)." Political and economic ties with China, are expected to strengthen the historically weak Kyrgyzstani economy.

Despite many locals harboring distrust and suspicion of Chinese businessmen and workers (Bedeski and Swanstrom 2015), as a whole, Kyrgyzstanis are widely supportive of their nation's close relations with China. Data shows, Kyrgyzstanis are more likely to view China as a better economic partner than the U.S., and to view the U.S. as a greater threat to their nation than China. For example in 2018, 38% viewed China as a partner, while 37% viewed China as an economic threat, compared to the only 13% viewing the U.S. as a partner, and 45% viewing the U.S. as a threat.

Joseph Nye coined the term "soft power" in reference to the act of a state achieving its' goals with another state through collaborative projects that benefit the other state as opposed to coercion. China's success in Kyrgyzstan is but one example of how China has advanced its interests in Central Asia through the use of soft power.

Why Does the West Remain so Obsessed with "Radical Islam"?

Jonathan Hoffman, 2018

Following the recent terrorist attack in Nice, France, French President Emmanuel Macron immediately proposed a new bill to defend "France's secular values" against what he called "Islamist radicalism." He also said that the religion of Islam is "in crisis" all over the world. Similarly, following a recent terrorist attack in Vienna, Austria, Chancellor Sebastian Kurz has said that he intends to create a criminal offense called "political Islam" to go after extremists and those who are "preparing the ground" for such actions. Western politicians – particularly those on the political right – continue to champion the narrative that "radical Islamist" represent an existential threat to the West. Yet, they fail to address that radical Islamism thrives off of two interconnected factors: Islamophobia in the West and the autocratic governments in the Middle East.

Islamophobia for Domestic Purposes

There is a need to look deeper into the rhetoric used by political actors such as Macron or Kurz. These narratives are being used for domestic political purposes. In both France and Austria, "it is easier to place blame solely on the Muslim community than it is to address how factors such as systemic and everyday racism, job and housing discrimination, police brutality, poverty, etc.," leading to the marginalization of these communities.

In Austria, the current ruling party – the Austrian Peoples Party – is a conservative party, and Chancellor Sebastian Kurz is particularly conservative. Islamophobic rhetoric tends to resonate well with conservatives, particularly those opposed to greater immigration.

In France, Macron's support is faltering, particularly in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis. With the 2022 election in France fast approaching, where Macron is likely to face far-right Marine Le Pen, Macron may be attempting to hedge against criticism that he has been "soft" on combating terrorism. He knows that rhetorically attacking Muslims will appeal to the supporters of the far right and its racist, anti-Muslim agenda.

France and Austria are not alone: such approaches remain front-and-center within the United States, particularly under Donald Trump. Whether it be his infamous "Muslim Ban," constant fearmongering about "radical Islamic terror," or attacks on Muslim politicians such as Ilhan Omar (whom he claimed hates the United States), the political right in the United States has historically sought to exploit anti-Muslim sentiments and rhetoric to appeal to its base. More recently, leading up to the 2020 election, Trump warned crowds that a Biden victory would "open the floodgates" to Muslims and pour "radical Islamic terrorism" into the country.

The Role of Middle East Governments

Several governments in the Middle East have a vested interest in maintaining their ability to exploit the "terrorism" card to gain Western support or acquiescence in cracking down on dissent at home. Various regimes throughout the region use particular interpretations of religion both as an instrument to counter political adversaries as well as to provide a veneer of legitimacy to their autocratic rule. Interpretations that challenge the status quo can represent an existential threat to the ruling elite. The priorities of these governments are regime preservation and power projection, and religion is used to serve these ends.

The persistence of the authoritarian status quo in the Middle East – which is often supported by the West – and the continued denial of political and human rights to the people in this region provides radicals with opportunities to recruit and further propagate their message. This anger is often directed at the West, who has a long history of supporting such autocracies.

By eliminating avenues for the peaceful opposition and repressing those who criticize the ruling elite under the guise of "fighting terrorism," governments in the region seek to present themselves to the West as the only barrier to extremism, thereby garnering more support for their flawed policies and the authoritarian status quo. When the West buys this narrative and supports such heavy-handed policies, it is in turn fueling the grievances that lead to radicalization.

Despite the West's obsession with "radical Islam," it still does not understand what "radical Islamists" thrive off of: Islamophobia in the West and the authoritarian status quo in the Middle East. In order to properly address radicalism, the West needs to fundamentally reconsider how its own actions – both domestically and abroad – and the actions of their allies can serve to exacerbate the very threat they are trying to eliminate.

Russia and the Cold War: 2.0

Jean Cocco, 2018

"No one has listened to us. You will listen to us now." This ominous phrase was voiced by President Vladimir Putin during his March 1, 2018 speech to the Russian Federal Assembly. In the speech, Putin stated that Russia has new strategic weapons to counter potential threats posed by the United States. In response, the White House said Putin confirmed what the U.S. has already known—that Russia has been violating its treaty obligations. This development is a reflection that the U.S. and Russia are "in a conflict," according to former CIA deputy director Michael Morell. "There should be no doubt in anyone's mind that after the invasion of Georgia, the invasion of Ukraine, the intervention in Syria, the meddling in our election, the attack last week by Russian mercenaries on U.S. forces in Syria, that we are again in a Cold War."

On March 5th, the Michael V. Hayden Center for Intelligence, Policy, and International Security hosted Russia and the Cold War 2.0. The policy discussion was held at the George Mason University's Arlington campus and featured a discussion between General Michael V. Hayden and former NATO Supreme Allied Commander, General Wesley K. Clark. The talk began with General Clark highlighting the need for the United States to have a clear strategy to manage its relationship with Russia. He then voiced three observations about the current state of relations between the two great powers. One, the struggle between the two nations did not end with the Cold War. Two, recent events are not a replay of the Cold War. Three, the two nations are engaged in a continual geopolitical chess game. General Clark eloquently elaborated on each observation with anecdotes from his past experiences with Russia and provided analysis on why the Russian-U.S. relationship has soured.

In his first observation, General Clark spoke about the relationship being fraught with insecurities because of Russia's sensitivity to the United States encroaching into their "part of Europe." The General mentioned the significance of Kosovo as an example of that mentality. In his view, U.S. intervention in Kosovo in the 1990s was the result of the U.S. using force against Russian allies who share a Slavic heritage with the Serbs and was an opportunity to increase the enlargement of NATO. General Clark expressed his opinion that both Russia and her Balkan allies have never forgotten or forgave the U.S. military campaign in Kosovo. It was an attack on Russian identity and has shaped the Russian vantage point of seeing the globe as one massive geo-political chess game, particularly, against the United States.

In his second observation, General Clark strongly emphasized that the current interactions between the U.S. and Russians is not a replay of the old Cold War. Both countries are entangled

through business and financial transactions, as well as through other means such as dual-citizenship. Furthermore, the ruble is now ubiquitous and convertible in the global economy compared to how it was in the past. Moreover, the Russians have successfully used their investments to buy influence and ensure reliance on its raw materials. Consequently, Europe is highly dependent on Russian natural gas for its energy needs. General Clark concluded that the old Soviet attitude is present but has more global influence and Putin, a leader who is a risk-taker.

At the close of the talk, General Clark reiterated his view that U.S. and NATO policies toward Serbia and Kosovo, along with the extension of NATO membership to former Soviet Bloc countries caused Russia to "dig in its heels" against U.S. encroachment into Eastern Europe starting in the 1990s. General Clark and General Hayden agreed that Putin's ultimate objective is to return to a traditional sphere of influence based on a geo-strategic balance of power system where Russia and the United States are in a world of bi-polarity.

The Spectre of Communism in Georgia

Courtney Kayser, 2018

1991 was heralded as the victory of Capitalism over Communism, the triumph of the West over the USSR, but within the former republics, opinions of the Soviet Union and communism are more mixed. The continued economic troubles and demographic strain exacerbate the dissonance within the former republics between celebrating their independence and desiring a return to the stability found in the Soviet Union and communist system.

In Georgia, for instance, their GDP dropped from 7.74 billion in US Dollars to zero, only recovering to 2.69 billion in 1993. Georgian GDP remained in the 2 to 4 billion USD until 2004, at which point its growth rate increased. The 2008 Russo-Georgian War, however, resulted in an economic recession that Georgia only began recovering from in 2011. In 2017, GDP reached 15.16 billion USD, and GDP per capita was 4290.17 USD. Yet, in the same year, only one percent of respondents to the Caucasus Research Resource Center's Caucasus Barometer Survey reported a household income over 1200 USD per month, and no one outside of Tbilisi reported an income of this level. Almost 60 percent of respondents, however, reported a household income between zero and 250 USD per month. Between urban and rural areas, 42 percent of respondents were in the lowest four income categories in Tbilisi, 54 percent in urban areas, and 73 percent in rural areas.

Demographics in Georgia also raise concerns: the overall population is declining, but its urban populations are growing; its urban population grew by five percent between 2002 and 2014. Tbilisi's population alone grew by 2.5 percent, but the population declined between 10 and 40 percent in the same timeframe in every other region of the country. Also in 2014, nearly 30 percent of Georgia's population resided in the capital city. By comparison, if a single city in the United States were to contain a similar portion of the country's population, it would have over 97 million residents, over eleven times the present size of New York City, and would be the largest city in the world. Though Georgia's population is much smaller than that of the United States, this concentration of people generates strain: public transportation systems degrade faster, it is difficult to find employment, housing prices skyrocket – if there is available housing to be found.

This is not to say that moves are not being made to respond to population movements. Numerous building projects are underway, both on the outskirts of Tbilisi and within the city center. However, there are still only two metro lines to service the city, neither of which reach the majority of the housing areas. Bus commutes can take upwards of two hours into the city, but bus timetables are notorious in Tbilisi for not being accurate. Jokingly, residents refer to buses running on "GMT," or "Georgian Maybe Time." Still, many Georgians feel a sense of nostalgia for the

Soviet period, as then, people had steady employment and the ability to afford necessities. They do not desire the return of a repressive government or the loss of their independence, but they do desire a return for the certainty they had under communism.

In addition to economic and demographic challenges, Georgia faces several security concerns it did not face as a union republic in the Soviet Union. There are nearly 300,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) within Georgia, mostly from Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These IDPs have a noticeable impact on everyday life – from the presence of refugee settlements to the fact that no university in Tbilisi has any dormitory space, as all of the buildings meant for this are presently being used to house IDPs. Twenty percent of Georgian territory is nominally controlled by the Russian Federation, but the Russian Federation is still one of Georgia's largest trading partners. The Georgian government does not have the capacity to settle its own IDPs within cities, much less the military capabilities to retake South Ossetia and Abkhazia or to expel Russian forces from its territory. Georgia is precluded from joining NATO and faces limitations with accession to the EU due to these challenges to its territorial integrity and its ongoing conflicts.

Reliance on Russian markets limits Georgian policies, as the Georgian economy will suffer if the Russian Federation imposes sanctions or embargos, as they did after the Russo-Georgian War. EU and Turkish markets have potential, but taking advantage of these markets is reliant on Georgia's ability to offset its own demographic and security concerns. In return, to alleviate these concerns, the Georgian government needs to fund its military and commit to expansive building projects, which in turn requires the government to tax its population – and the population needs to be making a decent income for these taxes to accumulate sufficient funds.

These features – economics, demographics, and security – are all interrelated. Resolving the challenges faced by the Georgian government will be a complex, long process. In the meantime, Georgia remains stuck between looking forward to a future with Europe and looking back to a past with Russia and the Soviet Union. Present insecurity and economic uncertainty about the future translates to a desire for the stability of the past, even if this stability is the product of rose-colored glasses.

The Diplomacy of China's Rise

Zachary Marks, 2018

Diplomacy is dynamic, no one leader wields this tool of statecraft in quite the same way as another. The way American and democratic leaders use diplomacy vastly differs from other countries and regimes. China's diplomacy has been rapidly changing as its role on the grand stage is shifting. The Century of Humiliation has given way to the Asian Century and China is using its soft power as a key component of their grand strategy. China seeks to establish regional hegemony in Asia, and it does not intend to put boots on the ground to do it. China's dynamic diplomacy is challenging the role of the U.S. in foreign affairs, where once countries turned to Washington for help they now turn to Beijing. The relationship between Chinese and American diplomacy will be instrumental in managing China's rise and determining how the 21st century will play out.

In recent decades, China is no longer hiding its strength and biding its time. It has been steadily increasing its international diplomatic presence since 2003 while the United States continues to scale back. In 2018, China's foreign affairs expenditures were 60 billion, in comparison the U.S. spent 35 billion on the State in FY 2018. In the past developing countries would look towards the U.S. for aid and guidance for determining policies and general navigation towards liberal-democratic values. Now China is stepping up in the realm of diplomatic outreach; they are trying to take over our role as the leading influencer of world affairs with soft power.

Chinese influence is harmful to U.S. objectives abroad due to the conflicting natures of the two countries' goals. China wants the U.S. out of the Asia-Pacific and to be the sole decider in what it deems to be its sphere of influence. China is also fighting back against the Bretton Woods institutions. The creation of the BRICS Development Bank (made up of the BRICS countries Brazil, Russia, Indian, China, and South Africa) and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank are in direct competition with the current U.S. led global monetary institutions. China is ditching their low profile and is now striving for achievement. They are aiming to build up their strategic credibility by "providing security protection and economic benefits to other nations, especially its neighbors." They aim to supplant the United States in this regard, their biggest wins would be to get South Korea and Japan to abandon their bilateral defense treaties with Washington and instead rely on China in a show of regionalism.

The current state of Sino-American relations is deteriorating. The Trump trade war has been having a negative effect on the American economy and our relationship with China. China has withdrawn from many high-level meetings it had planned to have with the United States. They no longer wish to continue the U.S.-China Diplomatic and Security Dialogue (USCDSD), and our

military to military (mil-mil) relations have degraded over Chinese purchases of Russian military technology coupled with further U.S. arms sales to Taiwan.
Vice President Mike Pence's speech at the Hudson Institute on October 4th highlighted these divisions further. Pence believes that the U.S. played a pivotal role in allowing China to rise (advocating for it to be a member of the UN permanent Security Council), that China is now betraying the United States by harming our national interests and interfering in our politics and domestic policy. Pence continued to outline that in the National Security Strategy (NSS) the Trump White House has described a new era of great power competition. This has led some to believe that there is a new Cold War between China and the United States. Pence brought up many valid points about China's grand strategy, however his tone was adversarial and left more room for competition than cooperation.

China's "debt diplomacy" is heavily investing in infrastructure throughout the developing world, from its neighbors in the Asia-Pacific to the reaches of Latin America. These infrastructure projects heavily favor Beijing and allow China to leverage their economic blessings with political repercussions. The CCP has convinced three Latin American countries (El Salvador, Panama, and the Dominican Republic) to sever ties with Taiwan in return for Chinese economic assistance. The Trump White House and future American leaders will have their hands full in dealing with a rising China and Xi Jinping. The Chinese have the advantage of continuity of government due to the removal of term limits from their constitution, and the ability to have free trade with a domestic policy that suppresses dissent. Dealing with a rising China will be the main foreign policy challenge for leaders in Washington for the foreseeable future and deft diplomacy will be necessary for ensuring the rise will be peaceful and compatible with American interests.

Frontex As a Test Case for a European Army

Daniel Fielden, 2018

Recently there has been significant news surrounding the idea of a European Army, largely because of German Chancellor Angela Merkel referencing the idea for the first time on November 13, though others have referred to it before.

To say that the idea of a European army is controversial would be a gross understatement, yet this is not a new idea, and the underpinnings of such an organization have steadily progressed over time. The progress of the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) of the European Union and the increased focus on security issues at a supranational level have continued to foster growth of collective security apparatus, such as Permanent Structure Cooperation which was authorized by the treaty of Lisbon in 2009, but only implemented in 2017. While it would be inaccurate to claim that further CSDP cooperation or increased integration of defense forces will lead to the creation of a European Army, it must be noted that these concepts were resisted in the past for many of the reasons cited in resistance of a European Army.

In the current environment, a better test case for the potential future of a European Army may be found in the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex). Frontex is the agency tasked with management of the European Union's external borders.

The modern Frontex was created in September 2016 out of a substantive reorganization and enhancement of the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders, established in 2005, after it was incapable of effectively managing the migrant crisis that Europe faced in 2015.

The old Frontex served as a coordinating, training, and analytical organization, which was largely. In 2015 when the migrant crisis struck Europe, the agency was largely ineffective in managing the situation and it failed largely due to the fact that it was reliant on national entities for operational implementation of border protection measures. In response, the European community chose to enact substantive changes. These changes were approved rapidly and in September 2016, the new Frontex would be born.

On September 12, the European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker called for the growth of Frontex to 10,000 border guards by 2020, with some other enhancements, in his 2018 State of the Union. One week later, European Council President Donald Tusk stated that the Council had agreed on the need for furthering Frontex's size, scope and authority during the informal Salzburg

summit of the European Council. Tusk recognized that issues surrounding sovereignty will need to be managed as some of the proposed changes increase Frontex's direct supranational operational authority. It is remarkable that such proposals have not only been made, but seemingly endorsed by the powerful actors within the European Union.

The proposed changes to the agency will serve as a test case of a supranational operational entity within the European Union. Other supranational entities, such as Europol and the European Defence Agency, have never possessed the level of authority currently being considered for Frontex. This has been met with mixed opinions: some countries are in favor of a supranational law enforcement agency managing the external borders and some fear for the effect it can have on sovereign power.

The issues facing the Frontex expansion are comparable to those that would face the creation of a European Army. It is necessary to remember that the current proposals for Frontex would likely have been rejected as vehemently as the European Army proposals before the migrant crisis in 2015. If the new authorities are passed, it will lay the ground for future supranational operational entities. While no comparable entity is expected to follow, it does set the stage for the question of whether a European Army could be in Europe's future.

Fixing a Broken Country

Gerry Moss, 2019

Since 2015, the Government of National Accord (GNA) behind Faiez Mustapha Sarrej in Tripoli and the Libyan National Army (LNA) behind Khalifa Haftar in Benghazi have been engaged in a civil war in Libya. While the GNA is the UN recognized government of Libya, Haftar is legitimized by singular external states, most notably the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. None of these countries have sent troops into Libya to fight for Haftar, but they have sent military weaponry, including fighter jets, helicopters, and armored vehicles. Since April 2019, Haftar's forces have been laying siege on Tripoli in an effort to take the city and become the government of Libya. On September 25th, during the 74th UN General Assembly Debate, GNA President Faiez Mustapha Sarrej explained that Haftar's forces have deliberately bombed hospitals, airports, and civilian neighborhoods. President Faiez has repeatedly called upon the UN Security Council to do something to stop the assault on Tripoli that has led to over 1,100 dead and 100,000 displaced.

Both France and Italy have attempted and failed to end the civil war, but now, Germany has taken the leading role in this endeavor. German leaders fear that this conflict will spread beyond Tripoli, potentially creating another migrant crisis and destabilizing other African countries. Unlike France and Italy, Germany is seen as an impartial actor because it has no economic ties to Libya. Germany has expressed a desire to bring the major actors – President Faiez, Haftar, Egypt, the UAE, Qatar, and Turkey – to Berlin to discuss unification. Turkey and the UAE have proven reluctant to come to the negotiating table. It remains unclear if Germany will have the leverage to stop Egypt, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia from backing and supplying Haftar.

Likewise, Haftar is unlikely to acquiesce to any agreement that makes him the legitimate leader of the new Libyan government. This stems from his belief that he is the logical successor to Gaddafi due to his position as a commander of Eastern Rebel Forces in 2011. This mindset has led to Haftar spending years refusing to attend any conference whose aim is to pacify and unite Libya under the GNA. However, Haftar, after months of conflict trying to take Tripoli, has agreed to start a dialogue.

The United States is involved in Libya and has supported the GNA publicly. The US has not, though, taken direct action against Haftar, instead choosing to only combat ISIS and ISIS affiliates in the south of the country through airstrikes. If the US were to aid Germany in these unification talks then perhaps the US could utilize its economic leverage over the external actors. Afterall, the US has provided and continues to provide $1.3 billion annually in military aid to Egypt since 1987.

Under the Obama administration the US sold $112 billion worth of military equipment to Saudi Arabia and under Trump a new deal worth $110 billion over 10 years was signed in 2018.

These massive economic ties would provide leverage that Germany simply does not have to pressure these states to no longer support Haftar. The US has a duty to stand alongside its ally Germany in these talks and to prevent further destabilization that can affect its allies in Africa and Europe. However, the Trump administration has not expressed any desire to attend these talks, meaning it will be up to Germany to convince Haftar and his international backers to prevent further conflict. Time will tell if Haftar's sudden change in tone over starting a dialogue will continue or bring about lasting change.

Freedom and Fears in Hong Kong

Faith Hawkins, 2019

Protests in Hong Kong began in response to an extradition bill proposed to Hong Kong's Legislative Council (Legco), and clashes between protestors and police are increasingly violent over the past four months. In response to the violence, Hong Kong's Chief Executive, Carrie Lam, announced the formal withdrawal of the bill in September. Residents of Hong Kong have long feared either legal infringement of Hong Kong's autonomy or Beijing's military's encroachment into Hong Kong proper to control the situation. Despite the extradition bill being withdrawn, it has already acted as a catalyst for mobilization, and these fears remain despite the bill no longer being on the table.

Firstly, the bill fed fears that the Chinese government was attempting to undermine the Hong Kong legal system. The Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill would have allowed for suspects to be to be extradited on a case-by case or one-off basis under the authority of the chief executive to Mainland China for trial without Legco or courts having much say in the process. Legco is the unicameral legislature of Hong Kong which enacts, amends or repeals laws; examines and approves budgets, taxation and public expenditure. Additionally, the Legco endorses the appointment and removal of the judges of the Court of Final Appeal and the Chief Judge of the High Court, and has the power to impeach the Chief Executive.

Beijing's support of the amendment and response to the protesters served to add fuel to these preexisting fears of Beijing infringing on the political system of Hong Kong. While Beijing denies any connection to the proposal of the amendment, the extradition bill would have granted Beijing a means to involve itself with the governance of Hong Kong by allowing Beijing to target political activists and critics of Beijing by requesting extradition orders under false charges.

Secondly, the militaristic response to the protests by Beijing also contributed to fears of infringement on Hong Kong's autonomy. The principle of "one country, two systems" grants Hong Kong a considerable degree of political and legal autonomy. However, many citizens are worried that the special freedoms granted to Hong Kong are eroding. In part, this is because President Xi Jinping has been cracking down on dissent since his ascent to power. The extradition bill provided a locus for people to mobilize around to express concerns about Beijing's interference in Hong Kong's political autonomy.

More than the legal infringement, Beijing's military response is the most concerning to Hong Kong protesters. Chinese military and police are not permitted to operate inside of Hong Kong. Yet, the Chinese military and police moved into Hong Kong days before the anti-government protests in August and September. Though the movement of the military in August was portrayed as regular troop movements, the Chinese governments condemnation of the protests as approaching terrorism makes it clear that Beijing is willing to use force. Whether or not the mainland government intervenes, the protestors are likely to see any action taken as proof of their fears.

The movement, though it lacks clear leadership, has moved beyond merely protesting extradition. Instead, the protests have become a forum for the citizens to express all manner of apprehensions about the future direction of the region. The expansion of the protestors demands to include "withdrawal of the "riot" description used about the protests, amnesty for all arrested protesters, an independent inquiry into alleged police brutality, and universal suffrage for the elections of the chief executive and Legislative Council" indicate the breadth of political concerns plaguing Hong Kong about human rights and democracy.

It is unclear what the results of the protests will be. However, with no sign of slowing momentum the situation is likely to continue to grow and do so violently. The Hong Kong government has already declared emergency powers with no effect. How the Hong Kong and Beijing governments choose to react will determine more than then end of a movement. It will set a precedent for how dissent is handled in the region and to what extent Hong Kong can retain its autonomy.

Regional Rivalries and Instability in Somalia

Jonathan Hoffman, 2020

Somalia and its autonomous regions are the latest victim to a vociferous broader regional geopolitical rivalry that has emerged following the 2011 Arab Uprisings. Left unchecked, this competition for political, economic, and military supremacy will serve to further undermine stability and cohesion within Somalia and its semi-autonomous regions of Somaliland and Puntland. Located at the mouth of the Red Sea corridor, further destabilization of this already fragile state could have wide-reaching ramifications that extend beyond the broader Middle East and North Africa.

This competition for control over the regional balance of power is between what can be called the "activists" and the "counterrevolutionaries." The "activists" are those regional states – Turkey and Qatar – that have sought greater independence in their foreign policy agendas and generally supported the revolutionary currents throughout the 2011 Arab Uprisings and their aftermath. The uprisings presented both states with the opportunity to utilize more proactive foreign policies to potentially tip the regional balance of power in their favor. Opposed to this camp are the "counterrevolutionaries" – Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and post-2013 Egypt – all of whom have generally sought to quell the tide of popular activism and return to the pre-uprisings status quo. This rivalry culminated in the 2017 blockade of Qatar launched by the counterrevolutionary states in what is now popularly termed the "Gulf crisis."

Although Somalia did not experience the wave of mass mobilization that swept across the region in 2011, it has nevertheless increasingly become a site of competition between these two rival camps, primarily due to its geostrategic location at the mouth of the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea corridor. This competition has accelerated dramatically following the eruption of the Gulf crisis in 2017. After the blockade was announced, Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed – known as Farmajo – was reportedly under intense pressure from Gulf powers to pick a side in the conflict. Despite this pressure, President Farmajo declared Somalia's neutrality in the conflict, deeply angering the counterrevolutionaries. However, the leadership of the semi-autonomous regions of Somaliland and Puntland broke with Mogadishu and expressed publicly their support for the blockade launched by the counterrevolutionaries. In response to President Farmajo's reluctance to bow to the demands of the Saudis and Emiratis, the counterrevolutionaries slashed budgetary support for the Somali central government, withdrew diplomatic personnel from the capital, and doubled-down on a strategy of supporting Somalia's semi-autonomous regions as a counterweight to the central Somali authority.

Casting its weight behind Somalia's semi-autonomous regions, the UAE has signed a 25-year lease with Somaliland to develop and maintain a military base there and agreed in 2017 to invest $336 million as part of a 30-year contract to expand and run a commercial port in Puntland's Bosaso. The UAE has also recently invested an additional $442 million in Somaliland's Berbera port. In addition to working within Somalia's semi-autonomous regions, the UAE has financed candidates for political office within Somalia proper "such as former Somali Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Sharmarke, and opposition figure Abdirahman Warsame in another attempt to sway Mogadishu towards Abu Dhabi, or at least fracture the Somali government." Tensions also erupted in April 2018, when Somali authorities seized $10 million in cash from an arriving Emirati airplane, which was cited by government officials as evidence of Emirati meddling. According to Abukar Arman, a former Somali diplomat who served as Somalia's Special Envoy to the United States, the UAE has "bankrolled various mercenary groups engaged in various clandestine operations that ultimately sustain [Somalia's] status quo." Most recently, Somali authorities are reported to have arrested an alleged spy network working for the UAE inside Somalia.

In response to the actions taken by the counterrevolutionaries, Somalia's central government under President Farmajo has dramatically increased its diplomatic, economic, and military relations with Qatar and Turkey. Beginning with Turkey, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan made history in 2011 when he became the first non-African government leader to visit Somalia since the state's collapse in 1991. Turkey has also built its largest foreign embassy in Mogadishu; developed its largest overseas military facility in Somalia; and Turkish firms are widely visible throughout the country building roads and hospitals. Moreover, while the volume of trade between Turkey and Somalia was $5 million in 2010, it reached $123 million in 2016. Ankara has also signaled its desire to increase weapons sales to Mogadishu. This increase in bilateral relations between Somalia and Turkey have also been lauded by Somalia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Qatar has similarly increased its relations with Somalia's central government. The Qataris helped finance President Farmajo's reelection campaign in 2017; provided large amounts of economic and military aid to the country; built a new seaport off the coast of Somalia's Hobyo; and airlifted Mogadishu's mayor to Doha for emergency medical treatment following an attack by al-shabab. Qatari media outlets such as Al-Jazeera have also been increasingly critical of Emirati actions within Somalia.

Competition between these two blocs is undermining stability and cohesion within Somalia by exacerbating deep fissures within an already broken state. By inflaming intra-Somali tensions and disputes, the activist and counterrevolutionary blocs are worsening the Somali state's already dysfunctional system. Moreover, continued heightened internal tensions undermine the stability of the Red Sea corridor. Unless this international rivalry within Somalia is stymied, the prospects of the country being able to address its problems appears bleak.

Alliances, Alignment, and the Future of International Partnerships

Connor Monie and Jordan Cohen, 2020

In September 2019, Donald Trump publicly stated that he and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu discussed a mutual defense pact. Ironically, while the U.S. State Department lists Israel as a "Major Non-NATO Ally," no formal alliance agreement actually exists. The result is that Washington is not bound to come to Israeli aid if the latter enters a conflict.

This puts Israel in a category of countries that receive strong signals of support from the United States, but without a formally written alliance agreement. Foremost are Israel and Taiwan, while Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Mexico all receive large amounts of weapons and coalition aid, signaling a smaller commitment.

On September 25, 2020, George Mason University's Center for Security Policy Studies debated the durability of the formal alliance. Given the risks of multiple, rival great powers in a world where allies and adversaries cooperate, should formal defense commitments die in lieu of short-term commitments?

Formal alliances should remain an integral component of states' security policies for several reasons. First, the criticisms levied by alliance detractors rest on shaky empirical ground. Second, formal treaty arrangements offer substantial benefits during peacetime, from credibility value to military interoperability, intelligence sharing and joint training opportunities. Third, the alternative to formal alliances – liquid, informal, ad hoc alignments – remain conceptually imprecise, making relative comparisons ineffectual.

Why are Formal Alliances "Dying"?

The traditional argument for formalizing alliances is that it reduces problems associated with the alliance dilemma: that countries want their allies to join them in war but do not want to join a war outside of their own interests simply because an ally is involved. Formalization lowers the risks of abandonment because official treaties add reliability costs to the equation. In other words, as the cost of not showing up for an ally increases, the probability that states renege on commitments decreases.

On the other hand, many practitioners warn that formalization increases abandonment and entrapment risks. For example, alliance with Montenegro offers the US little in the way of fighting Russia, but a formalized agreement does not mean that the U.S. will risk Washington D.C. in exchange for Podgorica. To those who argue for the death of alliances, these formalized agreements

do not improve the likelihood of an ally aiding the U.S. in war, but they also increase the likelihood that the U.S. will become engaged in a conflict where it has only limited interests.

Thus, the main benefit of informalized alignments is that they do not come with any requirement to fight war, nor do they exist absent a partnership. Aligned states can fight in coalitions together, as the case in Iraq and Afghanistan, but they do so without risking unnecessary conflict on behalf of the United States.

Whither Formal Alliances, Long-Live Formal Alliances:

While fears of an amplified alliance dilemma are worth discussing, they are largely based on poor evidence and analysis. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, there is little empirical evidence defending the argument that formal agreements increase risks present in the alliance dilemma. This is because these formal agreements are usually made after risk-analysis. Therefore, the United States would simply not sign a formal agreement with a country determined to be a risky ally. Research by Michael Beckley confirms this by examining the loopholes the United States includes in alliance agreements to avoid entanglement into dangerous wars that do not further US interest. Additionally, LeVeck and Narang find that countries who violate agreements tend to lose potential allies, raising the costs of abandoning allies. Alliance agreements are only formed when risks in the alliance dilemma can successfully be avoided.

Second, viewing formal commitments as only important during wartime is problematic. The grand majority of "alliance years" occur during peacetime and the largest alliance since the Second World War has never actually fought together in combat as an alliance. Examining alliances only in the framework of war ignores the majority of alliance-related costs and benefits from formal alliances, especially examining NATO. Beginning one's analysis at the onset of war excludes the myriad benefits alliances offer to states that seek to avoid war and deepen military interoperability with allies. For example, my research at Strategic Studies Quarterly finds that alliances are strongly correlated with weapons sales, partially because of the strategic benefits and trust stemming from written, formalized alliances. Ultimately, the "death of alliances" framework needs to account for the difference in peacetime benefits like interoperability training and weapons sales rather than strictly looking at wartime alliances.

Finally, the deeper, non-empirical problem is that the "death of alliances" thesis is a game of whack-a-mole. By not defining its terms, proponents can selectively point to individual successes or failures of agreements and claim them as actionable evidence. If informal alliances include any basic strategic partnership, the United States is aligned with 169 different countries. This definitional ambiguity allows proponents of "the death of alliances" thesis to select on the dependent variable. Cases where "alignments" are strong and have replaced strategic partnerships become the positive

cases, whereas non-aligned states become the null cases. This fallacious reasoning makes it impossible for anyone to "disprove" their argument. Absent a clearer definition of alignment with explicit bounds, the "death of alliances" thesis is opportunistic and undeveloped.

None of these three issues mean that alignments are useless or that formal alliances are infallible, but that the nature and benefits of alignments are too underdeveloped to argue for the "death of alliances." Moreover, it is a lofty task to argue for the end of alliances that have existed since the end of the Second World War. This is made all the more difficult by stating they will be replaced by vague, non-binding, and innocuous institutions that, by themselves, offer unclear benefits compared to formalized alliances. Collective defense treaties continue to supply security value that informal groupings, as currently defined, are incapable of providing. Consequently, better definitional reasoning is required before one can say Middle Eastern coalitions will overtake institutions like NATO.

Innovation: The Key to Competition?

Caroline Wesson, 2020

The global economy has become increasingly more complex since the inception of the World Trade Organization in 1995. At that point, it appeared that economic competition was more about an economy's size or existing trade barriers. Meanwhile, several late developing economies were pursuing policies of export-led development and industrial policy. Examples include South Korea, Taiwan, and China.

These models of growth advocated for investment into specific industries which were targeted for their export potential, value potential, and any resource advantages the country may have had. For instance, the Taiwanese government invested heavily into the development of semiconductors and the manufacturing processes for semiconductors through the creation of science parks and educational programs, and additionally fostered international links with relevant stakeholders in the semiconductor industry. Similar strategies became quite popular in East Asia, notably in China which also supplemented this approach with other policies and initiatives of their own.

It seems that the current trend is that many countries are now looking to develop domestic technology industries in order to compete on the global stage and gain international prestige. This has led the term innovation to become a buzzword in the fields of economics, technology, and even national security. While increased attention on innovation is productive for understanding the competitive environment of the global economic system, it is not always clear what is being communicated through the term innovation. Famously, innovation is defined by economist Schumpeter as creative destruction – and considers an innovation to be a new product or idea which eventually overturns an old idea. Another notable definition comes from Romer, who considers innovation in terms of new ideas which catalyze experts to create new knowledge. Meanwhile, the Oxford dictionary considers innovation simply as the "introduction of new things, ideas, or ways of doing something." With little consensus on what innovation is, it is difficult to understand how it works to catalyze economic growth and changes in national security.

Innovation is important because it leads to the development of new and improved technologies which then have the potential to grow a nation's income, increase trade competitiveness, improve a nation's ability to make war, and improve a society's standard of living. Since today's world is driven by technology, it is important for countries to continuously innovate in order to maintain or improve their international standing.

In the past, the development of new technologies was less contentious, but today's environment is increasingly competitive. As noted above, some countries have been quite successful in using policy and investment to foster environments where innovation occurs quickly and in impactful fields of technology which then have wide implications for economic performance, quality of life, and national security. It is now necessary for countries to have national innovation strategies, formally known as national innovation systems (NIS). National innovation systems are defined by leading scholars in the field, Lundvall and Freeman, as sets of institutions that interact to influence the development of technology. Essentially, a NIS encompasses the policies and institutions which seek to foster new product and idea creation within both private and public entities. A non-exhaustive list of example components of a NIS includes research funding programs and institutions, government to industry consortiums, and public universities.

The reality of the international situation is complex. There is an absence of studies that systematically study how NIS have impacted the global economy. What is known is that some of these programs are quite contentious and can be considered everything from subsidies, protectionism, and corporate espionage. It is no coincidence that innovation has gotten more attention since tensions between the U.S. and China have intensified. China's NIS includes programs such as the Thousand Talents program, which has funded researchers from around the globe. The U.S. claims that this program functions primarily to steal intellectual property which was at times created using public funds. More traditionally, others have taken aim at the Chinese government's direct intervention in and funding of the activities of firms, which could potentially enable firms to take more R&D risks. It is important to note though, that China is not the only country with an aggressive approach to innovation, despite the amount of attention they are given. Given this, is there a path forward? What should countries be doing in order to compete in this environment? It seems that adopting a well-functioning national innovation system is essential. We must also recognize that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to innovation. If the recipe for innovation were as simple as importing the successful Taiwanese model, more countries would have already adopted it. Governments should think seriously and strategically about performing the proper research to implement an appropriate national innovation strategy, or to encourage smaller regional subunits to adopt their own innovation systems. Adopting an effective NIS could grant a country a competitive edge in both the realm of economics and national security.

Hezbollah's Reign of Terror

Ryan Ghandour, 2020

As the dust settled, rubble littered the ground as far as the eye could see, and only screams and shouts could be heard. Soon after, the sound of sirens from fire engines and ambulances rushing to the scene filled the air. Dozens were trapped beneath the debris and dozens more had perished. On April 18th, 1983, the American embassy in Beirut was destroyed in a suicide bombing attack that killed dozens of Americans, Lebanese nationals, and other individuals. The Islamic Jihad Organization, a Shi'ite fundamentalist group with links to Hezbollah, an Iranian-backed terrorist cell operating in Lebanon, claimed responsibility for the attack. On October 23rd of the same year, barracks housing American and French troops of the Multinational Force in Lebanon (MNF) were attacked by two suicide bombers, killing hundreds of soldiers. Hezbollah was once again behind the attacks. Additionally, Malcolm H. Kerr, former president of the American University of Beirut, was murdered in cold blood by two gunmen in 1984. Those individuals were also linked to Hezbollah. Hezbollah attacks have not been isolated to the 1980s. This year, they were also linked to the August 4th explosion in Beirut that killed thousands of innocents and injured thousands more.

Hezbollah, or the "Party of God," was founded shortly after the Iranian Revolution of 1979 by Lebanese Shi'ite clerics who, with the support of the Iranian regime, served as representatives for the marginalized Shi'ite community in Lebanon. They formed a unified Shi'ite bloc to resist the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon. While the occupation ended in 2000, the "resistance" has yet to disband. In 2008, a coalition government was formed with Hezbollah's political wing, Loyalty to the Resistance, granting it veto powers and effectively establishing its control of the Lebanese government. With the government that should hold them responsible for its crimes against humanity firmly under Hezbollah's control, an alternative method must be taken. Thus, the United States and the international community must assist in the effort to bring those responsible for the August 4th explosion to justice, and support a counter movement to limit the influence and military power of the organization.

Hezbollah and Loyalty to the Resistance have repeatedly met dissent with brute force, aggression, and hostility. One example is the ongoing riots in Beirut that started on October 19th, 2019. Michel Aoun, the President of Lebanon, has implemented a "shoot-to-harm" policy, ultimately leading to security forces recklessly firing tear gas, rubber bullets, and pellets. The armed divisions of the government, which are proxies of Hezbollah, have been silencing dissenters from voicing their grievances against cabinet-level politicians, members of Parliament, and the president, by breaking up these demonstrations through careless, harsh means.

On August 7th, Hassan Nasrallah, the General-Secretary of Hezbollah, appeared on television to deny all accusations that blamed his jihadist cell as the perpetrators of the August 4th explosion in Beirut. He also denied any presence of armaments or other supplies owned by Hezbollah in that area after several reports indicated that the warehouse belonged to the organization. Gebran Bassil, the president's son-in-law and the leader of the Free Patriotic Movement, is linked to Hassan Nasrallah through their parties' alliance in parliament. Through these links, Bassil has knowledge of and connections to Hezbollah and its actions, and the U.S. government has applied economic sanctions to Bassil for his involvement with Hezbollah.

In an effort to encourage fair and democratic governance, the United States and its allies should economically and politically support domestic forces within Lebanon that are willing to push back against the Iranian-backed terror cell and its political wing in Parliament. The current practice of economic warfare against Tehran's allies in Lebanon by Washington has proven to be effective in weakening Hezbollah's primary financier and should be utilized further in the fight against the group, and the U.S. should continue to financially pressure Iran. If Hezbollah has no funds to buy weapons, pay its militants, and support terrorist acts, the organization will likely wither and die. However, there is the possibility that Hezbollah could bide its time and rely on domestic support and the political offices it holds to maintain a presence in Lebanon. Therefore, to force Hezbollah out of power, there must be serious sanctions against all Hezbollah sympathizers and loyalists in positions of authority.

Due to the measures already taken by the United States, Hezbollah finds itself in a precarious situation – several of its officials have been sanctioned by Washington, such as Wafiq Safa, Muhammad Hassan Raad, and Amin Sherri. Furthermore, because the Lebanese currency is already tied to the American dollar, the government is susceptible to economic sanctions and the Lebanese economy has taken a massive hit. The U.S. has an opportunity to utilize soft power like American culture and democratic practices in conjunction with these economic sanctions to show the dissenters in Lebanon, and the Middle East more broadly, that there is a preferable alternative to fundamentalism. Hezbollah's existence has become a part of life for many in Lebanon. For the sake of the hundreds of thousands of innocent lives that have been lost over the decades at their hands, Hezbollah must become a distant memory.

Keeping the Promise of the Green Deal: How Can the EU Reduce Its Reliance on China?

Beatriz Pascual-Macias, 2020

The EU depends on China to satisfy its demand for critical raw materials (CRMs), which are essential to the Green Deal. The EU's reliance on Beijing is due to the quasi-monopoly China has on the rare earth element (REE) industry and its trade practices. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and the disruption of global supply chains have made Europe realize that it must minimize its dependence on China. With that purpose in mind, this post makes three recommendations to the EU. First, partner with the Biden Administration to secure a future supply chain. Second, use current trade agreements to create strategic partners abroad. Third, lobby the US and Japan to use the World Trade Organization (WTO) against China. The EU must adopt these recommendations urgently to become climate-neutral by 2050.

This post is divided into three sections. Section 1 gives a brief overview of CRMs and explains why China controls global supply. Section 2 examines the EU's awakening to the necessity of raw materials. Section 3 outlines the three recommendations previously mentioned.

China's Control of REEs

In 2011, the EU started publishing a list of CRMs, including REEs and other chemical components. The latest list, updated in 2020, consists of 30 materials essential to the EU economy and vulnerable to supply disruptions. The EU's supply of CRMs is fragile and depends heavily on China, which provides 98% of REEs, according to a 2019 report of the European Commission. For geopolitical reasons, the EU has become increasingly worried about Beijing's quasi-monopoly on the REE industry.

China's reserves of REEs are estimated to be 36 million tons, or roughly 30% of the world's total reserves, according to data from the U.S. government. Furthermore, since the 1990s, China has used its trade practices to keep prices low, which has made it difficult for other countries to compete. Aside from having a quasi-monopoly, China has proven that it is willing to use its geopolitical leverage to achieve strategic objectives. That goal was spelled out in 1992, when then-leader Deng Xiaoping said, "The Middle East has oil; China has rare earths."

EU's Awakening to the Necessity of Raw Materials

In 2008, the EU decided that it was time to reduce its reliance on China and announced a plan to increase domestic production for the first time. This change in strategy came at a time when Beijing decided to implement strict export quotas with the purported goal of reducing illegal mining.

China's policy caused prices to soar by hundreds of percent. Consequently, in 2012, the EU, the United States, and Japan brought a case against China before the WTO. They argued that restrictions gave Chinese companies a competitive edge in products like hybrid cars, wind turbines, and energy-efficient lighting. The WTO ended up deciding against China.
Nevertheless, throughout this period—and until recently—Europe tried to keep a balanced relationship with Beijing for economic reasons. However, when COVID-19 hit Europe and disrupted global supply chains, the EU realized it could not continue to rely on China. In the words of Thierry Breton, EU industry commissioner: "The era of a conciliatory or naive Europe that relies on others to look after its interests is over." Those words meant that the EU had finally understood that it needed REEs not only to break China's grip but also to defend its status as a dominant regional power.

On September 3, 2020, the European Commission launched a new strategy to secure access to REEs' and diversify its CRMs supply. The Commission aims to partner with other resource-rich nations, such as Canada and Australia, and developing countries in Africa and Latin America, as well as those close to the EU, such as Norway, Ukraine, Serbia, and Albania.

Recommendations

1. **Partner with the Biden Administration to secure a future supply chain.**

In this new era, the Biden Administration could become an essential ally for the EU, although it may take years or even decades for this alliance to be profitable. From the 1960s to the 1980s, the United States was the leader in producing and trading REEs, but environmental damage prompted the closure of many mines. During the 2020 presidential campaign, according to Reuters, now-President Biden privately told miners that he would boost the production of REEs as part of his plan for a green energy revolution. The U.S. has the material potential, and now also the political will, to become a partner for the EU.

2. **Use Trade Agreements to Create Strategic Partners Abroad**

Apart from the partnership with the United States, the EU should also be looking at possible partnerships with Australia and Chile, both important countries from a raw material perspective. In this case, it must be noted that the EU is currently actively negotiating Free Trade Agreements with both countries. Therefore, the EU has the opportunity of using those agreements to ensure the supply of REEs while promoting higher environmental and labor standards in mining. That way, the EU would secure its CRMs supply without making environmental or social trade-offs somewhere down the line.

3. Lobby the United States and Japan to Use the WTO Against China

Lastly, it could be argued that the EU needs the United States and Japan to defend global trade rules. Although China lost the WTO case about REEs, Beijing has continued to impose export restrictions. Consequently, since 2016, the EU has launched several WTO disputes against Chinese limits on materials such as cobalt, magnesia, talcum, chromium, and graphite. Now, the EU needs to convince Japan and the United States to join those WTO cases on the side of the EU. Together, they would be able to make a more assertive stance at the WTO, and lower barriers to the commerce of REEs.

In sum, the CRMs are a perfect example of the nexus between energy security and the environment. The EU needs to act urgently. Without REEs, Europe will not be able to be climate-neutral by 2050. Moreover, without REEs, it would be impossible for the EU to contain China and defend its status as a regional superpower.

Cultural Goods as Soft Power: A Worthwhile Investment?

Caroline Wesson, 2021

Power, desired almost universally by individuals, companies, organizations, and countries, can be defined as the ability to get others to behave in ways that they otherwise would not. There is much to be said on the topic of power due to the nature of the concept and the way that power influences and permeates all aspects of politics, domestic and international. The concept of soft power – a topic of great interest in international relations that was first developed by scholar Joseph Nye – is defined as "the ability to get what you want through attraction" as opposed to other means such as coercion or payments. Meanwhile, hard power is a more traditional conception of power defined as either military or economic might. The difference between soft and hard power has brought about new scholarship as well as new approaches from states and policymakers.

Soft power has become, over time, an attractive set of tools for states to influence through building relationships, communicating values and identity, and ultimately engaging constructively in international institutions to establish rules and order. Even so, sometimes it is hard to distinguish when soft power is being used and measuring a state's soft power capability is nearly impossible. Nye has distinguished three types of soft power, cultural, ideological, and institutional. It can be difficult to separate the three, and these categories alone offer little understanding of how soft power is created, deployed, or in some cases countered. Cultural soft power has gained interest over time as the digital age has increased access to cultural goods around the globe. One can simply utilize their smartphone to access content produced anywhere around the world, with subtitles in nearly every major language.

Are states implementing cultural soft power strategies and if so, how? The answer is complicated. There are examples of states actively implementing policies to build soft power. However, in some cases, soft power is a by-product of other initiatives to catalyze economic growth, maintain involvement in international institutions, or implement governance reforms. For instance, it is true that American cultural and entertainment goods are not made with soft power implications in mind, yet these goods are consumed globally and have profound impacts on the way societies perceive the U.S. In other cases, countries such as China have actively utilized entertainment to increase soft power through partnerships with international (particularly U.S.) film industries to create films that allow China to project a positive image for international audiences. China is not alone. Many countries are making moves to create their own cultural soft power. Given the turn towards soft power creation, students of international politics should work to understand not only the impacts of soft power, but also the strategies states are employing to create it.

There is significant diversity within the term 'cultural soft power,' including everything from entertainment goods such as film and music to technology and innovation. The U.S. technology sector attracts global attention because of its cutting-edge nature, culture of openness, risk-taking, and incorporation of aesthetics. This is not different from the way entertainment goods capture our interest. Other parts of cultural soft power can include history, cultural heritage sites, educational tradition, food, values and lifestyle.

In terms of entertainment goods, some strategies stand out above others in frequency of use. Investment in entertainment industries and the creation of creative cities have been popular policy interventions to create soft power. South Korea offers a famous example, since the first Korean (Hallyu) wave of the late 1990s, the South Korean government has financially supported entertainment firms and encouraged corporate investment. These financial supports allowed for creatives to take more risks and eventually birthed extremely successful pop music and drama industries that continue to grow in international popularity today. Japan has taken a similar direction with their "Cool Japan" initiative, which has an associated fund to help entertainment and cultural businesses expand abroad. While South Korea and Japan have certainly seen success exporting their cultural goods – simply look at the popularity of K-Pop group BTS and the spread of popular Anime to streaming services such as Netflix and Hulu – it is still hard to say whether Japan and South Korea can leverage this cultural clout to achieve favorable diplomatic outcomes in international politics. Nevertheless, these strategies have had a real impact on economic growth through growing the consumer base abroad and increasing the volume of tourism.

So, should countries look to support cultural industries to increase their soft power? It appears there are still mixed results about the real impacts of these programs in terms of soft power. This is due to the inability to measure soft power capabilities and to draw causal links between cultural products and their level of internationalization and diplomatic outcomes. What can be said though is that many of these policies have real impacts for developing national economies. The cultural and entertainment sector, for some countries, has a huge impact on GDP and thus is meaningful for this reason alone – but in terms of power, the added economic value contributes to a nation's hard power as an economic asset. Therefore, it may be ultimately worthwhile for some states to consider policy interventions to develop their cultural and entertainment industries when considering state power capabilities.

The Concert of Autocracies: A Potemkin Village

Will Nelson, 2022

Change. We are all experiencing it. Sanctions are flying, missiles rocketing, and in the past few weeks, tragic amounts of ink, words, and blood have been spilled attempting to make sense of the insensible—the first full-scale, ground invasion by a European great power since World War II.

While much commentary has been focused—rightfully so—on the ongoing dynamics of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, little attention has been paid to the surrounding geostrategic context. In this essay, I will explore the growing Russia-China strategic axis by examining a similar time period in European history—the creation of the Holy Alliance in the 19th century. I will argue that, contrary to popular commentary, this partnership is unlikely to last due to inherent, conflicting strategic interests, and thus is not a cause for long-term Western concern. First, I will start with a brief overview of what happened so long ago.

The Holy Alliance

The year was 1815. Europe lay devastated, riven by almost twenty years of continuous warfare. France, formerly one the most powerful countries on the Continent, was broken, defeated. Napoleon, and his dreams of Empire, had left nothing but death, poverty, and destruction in his wake.

The great powers of Europe, fearing another conflagration, gathered together in what became known as the Concert of Europe, a loose consensus centered around preserving the existing territorial status quo in Europe. However, some of the most conservative great powers at the time felt this was not enough—they still feared the cry for liberté, égalité, and fraternité (the war-cry of the French Revolutionary armies) that had coursed throughout their countries.

These absolutist monarchies—chiefly Prussia, Russia, and Austria—formed a separate grouping of great powers called the Holy Alliance, whose goal was to intervene wherever previously stable monarchies were threatened by the rising tide of liberal democracy—a trend that came to its climax in the Revolutions of 1848.

While this grouping did have some notable successes—such as when Austria invaded Italy in 1820 to put down a revolution in Naples—the ideological currents that had brought Russia, Prussia, and Austria together were eventually overcome by geopolitics. In essence, Prussia, Austria, and Russia had always been an awkward pairing. All three, located in roughly the same geographical area, engaged in intense strategic competition. Russia, having suffered repeated invasions from the West,

sought security by expanding in Eastern Europe. Prussia and Austria, in the aftermath of the dissolution of the then-moribund Holy Roman Empire, sparred over which country should take up the mantle of German leadership. Given these dynamics, it is remarkable that the Holy League lasted for as long as it did.

Sino-Russian Cooperation

How then, might this dynamic apply to 21st-century geopolitics? As Harvard political scientists Daniel Ziblatt and Steven Levitsky noted in their best-selling 2018 book How Democracies Die, though Western liberal democracy expanded dramatically after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has been under assault in recent years. Monarchism, in its new guise of authoritarianism, is on the rise once again.

This idea—the central concept of blind submission to authority—is most present in both Russia and China today. Whether the paternalistic authoritarianism of the Communist Party of China (CCP) or Russia's toxic combination of pan-Slavic nationalism and Orthodox Christianity, both regimes have found solidarity in their mutual desire to break free the constraints imposed upon them by the global spread of Western liberal norms.

While this partnership is frightening, it is a bond of convenience, not a marriage of steadfast friends. Similar to the Holy Alliance, China and Russia right now see a temporary opening, a chance to push back on Western norms like human rights that they would much rather do without. However, their strategic interests are too dissimilar to allow this pairing to hold together for long.

Future Prospects of Cooperation

China's ambitions are global—it wants to replace the U.S. as the world's number one economy, and have its culture, military, and society be heard and respected around the world. In contrast, Russia emphasizes pan-Slavic nationalism and appeals to Orthodox Christianity. While this may take them far in Eastern Europe, it is a poor cousin to the global appeal of communism that the Soviet Union benefited from. Thus, while China and Russia may have joined together temporarily, Russia's interests are by nature far more regional, and revisionist—something that will eventually put them in direct conflict with China given the difference between the two in the scope of their ambitions.

China, as a country bent on replacing the U.S. as the world's global hegemon, will have to come up with a replacement for the set of rules that the U.S embodies. Whatever this ideology ends up being, non-interference and respect for territorial sovereignty will be key—this is the only way China can extend its influence around the world. However, Russia is clearly set on redrawing the map of Eurasia in its favor—the only way it can do this is with brutal military force.

While China might be going along with the invasion of Ukraine for now, it will at some point have to choose between its temporary partnership with Russia, or its long-term goal to replace the U.S. and its desire to be seen as a responsible global power—it cannot have both.

Similarly, while both Prussia and Austria were drawn together in their mutual desire to push back against the spread of democracy, their inability to agree on who should be the leading state of Germany inevitably split them apart. Thus, while China and Russia's newfound partnership is worrying for now, it is a temporary agreement that will eventually dissipate due to irreconcilable strategic interests, and is therefore not a cause for long-term strategic concern for U.S. analysts and policymakers.

The Russian Invasion of Ukraine, the Contemporary Russo-Japanese War?

Leo Field, 2022

The Russian invasion of Ukraine is proving to be one of the most destabilizing political developments of the twenty-first century. The long-term effects of this conflict will be felt for years to come, particularly within Russia itself. This conflict is reminiscent of another conflict over a hundred years ago, the Russo-Japanese War. The Russo-Japanese War was a turning point in Russian history as it weakened the Russian government both internationally and domestically, leading to the Bolshevik Revolution twelve years later. Likewise, the recent invasion of Ukraine has isolated Russia from the international community and exacerbated political unrest domestically. The Russo-Japanese War may provide valuable insight into the long-term effects of the current conflict.

At the turn of the century, the Russian Empire was under significant pressure both domestically and internationally. The unification of the German Empire in 1871 solidified its status as a great power, threatening the power balance in Europe. Following the decision of Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1887 to not renew the Reinsurance Treaty, Russia had to counter the growing ambitions of Berlin by a show of strength. Domestically, there was considerable political upheaval as the Czar promoted russification policies alienating a majority of his subjects and a proletariat formed from an industrial boom (Sebag 2016, The Romanovs, p. 509). The growing political unrest resulted in brutal crackdowns by the Czar's administration. To distract from these domestic troubles, the Czar looked East, spurred on by the legacy of Russian expansion. This led to a military buildup in Manchuria and the breakdown of negotiations between the Japanese and Russian diplomats (Nikolai wanted both Manchuria and Korea). Though the war officially began with the Japanese surprise attack on Port Arthur, Russian expansion into Manchuria in the years prior and Russian refusal of Japanese diplomatic offers heightened tensions between the two empires. The war resulted in a shocking Japanese victory that destroyed much of the Russian Pacific and Baltic fleets, weakened the Russian position into a near secondary status, and weakened the position of the autocracy of the Czar domestically. With the withdrawal of Russian forces from Korea and Manchuria, the Czar pivoted to the West, strengthening his support for Serbia to restore Russian prestige and legitimacy. This backed the Czar into a corner, forcing participation in the First World War, resulting in the destruction of the Romanov dynasty by the Bolsheviks.

It is also important to identify the atmosphere around the rise of Putin and the ascension of Nikolai II. The Czar came to power at a time when aristocratic rule across Europe was being replaced by democratic reforms. The assassination of Alexander II and the autocratic influence of

Alexander III pivoted Nikolai II towards strengthening his regime. Putin came to power following the collapse of the Soviet Union and had to contend with the Chechnya conflict. Like Nikolai II, Putin solidified his autocratic regime and rolled back democratic reforms. Similar to the Czar, Putin has worked to restore Russia's status as a great power by expanding Russia's borders in Chechnya, Georgia and now Ukraine, the historical backyard of Russia.

How does this relate to the current war in Ukraine? Part of the reason for the Russian expansion into the Far East was to secure a warm water port in the Pacific and foster economic growth in the region. Warm water ports are important to Russian security as they are vital to the protection of Russian interests and power projection. The annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and the vital port at Sevastopol in 2014 strengthened the Russian presence in the Black Sea. This action weakened Ukraine economically and emboldened the Kremlin. President Putin has also invoked historical ties between Russia and Ukraine to justify the invasion. Like the Czar, Putin is using the legacy of Russian dominance and expansion in the region to both show strength as a major international player and crack down on political dissent domestically. However, Putin has underestimated Ukraine and miscalculated the political implications of the conflict, similar to that of the Czar and Japan.
The Czar, fueled by racial prejudices, believed the numerically superior Russian forces would defeat the Japanese. Instead, Russian forces were defeated in nearly every instance, humiliating the autocratic regime. Likewise, it is clear that the Russian military has been humiliated in the last three weeks with approximately two to six thousand casualties and another thousand vehicles and heavy material, artillery, missiles, etc., destroyed in Ukraine. The Russian advances have stalled with logistical issues stemming from Ukrainian defenses and Russian supply chains. The damage to civilians in Ukraine is also damaging Russian status abroad, providing greater support to the Ukrainian cause.

Will Vladimir Putin face a similar situation to that of Nikolai II following the war? I believe it is possible. The actions of the Ukrainian people have shown that they may continue to resist Russian occupation following the cessation of hostilities. The Covid-19 pandemic has isolated Putin, from his people and inner circle, and continues to be isolated through the current conflict. This separation between the Russian head of state and the people existed in the last years of the Romanovs, leading to poor national decision-making by the Czar based on misconceptions of the connection between the dynasty and the people. Something similar may be happening now, but it is unclear if any removal of Putin will take place in the near future. A major contributor to pressure on Putin is the recent economic sanctions that have devastated the Russian economy. The effects of the sanctions imposed by states around the world are creating pressure on the oligarchs supporting Putin that can add to Russian domestic issues, possibly resulting in a change in leadership.

As Mark Twain said, "History doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes," and I believe we are witnessing such a rhyme today in Ukraine. Putin's gambit to maintain Russian prestige and great power status in the twenty-first century resembles the efforts of Nikolai II to do the same. In both cases, efforts to solve the dispute diplomatically were rejected by Russia. The failure to achieve a clear victory weakened Russia's position internationally and the strength of the regime domestically in both cases. If the legacy of 1905 is any indication, Putin is leading Russia into an unstable and uncertain future.

Scholz's Sondervermögen: A German Strategic Revival

Brandon Grosch, 2022

In late March, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced a Sondervermögen ("special fund") meant to pour 100 billion Euros, or 112 billion USD, into the Bundeswehr for procurement and training, along with a commitment for Germany to meet and exceed NATO's two-percent GDP military spending requirement. The intent of this move is to shift German military doctrine from gradually increased contributions to NATO's out-of-area operations back towards the territorial defense priorities of the late 20th century. Since the end of the Cold War, the Federal Republic of Germany has shied away from committing to increased defense expenditures and has consistently failed to meet NATO's two-percent spending mandate every year since 1991, meaning that the Sondervermögen will be the most dramatic uptick in German military spending since World War II. 100 billion Euros is roughly double what Germany spent on the Bundeswehr in 2019, and such a sharp increase in spending will make the Federal Republic the third-largest defense spender in the world, behind the United States and the People's Republic of China.

However, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute suggests that the fund may dry up by 2025, potentially rushing the Bundeswehr's rehabilitation. While funding has been a problem for the Bundeswehr, the money in the Sondervermögen will not solve the underlying issues plaguing German defense policy. However, it could represent the beginning of a tectonic shift in German political culture that may correct long-standing shortcomings in German security strategy.

Since the end of the Cold War, German strategic culture has stagnated. NATO's 1990s eastward expansion into Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic made Germany no longer the frontline battleground in a potential war between the West and the Soviet Bloc. This newfound security, together with German distaste for military action and the increased exercise of its economic and diplomatic strengths in the 21st century, have all contributed to a frustrating lack of German participation in international crises and European security integration. In every other aspect of the international democratic order, Germany is a leader and an essential voice in the global community. It is the largest single economy in Europe and the fourth largest in the world. In the security realm though, Germany has not reached its potential.

This lack of a coherent German security strategy stems partially from its domestic politics. Traditionally, Angela Merkel's moderate conservative Christian Democratic Union party (CDU/CSU) represented the bloc in the Bundestag (the German legislature) willing to increase defense spending and integrate Germany with the European security framework, while its coalition partner, the moderate liberal Social Democratic Party (SPD), opposed such changes with the

general support of other left-leaning parties like the Greens/Alliance 90, the Free Democratic Party (FDP), and the Left Party. It is important that the Sondervermögen was announced by a Chancellor from the SPD, and cabinet members from the Greens and the FDP have shown support for the proposal, with CDU support in principle. A CDU-led government may not have been able to bring together the political support of those traditionally dovish parties. The German public even approves greater efforts to support Ukraine than Germany has already taken since the outbreak of war there.

Chancellor Scholz, then, may represent the introduction of a new, domestically supported style of German leadership that prioritizes the strategic strengthening of Europe while leveraging the economic and political tools of diplomacy that the Federal Republic has developed since reunification such as its part-ownership in the World Bank, push for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, and leadership in the EU and other multilateral diplomatic organizations. Prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, German conflict mitigation strategy in Eastern Europe amounted to promoting somewhat anemic economic interdependence with Russia, including European dependence on Russian energy production and Russian dependence on European capital investment and financial markets. Détente with Eastern Europe and Russia has always been a staple in German foreign policy since Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik of the 1970s, and this new 21st century version of the policy pursues economic interdependence as the primary vehicle for that détente.

Interdependency introduced vulnerabilities to both European and Russian security in the hopes that the risk of losing those economic ties would constitute an economic deterrent to Russian aggression in Eastern Europe. Partial economic integration has unfortunately proven ineffective as the Russian Federation has continued to wage war in Chechnya, Georgia, the Crimean Peninsula, Syria, and now the whole of Ukraine.

Since the invasion of Ukraine, the German government has had to hastily shift its tactics. Along with the announcement of the Sondervermögen, Scholz has ended the German-Russian partnership on the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, supported sweeping sanctions against Russia, and even belatedly supported suspending Russian SWIFT payments. He also indicated that Germany would be pursuing F-35 procurement under NATO's nuclear-sharing doctrine, which allows any non-nuclear alliance member to store nuclear weapons within their borders and allows access to platforms capable of delivering those weapons, such as the F-16 and F-35. Scholz also announced his intentions for redoubling the German commitment to the European Future Combat Air System project, which aims to develop a natively European network of next-generation air defense and air combat capabilities, including a 6th generation air superiority fighter and improved Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicle (UCAV) capabilities.

As NATO warfighting equipment pours into Western Ukraine, German leaders must regroup and find a new security framework that does not solely rely on the preventative power of economic integration. The Sondervermögen may simply be a temporary fund for the Bundeswehr to modernize and expand over the next few years, but it represents an unprecedented German willingness to commit to collective European security in a way it has not since the collapse of the Soviet Union. It remains to be seen whether Germany will rise to a position of leadership in global security in the same way it has in the global economy, but the Scholz government appears prepared to make those steps in the interest of maintaining European stability.

The Strategic Power of Water in Asia

Will Nelson, 2022

Ice, melting. The glint of the sun, reflecting off of a snowy waste. It is not the Arctic, nor the South Pole. Instead, it is an area of the world deemed the "Third Pole" by many environmental scientists. Nestled high in the mountains, the glaciers of the Himalayas provide water for some of Asia's mightiest rivers, including the Indus, the Yangtze, and the Mekong.

However, there is a problem: they are melting. Climatologists predict that glacier run-off from the Himalayas will increase until around 2050, after which it will rapidly decrease as glacier shrinkage accelerates. Over 1.3 billion people, a fifth of the world's population, are in danger of losing access to what is essentially one single, vast source of water. The long-term dynamics this sets in motion are destabilizing for all of Asia and a grave, unrecognized crisis for U.S. national security through the widespread regional instability it will spark.

The reason for this comes in two parts. First, as seen in the Arab Spring, threats to fundamental basics like water can topple even seemingly stable regimes. For example, in 2017 the Bolivian environmental minister resigned in the midst of a crippling drought and violent street protests. Transnational terror groups and criminal networks have also likewise leveraged water instability to achieve strategic gains—in 2016 ISIL launched attacks on water supplies in Libya that forced citizens to dig through street pavements in order to access crippled water mains.

Many of the countries in this region—such as Myanmar and Afghanistan—have similarly difficult legacies of war, civil unrest, and economic instability. Threats to their water supplies are two-fold—not only will water scarcity deprive people of vitally needed hydration, but it also cuts at the fundamental viability of irrigation-based agriculture—long a fundamental component of agricultural methodologies in many countries throughout the region. For example, irrigation-fed crops were a hallmark of the Indus River Valley culture—one of the great fonts of civilization in Asia, along with the Yellow River Valley in Mainland China. States in Asia continue to depend on water for economic viability. In 2011, for instance, Cambodia used almost 94% of its water exclusively for irrigation and livestock. Recent horrific floods in Pakistan—according to satellite imagery, over 30% of the country is currently underwater—only highlight the danger that climate change plays in exacerbating this crisis.

A severe domestic or environmental crisis in any one of these countries could threaten U.S. national security through its potential to spark region-wide insecurity. For example, terrorist groups seizing control of WMDs in unstable states like Pakistan is a perennial concern, while intra-regional

conflict over diminishing water resources, especially involving treaty allies like Thailand, risks drawing the U.S. into a wider conflict. If multiple countries were to experience crippling food and water shortages at the same time, the implications would be staggering. Disturbances at this scale simply have not occurred in Asia since World War II—the Vietnam War was confined to Southeast Asia, and the Korean War only involved the Korean Peninsula. In contrast, Himalayan glacial melt threatens every country from Pakistan to China—an arc of countries that comprises one of the most densely inhabited population belts in the entire world.

The threat to Himalayan glaciers is not regional—it threatens the entire continent of Asia. Only North Korea, South Korea, and Mongolia will be spared. Famine and instability, potentially even mass starvation, threaten to spread unchecked across the continent in coming years if this melting is not stopped.

However, the impending water crisis in continental Asia is only the first part of the problem. The second is where most of these headwaters lie: the Tibetan plateau. Ever since China reoccupied Tibet, it has taken steps to solidify its control, which has given it a stranglehold over the sources of key rivers like the Indus and Mekong. What is more, the Chinese government, in keeping with its emphasis on territorial sovereignty, has treated water inside of its borders as a sovereign resource—the needs of downstream countries like Pakistan do not matter. Part of this stems from Chinese concerns about reliable domestic access to water— in 2017 alone, scientists estimated over 80% of China's groundwater resources were unfit for human consumption. In fact, so grave is China's sensitivity to its scarcity of water that it is "one of only three UN member countries to reject the notion that states have the right not to be adversely affected by activities of upstream countries."

A similar scene is already playing out today. The Nile starts in Ethiopia, but multiple countries—most importantly Sudan and Egypt—also depend on its waters. For years, Ethiopia has been planning a vast hydroelectric dam close to the source of the Nile. While this would provide Ethiopia with much-needed electricity, policymakers in Egypt have repeatedly threatened to attack Ethiopia if they build the dam, fearing that it would deprive Egypt of the water it needs to survive.

If China did a similar thing, such as by damming up the headwaters of the Mekong to make up for a decrease in outflows of the Yellow River—Pakistan and much of Southeast Asia would be devastated. The resulting refugee flows, instability, and potential conflict between nuclear-armed countries will threaten U.S. interests throughout the region. Worryingly, China has already been caught 'turning off the tap' of the Mekong, leading to prolonged drought in Southeast Asia. As glacial runoff—expected to peak by 2050—increases, China will be increasingly tempted to exercise this leverage, with devastating consequences for downstream countries.

If these parallel crises —continental-wide discontent and sweeping, intra-regional warfare over dwindling water—are to be avoided, U.S. policymakers must act now to head off the worst of the crises.

Firstly, policymakers must devote more funding to monitor the rate of Himalayan glacial decline—they are some of the least studied glaciers in the world. Only with accurate measurements of remaining water reserves can regional governments in Asia know the depth of the crisis they face.

Secondly, U.S. policymakers must accelerate efforts to combat climate change and reduce the amount of greenhouse gases currently in the atmosphere. Since climate change is the primary cause of the melting of Himalayan glaciers, any reduction in the rate of increase in Earth's temperature will slow the decline of glacial runoff, giving Asian countries more time to adapt. Building upon the momentum of the COP 26 summit, the Biden administration must expand efforts to increase the use of green and renewable energy and speedily implement recently passed climate change legislation—an effort that has taken on increased urgency given the energy crisis facing the developed world.

Finally, the U.S. should accelerate efforts to help regional farmers conserve water and use it as efficiently as possible. Farmers in Western agricultural states like California are already experiencing crippling, historic droughts, and have learned painful lessons in water conservation—these represent a source of human capital that the U.S. can draw upon.

Furthermore, U.S. government agencies already have a strong presence throughout much of the region. For example, the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok is one of the largest U.S. diplomatic presences abroad, and organizations like the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) are well-positioned to facilitate the transfer of water conservation management techniques to partner countries throughout the region. Every effort should be made to increase collaboration with humanitarian and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like Water Aid and the Pacific Institute, who have the institutional know-how needed to be effective regional implementers of water conservation projects.

Brute Force and Coercion in Ukraine

Vincent Escobar, 2022

In the opening pages of Arms and Influence, Thomas Schelling wrote about two different ways of using military force to achieve a country's goals: brute force and coercion. Both of these approaches are being utilized in the ongoing war in Ukraine, and understanding the different logics behind these methods is vital for actors interested in the resolution of the conflict since brute force and coercion have differing needs for enemy collaboration in order to work. Ukraine is engaged in a campaign of brute force to retake its lost territory, while Russia is attempting to hold on to its slipping gains through coercion.

Brute Force versus Coercion

In his 1966 book, Schelling distinguished between brute force and coercion. He wrote, "There is a difference between taking what you want and making someone give it to you... It is the difference between brute force and intimidation, between conquest and blackmail, between action and threats. It is the difference between the unilateral, 'undiplomatic' recourse to strength, and coercive diplomacy based on the power to hurt." Schelling observed that brute force is a matter of successfully using strength, while coercion involves the "exploitation of wants and fears" by using the threat of violence. In other words, brute force is about overpowering the target's opposition to the user's goal, while coercion is about making the target feel that opposition to the user's goal is not worth the pain involved.

Ukrainian Brute Force

The liberation of Ukrainian land is Ukraine's goal, and Ukraine's actions in the waning months of 2022 are characteristic of the use of brute force to achieve that goal. In August and September of 2022, the Ukrainians launched counteroffensives against the Russian occupied areas of Kherson and Kharkiv. The eastern counteroffensive in Kharkiv resulted in dramatic gains for the Ukrainians. In a matter of days, they reclaimed more than 3,000 square kilometers, and have continued to push forward. Recently, they took the strategic city of Lyman, an important supply center for Russian forces. On the southern front, the Ukrainians have made significant progress in their Kherson counteroffensive. In response to Russia's claimed annexation of the occupied territories, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has ruled out negotiations with Russian President Vladimir Putin. When it comes to restoring their territorial integrity, the Ukrainians are pursuing battlefield victories over bargains. With indispensable Western aid, the Ukrainians are, to paraphrase Schelling, "taking what [they] want."

If the Ukrainians themselves were attempting to compel Russia into leaving, they would either seek to maximize pain inside Russia itself or maximize the pain of occupation. Although there have been some strikes inside of Russia, they were of military targets and were not threatening to inflict unbearable pain on Russian soil to persuade Russia to withdraw from the occupied territories. It could be argued that the Ukrainians are not using large, pain-maximizing strikes inside of Russia to avoid grave Russian retaliation. However, the Russians are already making the most serious retaliatory threats over war-torn territory that they now claim as part of their homeland. Rather, pain-inducing Ukrainian strikes inside Russia would jeopardize the Ukrainians' access to the Western arms that are enabling their brute force campaign since the West does not want its weapons used for those purposes and the strikes would undercut the Ukrainian narrative of noble defense. While Russian families feel pain from the many body bags filled by the counteroffensives, Ukrainian efforts are more tailored to liberate land, not kill Russian soldiers. If achieving a critical mass of dead Russian troops was the strategy to get Russia to abandon the war, then the Ukrainian war effort could have focused on operations that would bog down and ensnare the Russians instead of higher risk counteroffensives. Instead, the Ukrainians have focused on the active, forceful reclamation of territory.

Thus far, the Ukrainians are succeeding in their attempt at brute force liberation. With recently increased US aid and the meager Russian conventional response, it seems that they can continue to retake their land without the need to employ coercion themselves. However, Russia is responding by threatening to move beyond conventional war in a continuation of their coercive approach to the conflict.

Russian Coercion

Ever since the war did not end in quick victory like they expected, the Russians have been attempting to coerce the Ukrainians into submission, and the recent declarations of annexation backed by nuclear threats are an extension of those efforts. When Kyiv did not fall in the initial phase of the invasion, Russia began striking civilians and they continued that behavior as the war progressed. In response to the rapidly advancing Ukrainian counteroffensive in Kharkiv, they attacked Ukrainian infrastructure, which cut civilians' access to power and water. These conventional strikes on civilian targets were not attempts to overpower the Ukrainian military, but rather were inflictions of pain meant to convince the Ukrainians that resistance was not worth the price. The Ukrainians continued fighting unbowed. As this conventional coercion failed, Russia has claimed that Ukrainian land is now Russian through annexation, and Putin is intimating that he may use nuclear weapons to defend it as such. In explaining the differences between strength-focused brute force and violent coercion, Schelling wrote, "With strength they [opposing sides] can dispute objects of value; with sheer violence they can destroy them." Russian strength has

faltered in disputing Ukrainian land, and Russian nuclear threats raise the specter of destruction. To the extreme, Russia is doubling down on its attempts to threaten the Ukrainians with intolerable pain.

While Ukrainian brute force and Russian coercion are clashing head to head, it is taking place in the context of dueling coercion between the United States and Russia. Indeed, US coercion is creating the environment for Ukrainian brute force to thrive in. However, this greater coercive context does not negate the Ukrainian intent and experience of overpowering deployed Russian strength as they are forcibly moving closer and closer to their objective.

With this identification of Ukrainian brute force and Russian coercion in the conflict, observers can see that the two direct participants in the conflict have different needs for enemy collaboration in order to be successful in the approaches that they pursue. Schelling noted that bargaining involves collaboration, and that while striking a bargain is essential for coercion, it is not required for brute force. The Ukrainian approach does not require Russian cooperation, while the Russian approach inherently needs Ukrainian acceptance. As global concern rises, epitomized by US President Joe Biden drawing parallels between the conflict and the Cuban Missile Crisis, knowing the frameworks that Ukraine and Russia are operating under helps interested actors see how the two countries understand the role that the other plays in ending the conflict. If actors wanting to effect change misunderstand these adversaries' perspectives on their opponent's roles, then their actions may have unintended consequences.

Finding Greater Energy Security in Europe

Brandon Grosch, 2022

Since the outbreak of the war between Russia and Ukraine, Europe has faced a looming energy crisis. EU sanctions against Russia have minimized energy imports from the east, and the recent apparent attack on the Nordstream pipelines halted gas flow in all except a single line. Russia has also opted to restrict gas flow outside the scope of EU sanctions, and as a result Russian gas powering European homes has more than halved this year. As winter approaches, countries across Europe are racing to instill a range of stopgap measures in order to prevent the continent from freezing. Some of these measures include the German government postponing the closure of two of its remaining three nuclear power generators and suspending its constitutional debt brake as part of a massive energy relief plan, and the European Union agreeing to pool gas purchases in an effort to combat high prices over the cold months. Europeans are almost certain to be in for a difficult winter this year, and government leaders will need a large amount of political will to wait it out without returning to Russian gas supplies.

Economic interdependence as a deterrent, something that Europe has staked its security strategy on for years, has proven to be a failed experiment in the case of Russian aggression. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Europe has tried to integrate Russia into the European political, economic, and security spheres through the 1997 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, and over the next twenty years it would come to rely heavily on Russian energy imports through pipelines like the Nordstream 2 project, which started construction in 2010. Angela Merkel and her predecessor, Gerhard Schröder, were advocates of the Gazprom-owned pipelines despite US objections because the direct connection with Russia would provide cheap fuel to Germany's massive, energy-intensive economy. Russia sold the project as an improvement on Europe's energy security, partly because Russia was one of the only options for Europe to satisfy its energy needs, and partly because closer economic integration with Russia and the West would deter either from interfering in the other's affairs. Logically, that integration also includes a greater potential for economic coercion, namely sanctions, to work as part of that deterrent as well. Sanctions have, however, failed to deter Russia from further aggression in Ukraine after 2014. The pressing question regarding European security after this coming winter, and after the end of the war in Ukraine, is this: how will Europe guarantee its energy security in the future?

The first option for a post-war Europe is to return to Russian gas supplies, pinning its energy security once again on the deterrent effects of economic interdependence. After the apparent attack on the Nordstream pipelines, however, it is unclear whether that option is viable for Europe.

Further, reintegrating Putin's Russia into the European security structure as an essential energy supplier would only serve to reward its bad behavior. Ultimately, this option will be detrimental to European security in the long run.

The other options Europe must consider, then, are ensuring energy security either through energy independence—ensuring enough indigenous production to cover domestic needs—or energy interdependence with more reliable security partners such as non-EU NATO partners or other stable democratic energy exporters. There is some evidence that European decision-makers are making steps towards both.

Some steps towards energy independence already being taken include plans for a new hydrogen and gas pipeline between Barcelona and Marseilles through the Mediterranean, and recent European Council policy planning urges accelerated investment in renewables and reducing demand for gas consumption across the Union. Energy independence, however, is a difficult task for Europe. Most European states are net-consumers of energy and those that are strong energy producers like Norway and Azerbaijan have historically produced too little to act as alternatives to Russian oil. In 2020, Europe natively produced 42% of its energy and imported 58%. Energy independence is a goal of the European Council, but it seems unlikely to happen anytime soon. Nuclear energy is not embraced in Germany, where it could do the most good for closing the energy gap, and renewables have not received enough private or public investment to overcome fossil fuel production. Liquified natural gas (LNG) is a potential stopgap, but Europe can only get it from distant producers like the US and Qatar.

In the meantime, The European Union will need to turn to energy imports from sources other than Russia. The EU has already started to increase natural gas imports from Norway, the United States, and Canada, as well as planned increases of gas deliveries from Azerbaijan, Israel, and Egypt. The first hydrogen deliveries from the United Arab Emirates have also recently made their way to Europe. Importantly, many of these countries already have strong ties to the European Union. Norway, the US, and Canada are all members of NATO and thus have a strategic interest in keeping Europe securely supplied with energy. Azerbaijan is a part of the Eastern Partnership Initiative, a project to strengthen ties between the EU and former Soviet states, and its primary economic relationship is with the EU. Egypt and Israel both also have important economic and security relationships with Europe.

Not every country that Europe is turning to for energy imports is an ideal partner, but no potential new partner represents a strategic threat on the same scale as Russia. Energy independence may be the ideal situation for Europe in the post-war period, but European energy consumption may prevent that from becoming a viable option until the distant future. In 2020, only 20% of the EU's

energy consumption was from renewable sources. Until energy independence is achieved, Europe must avoid returning to its past habit of sourcing energy supplies from strategically threatening actors. As the invasion of Ukraine has shown, economic interdependence does not have a deterrent effect.

Furthermore, If Ukraine manages to completely repel Russian forces from its territory and extract a politically satisfying resolution to the war, reintegrating Russia into the security fabric of the continent would only serve to needlessly endanger European security. The far more secure choice for Europe, and one that it seems to be working towards, is the construction of an interdependent energy network of allies and close friends. Importing energy from NATO allies like Norway, the US, and Canada is the best scenario as it will be the safest method of ensuring energy security short of independent production. So long as European leaders can survive this coming winter without returning to Russian gas supplies, EU energy security will be greatly improved in the long run by shifting energy reliance away from the east and towards the west.

State Degradation in Putin's War-time Russia

Will Nelson, 2022

The Second Russo-Ukrainian War has become the largest land war in Europe since World War II (WWII), and is arguably one of the most momentous geopolitical events of the 21st century. However, while most coverage of the Ukraine conflict has naturally focused on ongoing shifts in momentum between Russia and Ukraine and the rise of non-state actors like the Wagner Group and Chechen warlord Ramzan Kadyrov's Kadyrovsty, comparatively little attention has focused on how the rise of privatized actors like Kadyrov and Wagner may undermine the long-term viability of the Russian administrative state.

Putin's Power Structure

Putin's power structure is based on two pillars: the security state, many of whom are siloviki (lit., men of power), and Russia's energy and natural resources-based economy, the proceeds of which he uses to pay off various actors. For example, after the Second Chechen War Putin set up Chechen warlord Ramzan Kadyrov's family with a strikingly feudalistic relationship: in exchange for loyalty, Ramzan would have carte blanche to rule Chechnya as he sees fit. Notably, most other regions of Russia do not have this type of relationship and are instead administered by governors who ultimately report to Putin. Reportedly, Putin relies on substantial oil and gas revenues to subsidize Kadyrov's rule in Chechnya.

Current Dynamics in Ukraine: Escalation

Despite substantial casualties and significant battlefield setbacks, news reports indicate Putin plans to continue his campaigns in Ukraine. Yet, these plans have come at an increasing cost to Russia and its economy. For example, while Putin may have mobilized roughly 300,000 conscripts in his first conscription drive, hundreds of thousands of more men fled Russia—a long-term drain on Russia's manpower and tax revenue that will not be replaced any time soon.

Increasingly, this escalation is coming at a cost to the viability of Putin's regime. While he is correct in assessing that Russia has more aggregate resources—manpower, money, and munitions than Ukraine—the material support of the West changes this equation. For example, the combined GDPs of Western allies and partners who imposed financial sanctions on Russia represent around 41% of total global GDP (U.S., UK, Canada, New Zealand, Switzerland, EU, Australia, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea)—compared to 23% of global GDP if all of Russia's backers/Russia aligned countries (North Korea, Iran, Syria, China, Venezuela, Eritrea, Cuba, and Sudan) are taken into account. Essentially, Ukraine has almost double the financial and industrial base to call upon than Russia does—not a winning prospect for Putin's hopes of an attritional victory.

Thus, while Putin appears intent to continue his campaigns in Ukraine, the prospects of an attritional victory in Russia's favor look increasingly grim. With both sides intent on slugging it out, "victory" may result more in a collapse of one side's ability or will to fight than a clear military victory. Echoes of this have occurred in Russian history before, such as during WWI when the Eastern Front collapsed after years of devastating losses. While the suffering of Ukraine cannot be understated, especially given that the war is being fought on their territory, it is important to highlight that Russia may not hold the advantage in fiscal or military reserves, though it appears to hold an edge in manpower.

As this war progresses, the administrative apparatus of both Russia and Ukraine are increasingly under strain. For example, Ukraine had to rely on mobilized volunteers for the defense of Kyiv, while Russia is recruiting prisoners for military service. Yet, Putin's regime might be more susceptible to this long-term degradation than Ukraine.

Autocratic regimes are by nature top-down rather than bottom-up, and as the war progresses, Putin's sinews of power—how he mobilizes Russia's aggregate manpower, GDP, etc.—are coming under strain. Ukraine is facing this too, especially with the impact of Russian attacks on critical infrastructure. Yet, Russia has increasingly witnessed the rise of private, clan-based, and familial power networks like Wagner and Kadyrov who appear to be becoming more emboldened. While such dynamics may be occurring on a localized level in Ukraine, as of now it does not appear to be a nationwide phenomenon to the extent it is in Russia. If the Russian state continues to show strain—and perhaps even break down—actors like Kadyrov and Wagner may hedge their bets and begin to take power into their own hands. This was an all-too-familiar dynamic in Afghanistan, where the weak central government was forced to concede power to a host of private security forces, warlords, and clans. Although Russia is not remotely similar to Afghanistan, this dynamic—the center ceding power to regional/private groups—is a worrying parallel.

Consequently, the U.S. and other democratically-aligned countries must be prepared for a long, grinding war. Defeat holds no advantage for him—the only fate that awaits is the Hague or worse. Conversely, continuing to fight offers the prospect, however remote, of eking out a victory. Yet, continued escalation only further harms his long-term hold on power. This dynamic: the inescapable nature of the conflict, yet an increasingly shaky and unstable Russian government—may only accelerate in the years ahead. Similar conflicts, like the Iran-Iraq War, have lasted years, and Putin, at 70 years old, could fight for years ahead. U.S. policymakers and the public need to contend with the fact that the Ukraine War may last for far longer than they are prepared for, and that Russia may become increasingly unstable as it continues to fight. Although Russian

state collapse is arguably not a realistic outcome yet, it is a grim outcome Western policymakers must be prepared for.

Security Sector Reform Matters

Alexandra Gerbracht, 2023

Security sector reform is an underappreciated but vitally important variable when studying post-conflict nations. The formation, evolution, and destruction of security institutions impact both domestic and international conflict. Understanding critical connections and developments inside a security sector can introduce researchers to a beautiful world of institutional causal relationships. However, it is decidedly unsexy to study how bureaucratic sausage is made. A quick library database search yields only 2000 results for "security sector reform". This is a weak showing compared to "transitional justice", which generates 12,000 hits. Despite its marginal appeal and minimal literature available, each of the central international relations paradigms would agree on the importance of studying security sector reform.

Albrecht Schnabel and Hans-George Ehrhart, in their 2005 compendium on the topic, describe security sector reform (SSR) primarily in terms of post-conflict rebuilding of the local security sector and military forces as part of the larger democratization process. Linked closely with the peacebuilding process, security sector reform is part of the "political process of transformation from a state of war or violent conflict to one of stability and peace...requiring diplomatic, political, and economic factors". SSR is an avenue for external nations and intergovernmental organizations to cooperate with transitioning nations. Beyond peacebuilding and external influence, as Bleiker and Krupanski describe, SSR is tightly connected to rule of law. More than just civil-military relations, this central aspect of statehood is also a defining factor for domestic and international security policies. Although SSR is a concept that speaks to a specific time in a nation's history, the linkages between the military and its directive political institutions inform later state policy choices. The evolution of civil-military affairs and the partners that influence bureaucratic development impact choices about broader international security.

The overlapping Venn diagrams of SSR and international relations make it an ideal variable to explore and understand when looking deeper into causal relationships in security studies. Understanding SSR through the lenses of realism, liberalism, and constructivism shows the importance of this crucial but rarely studied topic.

Realist assumptions point to the importance of SSR because reforms define material pathways for military power. The size, scope, and control of a security sector within a country bear directly on the relative power of a nation. This is specifically important in transitioning nations seeking to rebuild military power. Should the SSR enforced by Allied powers on Weimar Germany following

WWI have been more thorough, perhaps military authoritarianism would not have followed. Clear civil-military checks and balances, like mandated troop limits and military-specific legal restrictions, can prevent a powerful military from regaining governmental control.

Liberalist assumptions also emphasize SSR because bureaucratic development more clearly delineates decision-making pathways within a domestic system by taking an authoritarian military out of the loop. The development of a security sector can impact state preferences based on the history of military political influence or the shifting powers within the larger security sector. SSR enables a military to maintain combat power but more tightly connects the military to rule of law. Sierra Leone, following a lengthy civil war and with the help of the United Kingdom, used SSR to professionalize internal law enforcement units separate from the military which previously controlled the government. Differentiation of security forces opened up preferences and options for international security actions.

Constructivist theorists view SSR as significant because changes in civil-military prerogatives reflect shifts in domestic identities and interests that result from improvements in rule of law and domestic checks and balances. More important than military might, constructivism cares about how state identities and interests are influenced by culture and history. SSR is institutional development based on those same factors. The history and culture not only of the transitioning state but also of neighboring and regional countries shape how a security sector weaves through multiple institutions. Following the end of the Cold War, Georgia's SSR enabled the development of its identity as a newly independent state with its own clear military strategy.

While every post-conflict country goes through a review of security force capabilities, roles, and responsibilities, the overall quality of the current literature on security sector reform is inadequate, and it's not for lack of cases. Few researchers seem interested in how bureaucracies are built and connected, as it is not as glamorous as unitary theories of development. Just because SSR will not win any popularity contests, it is still a topic of significant importance. More scholars should explore security sector reform not only for its value in each of the traditional international relations paradigms but also for its unrealized potential to impact the broader security studies field.

Habitual Line-stepping: Gray Zone Conflict in the South China Sea

Nicholas Davidson, 2023

Chinese belligerence in the South China Sea is not a new phenomenon, but provocations by the rising power have certainly accelerated over the past five years. While not full-fledged armed conflict, China has embraced the concept of gray-zone tactics, or coercive actions beyond political or economic activities, but just shy of armed conflict. Beijing has employed these tactics with the express purpose of extending its reach beyond its traditional territorial waters through a variety of legally dubious means, such as the dredging of man-made islands near the Spratly archipelago, swarming Chinese fishing vessels to lay claim to small atolls and outcrops in their neighbors' backyard, and flying military aircraft dangerously close to foreign controlled airspace. These provocations are yet another side to the multi-faceted US-China competition that has heated up in the past few years. While smaller states may bear the brunt of Chinese aggression, it is the opportune time for the United States to bolster its allies and partners to set firm boundaries around the regional bully.

Tensions in the South China Sea had simmered for decades, but the gray zone conflict really began in April 2012 when Chinese and Philippine military vessels faced off over the fishing activities of Chinese civilian ships at the Scarborough Shoal in the Spratly Islands. This uneasy standoff ended in June of the same year with the Philippines pulling out of the area under the false pretense that China would do the same; instead, Chinese activity (both civilian and military) ramped up and by July there were reports of Filipino fishing vessels being chased off by the Chinese. Since 2012, Chinese presence in the region has dramatically increased under the guise of commercial fishing activity, but China's island-building tells a different story. Between 2013 and 2015, China not only claimed the coral atolls of the Spratly archipelago as sovereign territory, but also conducted a major campaign to construct a handful of manmade islands. By dredging material from the ocean floor to build these small islands, Beijing seemingly cemented its territorial claim, one that is disputed by many countries in the region. This in turn has empowered Chinese militia who operate as fishing and survey ships, further muddying the distinction between military and civilian.

The territorial claim in the Spratly Islands, which is in the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), has implications for not just the Philippines, but all countries who rely on the fishing industry in the rich waters of the South China Sea. Vietnam has had a few recent run-ins with China traversing their EEZ highlighted by a 2023 encroachment of a science research vessel escorted by militia and coast guard ships; Malaysia has had to deal with Chinese overflight of their airspace and Chinese military patrols of oil and gas operations as well. In 2022, new images revealed the total militarization of China's manmade islands, with sprawling military complexes and full

runways suitable for military aircraft. These "salami slicing" escalations chip away at non-Chinese sovereignty claims to traditional territorial waters and normalize Chinese encroachment in the region. As experts in the region put it, gray zone tactics add a layer of deniability, allowing China to brush away criticism with little legal recourse for victims.

When compared to China, the Southeast Asian countries have little recourse in fighting these claims, so the question becomes: does the United States have a role to play? The Philippines is the only treaty ally that is directly impacted by Chinese encroachment in the South China Sea, but Malaysia and Vietnam are friendly with the US and could benefit from a helping hand. The past three US administrations have shied away from direct military confrontation with China, but actions such as freedom of navigation operations (FONOP) are commonplace around Taiwan and increasingly utilized to bolster confidence in the Philippines' EEZ. Of course, without blatant escalation of coercive tactics by China the United States is unlikely to directly intervene on behalf of any state with claims in the South China Sea; however, combined with the semiconductor limitations passed by Congress in 2021 and 2022, there are a handful of methods the United States can employ to corral China.

According to experts, one meaningful way Washington can contribute to cooling the South China Sea disputes is to utilize international partnerships like the QUAD to promote maritime domain awareness (MDA) initiatives with ASEAN member states. MDA initiatives can be a vessel through which the United States can provide technologies to promote the publication of Chinese transgressions such as satellite imagery and signals detection tools to track ships with inactive location transmitters. By looping in international organizations, countering China becomes a group effort with a multiplicative effect on each member's contribution.

Additionally, by publicizing China's illegal activity, future breaches of the common trust are louder and will attract more attention in an area where Beijing has relied on deniability and handwaving to great effect. For a more direct approach, the United States and the Philippines have rejuvenated their close military cooperative partnership; while Washington has continued to conduct FONOPs through disputed areas, it would not be surprising to see a renewal of significant and permanent US Navy and Coast Guard presence housed at Subic Bay soon.

The latent territorial water conflict in the South China Sea presents a uniquely difficult challenge to US policymakers. Where there is no gun smoke, it does not make sense to send in the cavalry. However, with the smart utilization of partnerships and alliances in the Indo-Pacific, the United States has yet another front to approach challenging China's rising power status.

Responsibilities of Peoples and Nations in International Affairs

Joshua Stone, 2024

In his 1893 work, The Division of Labor in Society, French Sociologist Emile Durkheim evaluates the social costs of Adam Smith's division of labor, or how the separation of work according to specialized individual skills affects human relations. If every activity, if every discipline, be it economic, political, social, administrative, academic, or otherwise is broken down into smaller and smaller specialized roles, what then are the social consequences? Can "over-sorting" social affiliations degrade the cohesive ethics of communal responsibility? When do hyper-individualism and hyper-sovereignty degrade the connective responsibilities nations have to advance common endeavors in human affairs?

Durkheim reminds us that much like dividing labor into specialized, independent roles, society too can fall victim to over-sorting into cliques. The consequences of which he calls anomie. Different from anarchy, anomie is a condition of normlessness—a breakdown of social bonds; a paranoiac condition that our counterpart's beliefs are somehow inimical as we retreat from agreed-upon values, morals, norms, and standards that bind us together. For example, if the ideals of nations and groups mirror the dissimilar manufacturing principles of car companies, then the ideas that adhere societies and nations together will erode, even if everyone is still making cars. But we, at our best, work in common cause to overcome differences. Hereto, Durkheim does not just diagnose how anomie and moral relativism become prevalent in politics. He gives us an antidote to arrest this breakdown in human relations. It starts with aspirations.

To cure the international system of anomie—this breakdown of normlessness—nations must first aspire and then agree that they are responsible for fundamental norms in foreign affairs; that nations do in fact have responsibilities to act upon agreed standards of conduct that ensure stability in international relations. Where can nations begin stitching together the connective tissue of responsible conduct? By reasserting first principles.

Take the Geneva Convention. All 196 members of the United Nations have agreed to the four 1949 conventions that States observe certain restrictions on the conduct of war: (1) the Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field, (2) the Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded, Sick, and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea, (3) the Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, and (4) the Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

Nations also have the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) their "...population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity." Furthermore, the use of force in international affairs is limited to self-defense and nations observe the morality of non-intervention in intrastate conflict. Indeed, nations have a responsibility to assist other states from external assault on a nation's homeland. However, another country's domestic disputes belong to the domain of that actor and that actor alone—unless again protecting populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity are clear and present.

It's easy to be distracted by anomie. It's hard to find consistency when everything you have come to understand about the world seems turned inside-out. But now more than ever is the time to hold steady to first principles and remain consistent in our application of values. "War is an ugly thing...," John Stuart Mills says, "...but not the ugliest of things: the decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth a war, is much worse. When people are used as mere human instruments for firing cannon or thrusting bayonets, in the service and for the selfish purposes of a master, such war degrades a people. A war to protect other human beings against tyrannical injustice; a war to give victory to their own ideas of right and good, and which is their own war, carried on for an honest purpose by their free choice — is often the means of their regeneration...". We mustn't fear these times. We must make these times fear that they ever sought to violate the dignity, freedom, and virtues of an enlightening belief in liberty, equal protection under the law, and justice for all.

Realist Economic Nationalism versus Multilateralism: Which is Best for Power and Plenty?

Alexandra Gerbracht, 2024

Realist economic nationalist policies or multilateralism, which is the best way forward? Thomas Mun, the godfather of mercantilism, argued that plenty was trade and wealth. Frederich List, the initiating voice behind economic nationalism deemed production and national security as power as part of economic nationalism. There is tension between plenty in terms of wealth and trade balance and power in terms of national security, but these definitions offer a way to compare economic nationalism and multilateralism. Multilateralism prioritizes plenty over power by seeking to lift all boats and increase wealth for all nations, primarily by reducing tariffs. Nations working together under institutions with shared norms, rules, and principles allow for power through collective security. Realism, although not traditionally an economic theory, prioritizes national security as power. Economic nationalists see domestic production as national security and assure this priority through tariffs. Using historical perspectives and theories, multilateralist policies, although not perfect, are superior to economic nationalist policies at increasing both power and plenty.

In his 1995 critique of multilateralism, "The False Promise of Institutions", John Mearsheimer writes that multilateralism has a minimal effect on state behavior. Institutions offer a set of rules to prescribe behavior, and Mearsheimer argues that states can choose to follow those rules or not. Realism argues that states will behave based on five assumptions: the international system is anarchic, states possess offensive military capacity, states are never certain of the intentions of others, states will prioritize survival, and will think strategically. The rules that constrain states in multilateralism still account for realist self-interest in terms of both security and economy. Iterated behaviors coordinated through institutions can reduce realist concerns over cheating and increase trust by showing consistent behavior in favor of improving plenty. Collective security is power enabled by multilateralism in the form of shared rules and treaty relationships. Collective security is also counter to Mearsheimer's argument that institutions have minimal effect. Collective security is anti-realist because it moves beyond self-help. While realism views nations as aggressors trying to surpass others at the top of the power pyramid, multilateralism provides opportunities to build a sense of responsibility for the larger global community. Collective security is power in a multilateral world that cannot be replicated by economic nationalist policies which block cooperation. Increasing tariffs to support domestic production may increase power and plenty in the short run, but in the long run multilateralism will enable both.

John Ruggie's 1992 "Multilateralism: The Anatomy of an Institution", uses historical examples to describe successful collective security in terms of institutions that also provide plenty. He described the qualitative dimension of norms and institutions by exploring historical practices. Ruggie illustrates how NATO, following the fall of the Soviet Union, used norms and institutions to continue building cooperation between nations in the absence of a realist bad actor. Multilateralism increases plenty and improves power simultaneously. The international regime was based on American hegemony, enabled by the permissive domestic environment. America did not always act in its realist self-interest and instead prioritized cooperation to improve plenty. Institutions like the World Trade Organization, with its most favored nation status, established clear rules for property rights and developed structural conditions that impact actor behavior. These are examples of multilateralism countering the realist assumptions about not knowing another nation's intentions and impacting state behavior to increase plenty over increasing their own power.

John Ikenberry uses more historical examples to describe successful multilateralism. Following WWII, Britain and America worked together to develop a Keynesian economic system that balanced laissez-faire and interventionist policies. Realists would prioritize their own interests versus embracing a system that was multilateral in character, and that is not what happened. Following both the Great Depression and the Second World War, countries realized that they could not cope with mass unemployment and significant security threats alone. These post-war agreements enabled domestic production, increasing List's form of plenty. Multilateralism assisted cooperation to prevent significant tragedies in both security and trade, thus increasing both power and plenty.

While John Mearsheimer argued that institutions cannot overcome realist assumptions to change state behavior, Ruggie and Ikenberry effectively use historical examples to show the benefits of multilateralism. This empirical claim does not diminish the value of realist theories, but it supports the argument that multilateralist cooperation will bring more overall gains than economic nationalist policies. Multilateralism continues to change and develop while consistently improving power and plenty in ways that realist economic nationalism policies cannot.

Cold Realities: Russia's Arctic Security Actions and Implications

Abby Bell, 2024

Since 2007 when a Russian submersible planted a ceremonial Russian flag on the North Pole seabed, Russia has increased its military presence in the Arctic in various ways, provoking similar responses by the United States and North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The Arctic has always been important to Russia because it not only forms a core part of Russian national identity and serves as an economic resource base, but it is also perceived by Russia to be a critical area for its defense capabilities. Russia's increased military presence in the Arctic is motivated by security concerns primarily stemming from two factors. The first factor is Russia's perception of needing to strengthen its self-defense capabilities. The second factor is maintaining Russia's regional hegemony against what it perceives as threatening efforts by the U.S. and NATO to contain its influence in a strategically important region to Russia. However, the implications of Russia's actions and the reactions by the U.S. and NATO have the potential to threaten future Arctic security and stability.

The Arctic plays a significant role in Russia's self-identity as a great power because Russia has historically perceived the Arctic to largely belong in its sphere of influence and because Russia boasts regional hegemony in the area. Russia's security posture aims to maintain Russia's sphere of influence to safeguard it against external threats, particularly in areas of strategic importance such as the Arctic. While the U.S. is by far the most powerful Arctic state, its limited presence in the Arctic has granted Russia de-facto hegemony in the region. In terms of the greatest capabilities deployed in the region and the fact that Russia has the largest Arctic fleet capable of year-round power projection, Russia is the commanding military power. However, Russia has increasingly perceived the U.S. and NATO as trying to reduce and replace its influence in its historic sphere of influence.

Over the last few decades, Russia has sought to increase its military presence and capabilities in the Arctic to demonstrate and maintain Russia's power in the region as well as convey it to the U.S. and NATO. Russia has both re-opened former Soviet military and radar bases on and around its northern coastline and has built new ones to boast a total of twenty-seven bases above the Arctic Circle. Additionally, Russia intends to add an additional twenty-two icebreakers to its existing fleet of fifty-five which will significantly increase its already strong year-round power projection capabilities in the Arctic. Meanwhile, the U.S. and NATO have responded to Russia's "aggressive" behavior in the Arctic by building up their own military presences and military capabilities in the region. The U.S intends to build six new icebreakers for the Coast Guard to replace the two in its fleet to better maintain a persistent presence in the region year-round and has reopened the Keflavik Naval Air Station in Iceland where it now stations a bomber task force mission for "strategic

deterrence." NATO has taken similar actions in response to Russia's expanding military presence by taking steps such as increasing its exercise and training tempo in the region to "show the world that NATO is relevant, united, and ready to defend itself".

One implication of Russia's actions in the Arctic involves the continuation of suspicion and mistrust between Russia and the U.S./NATO in the future, especially considering Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. The U.S. and NATO may reasonably continue to view Russia's actions in the Arctic with heightened suspicion and increase their own respective military presences and capabilities in the Arctic to bolster their own self-defense capacities. The current perspectives of each side viewing the other as presenting a potential security threat leads to continuing cycles of mutual distrust and uncertainty between Russia and the U.S./NATO in the Arctic. Geopolitical tensions and suspicions will continue to increase as this cycle continues, which may result in a destabilizing and increasingly offensive posture in the region. U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin has cited "the importance of maintaining lines of communication [with Russia] amid the ongoing war" in Ukraine. Maintaining open diplomatic and military lines of communication between the U.S. and Moscow on Arctic matters may be one way to help minimize misperceptions by either country in the Arctic to help reduce tensions or avoid misperceptions that could lead to accidental escalation.

Furthermore, the outcome of Russia's war in Ukraine bears the potential to influence future security and stability in the Arctic regarding Russia's future on the Arctic Council. Composed of the eight Arctic states (the U.S., Canada, Denmark, Norway, and Russia, Finland, Iceland, and Sweden), the Council is a consensus-based intergovernmental forum designed to facilitate cooperation and collaboration on Arctic concerns and which thereby contributes to stability in the region. As a response to the onset of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the seven other members of the Council (the "Arctic 7") suspended political activities and high-level meetings. While projects that did not involve Russia resumed as early as the summer of 2022, this decision has pushed back the progress of inter-Arctic dialogue and cooperation. Regardless of whether Russia should win or lose the war in Ukraine, the Arctic 7 may seek the eventual re-normalization of Russia into Council activities to resume full-scale Arctic coordination and cooperation. The Arctic 7 may reluctantly prefer this option over the continued isolation of the largest Arctic state, which would undermine the fundamental vision of circumpolar cooperation that prompted the Council's creation in the first place.

The Arctic remains an evolving arena for geopolitical competition between Russia and the U.S. and its Arctic NATO allies, particularly as tensions have increased following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. To help mitigate risks and preserve stability in the Arctic, Russia and the U.S., along with the rest of the Arctic 7 countries, must take care to ensure that increased human activity and

military capabilities in the region do not lead to accidental or inadvertent escalation caused by miscommunication or misinterpretation of each other's actions. Despite the ongoing war in Ukraine, maintaining lines of diplomatic and military communication with Russia on Arctic matters and re-normalizing Russia's participation on the Arctic Council to help bolster Arctic cooperation and stability may be effective methods to help do so.

A True Leader: How Zelensky Should Signal Credibility in the Face of War

Meredith Hutchens, 2024

On May 20, 2024, President Volodymyr Zelensky's five-year presidential term expired. Now Zelensky and Ukraine must decide on how best to move forward in the face of the Russo-Ukrainian war while maintaining credibility. Not only will Zelensky have to contend with the Ukrainian people for his presidential position, but he will have to work to signal to Russia and his international supporters that he is still a credible representative of the state. For many states, it is unquestioned that during war, elections may be postponed in order to maintain stability; However, Russia's invasion of Ukraine was in part predicated on the declaration that Ukraine was run by "neo-Nazis." Zelensky has stated that now is not the time to hold political elections, but in order to continue to represent Ukraine as a credible leader, he must take steps to be transparent and open about how he plans to hold elections.

When Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, Ukraine declared a state of martial law. Under a longstanding law, Ukraine is not able to hold elections under martial law. This provides the historical and legal grounds for Zelensky to delay elections until peace has been achieved. However, there are costs and benefits in doing so.

It is in President Zelensky's best interest to be open and transparent with how he plans to hold elections under martial law. Not only would this provide political certainty for the Ukrainian citizens, but it signals strength and stability for the country as a whole. Lastly, it is in Zelensky's interest to reconfirm his status as a presidential leader to stand on the world stage and advocate for his country and its needs. This entry will attempt to identify the points of concern distinctive parties have voiced in response to President Zelensky's upcoming presidential term expiration. By examining ways Zelensky can signal his intentions, Zelensky can show that he is committed to holding fair and timely elections at some designated point in the future. Examining how each party will view Zelensky's decision to delay elections will provide a more accurate cost/benefit analysis for his resolution.

Ukraine: Domestic Legitimacy and Commitment to Democracy

Zelensky faces an interesting domestic predicament. The Russo-Ukrainian war broke out in February 2022, just over halfway through his presidential term. When the Russo-Ukrainian conflict started, Ukraine declared martial law. A Ukrainian law prohibits elections from happening when martial law is in effect, so elections cannot legally happen until Ukraine ceases martial law.

Since the conflict is unlikely to end soon, Zelensky is stuck balancing competing interests. He faces the difficult challenge of knowing that this conflict is likely to carry on—given that peace negotiations have failed and both sides view the war as a fight for their survival—while understanding that elections need to happen.

The worst outcome for Zelensky is ignoring the question. Zelensky has stated that now is not the time to hold elections, given the challenges of the war. However, by calling upon Congress to extend martial law by 90 days without assuring the citizenry, Zelensky is signaling uncertainty. Observers have begun to call on Zelensky for more clarity on Ukraine's domestic political situation and address how he plans to move forward with elections. Despite the turmoil that the citizens have endured for over two years now, commitment to democratic institutions and respecting the people's interests is paramount to maintaining credible positions of power. Especially since Zelensky and Ukraine are seeking NATO membership, it is important to uphold democratic practices internally.

Furthermore, every decision, whether military or diplomatic, will be under question as Zelensky moves beyond May 20th. While he may have the people's support now, his popularity may begin to wane as conflict worsens in the summer months. In addition, as international humanitarian and military aid trickles in he will face difficult opportunity costs on how to best use these funds. Any miscalculation could lead to his presidential downfall in a turbulent geo-political climate. A catastrophic blow to Ukraine could be that the people call for an emergency election when the situation is bleak, which would further destabilize the country. To mitigate this, Zelensky should seek to hold elections as soon as possible.

Russia: War Conflict and Commitment to Slander

Vladimir Putin himself won his presidential reelection in March 2024 with over 87% of the votes. His presidential reelection also came during wartime. While Putin did declare martial law a month after the invasion, it did not stop him from holding elections. Putin can make the case that if Russia can hold wartime elections, then why can't Ukraine? Despite the obvious issues with this argument, the comparison could be compelling for those who support the invasion. Primarily, it paints Putin and Russia in a democratic light, one in which they value the electoral process. Furthermore, it legitimizes Putin as a credible representative of the state.

Putin will use this opportunity to further defend his decision to invade Ukraine and undermine Zelensky as an official leader and representative of the state. To combat this, it is in Zelensky's short- and long-term interests to issue an official memorandum (or some similar notice) starting his intent to hold elections but most importantly signaling his party's support of the decision. If Zelensky can signal to the rest of the world that the majority of Ukrainian people along with those

in political power are accepting of his decision to push back elections, this will diminish Putin's political assaults.
While state media in Russia is under Putin's thumb, there are still channels through which to get international information. While the spread of Ukraine's legal decision to push back elections might not reach every Russian's ear, for those who do not support the invasion it signals that Zelensky and Ukraine are still working towards building a democratic society that works for the people.

International Allies

Zelensky also needs to show his credibility to his international allies. His country is still actively seeking admission to NATO and is working to increase funding for humanitarian and military aid. Ukraine will need to continue to show commitment to democratic values, especially since they desire NATO membership. One major step would be to outline how he will govern the country as a wartime president and the steps he will take to ensure a fair and timely election. Without this step, he could potentially hinder the work he and his country have made in striving toward membership.

The United States alone has sent approximately $175 billion to Ukraine. Of this figure, $107 billion supports the Ukrainian government directly in areas such as institutions, infrastructure, and military support while the remaining funds go to supporting various US activities in the war. There is a tremendous amount of money flowing into the country, so international allies want to make sure a credible head of state is receiving the funds. As this war drags on, and Ukraine moves farther from May 20th, it is essential that Zelensky and his political party remain transparent about holding elections and open to doing so.

President Zelensky is legally in a difficult place given the current Russo-Ukrainian war and Ukraine's enforcement of martial law. In order to signal credibility, both domestically and internationally, it is in his best interest to be transparent and open about how and when elections will take place during this conflict. While there is fear of potential Russian influence during the election, as there was speculation in the US 2020 election, this is not a matter Zelensky can delay forever. By ignoring the question, he not only signals uncertainty for the future of his citizenry, but he signals unwillingness to hold elections for both Russia and his international allies. If Zelensky will not hold timely elections or announce a plan to do so, Russia will be quick to fill the silence.

The Tug of War for Georgia: Russia's Efforts to Exploit E.U.-Georgia Tensions

Abby Bell, 2024

Russia's largest security goal in the Republic of Georgia is to prevent Georgia's Westward integration, as Moscow regards Georgia as an important component of its near abroad through which it can maintain a sphere of influence and a security buffer with the West. Consequently, Moscow views Tbilisi's attempts to orient itself with the West and its associated international organizations, like the E.U., as hostile to its security. Russia demonstrated the lengths that it was willing to go to in order to keep Georgia out of the West's sphere of influence in the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, resulting in Russia's victory and the continued occupation of Georgia's two breakaway regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which amount to approximately 20% of Georgia's territory. However, even in the wake of Tbilisi's recent actions to further align with the E.U, Russia has sought stronger ties with Georgia, reflecting renewed efforts to keep Georgia in its sphere of influence. Russia's actions to court the ruling Georgia Dream party aim to drive and exploit a growing wedge between Georgia and the E.U. The E.U. must take a clear position on Georgia's recent disputed parliamentary election results if it is serious about considering Georgia for future membership at this critical political crossroads.

Despite Russia's and Georgia's historical tenuous relationship since the 2008 war, their relationship has improved in recent years. In 2023, Moscow lifted the ban on direct flights between Russia and Georgia and also abolished long-standing visa requirements for Georgians. Then in September 2024, Russia's foreign minister announced that Russia was open to a "compromise that could see [Russian] troops leave Abkhazia and South Ossetia," which could be a powerful bargaining chip with Tbilisi. These moves came unexpectedly in the wake of several steps that Georgia's government took to increase integration with the E.U. in recent years. For example, Georgia signed a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the E.U. in 2016, and Georgia became a candidate country for E.U. membership in 2023.

What could explain Russia's seemingly conciliatory gestures towards Georgia despite Georgia's pro-European movements? Russia is aiming to exploit an emerging rift between Tbilisi and the E.U. by attempting to strengthen relations with the Georgia Dream party, which has increasingly adopted a pro-Russia platform despite widespread public support for pro-Western alignment. This rift began in 2022 when Georgia did not join most of the Western community in sanctioning Russia for invading Ukraine, a decision for which it suffered heavy criticism from the E.U. Later, E.U. officials critiqued that as a candidate country, Georgia should comply with the E.U. sanctions. Relations further soured when the E.U. announced a freeze on Georgia's candidate status in July

2024 following the passage of a controversial "Russian-style," "foreign agents" law. Then in early October 2024, E.U. officials warned the Georgia Dream party, amid recent criticism that Georgia's democracy was backsliding, that the country could face sanctions if the upcoming parliamentary elections were not free, fair, and peaceful.

Moscow's recent activities towards Georgia demonstrate that Russia has not given up on obstructing Georgia-E.U. alignment despite Georgia's commitments toward greater E.U. integration. Furthermore, as Russia's military efforts are overwhelmingly focused on Ukraine, Russia must adapt its security strategy methods to undermine Tbilisi's viability as an independent and sovereign state as it faces a crossroads between greater E.U. integration and closer ties. Rather than using military force as Russia did in 2008, dangling the possibility of withdrawing an estimated 15,000 Russian troops from the breakaway regions could be a powerful incentive for Georgia to increase its engagement with Moscow. Simultaneously, it would permit Russia to drive a wedge between Georgia and the E.U., which would be loath to see the smaller nation improve ties with Russia.Ultimately, Moscow's actions underscore that Georgia remains an important element in Russia's near abroad and where it seeks to maintain its perceived sphere of influence.

On October 26, Georgia held parliamentary elections that were regarded by many Georgians as a referendum on whether to further integrate with the E.U. or side with the Georgia Dream party and its appeasement to Russia. The Georgia Dream party claimed a contested victory of 54%, which the four pro-Western opposition parties have refused to recognize, reporting electoral fraud and irregularities. Georgia's president, a critic of the ruling party, has referred to the vote's outcome as a "Russian special operation." While it is unclear at present if Russia had a direct role in Georgia's elections, the opposition parties intend to boycott the new parliament and continue to call for supporters to take to the streets in peaceful protests.
The E.U. has called for an investigation into the alleged election irregularities, but it has refrained from taking a position on the election's legitimacy, much to the disappointment of the opposition.

The E.U. must take a clear stance on recognizing the election results if this supranational organization that champions free and fair elections is serious about both promoting democratic ideals in Europe and working to further Georgia's path to E.U. membership. With the future of Georgia's E.U. integration in the balance at this pivotal moment, the E.U. needs to decide if it will support the fight for democracy and respect for the rule of law in Georgia or let Tbilisi slip away under the shadow of Moscow.

Cracks in the Ice: The Inevitable Decay of Sino-Russian Cooperation in the Arctic

Jared Sofia, 2025

In recent years, the physical effects of climate change have visibly worsened as sea levels continue to rise and wildfires ravage parts of the world. The impact on geopolitical tensions has been equally evident as the melting ice caps in the Arctic have thrust the region to the forefront of international relations as this era of Great Power Competition unfolds. The emergence of new trade routes and greater access to coveted natural resources has prompted Russia and China to work together to circumvent the United States and its Arctic state allies. But even as the two nations share a "no-limits friendship," Russia and China's cooperation in the Arctic is quite unsustainable. While it may seem the two nations are well-positioned to jointly benefit, especially after securing China's status as a "near-Arctic" state through the Polar Silk Road Initiative, it is actually their shared access to new trade routes and natural resources that will inevitably splinter collaboration and cause a clash of interests.

Before there was even an official announcement of a "no-limits friendship" between Russia and China in February 2022, an alignment in Sino-Russian interests in the Arctic began to form as early as the 2010s. A joint prioritization of their Arctic access and collaboration meant there could be a resurgence of new trade routes to benefit Asia and an abundance of natural resources that would invigorate both of their economies. Geopolitically, this combined effort also provided a calculated opportunity to counter the United States – by reinforcing their collective interests, Russia and China understood their sustained efforts in the Arctic would ensure a rebalancing of foreign policy and trade away from the West. Although they have demonstrated a willingness to collaborate as a means to restrain the United States, the central focus of their cooperation to grow their energy sources and decrease their dependence on maritime choke points actually reinforces the inevitability of a collapse in their cooperation. China and Russia may see the threat of the United States as an adequate reason to sustain their Arctic efforts, but it is not enough to overcome the instincts of state competition for limited resources and limited access that both countries seek.

For Russia and China, their agreement to develop the Polar Silk Road Initiative largely materialized because of the transformation in the Arctic terrain. Russia's main objective in working with China in the Arctic has been to more effectively sell its natural gas and oil reserves which would strengthen its own trade benefits with China from the access to the new trade routes. Similarly, China's ability to reduce its dependence on the Strait of Malacca and enhance both the convenience and cost-effectiveness of its maritime trade would be an extraordinary economic advantage. Even though the prospective joint use of these emerging sea routes seems like a clear sign of Russia and

China's unwavering "no-limits friendship," the real test of their cooperation will be when these sea routes become fully functioning and are inundated with commercial vessels from around the world. Overcrowded trade routes will push states to ensure that their ships receive a higher priority than others by any means necessary. And if inter-state skirmishes start to occur because of this, the Arctic Council or the United Nations may involve themselves to create more stringent international maritime rules, further prompting states to act in their self-interest. Whenever this struggle arises, Russia and China will no doubt act to ensure their own economic fortunes take precedence over the other, regardless of the partnership they share.

Further, the melting ice caps in the Arctic have also accelerated access to fossil fuels and other minerals buried beneath the once-frozen land and seabed. The creation of the Polar Silk Road Initiative allowed China and Russia to jointly benefit from this increasing supply of natural resources, particularly as Chinese companies began investing in Russia's energy projects in the region. Recent western sanctions, however, have been successful in disrupting Russia's production capabilities and have significantly damaged Chinese investments. If their joint collaboration continues to destabilize and pose a direct threat to their economic security because of their shared access to these resources, it is highly unlikely to believe that either country would want to continue to work together. And as oil, natural gas, and rare earth elements are vital parts of China and Russia's individual economic prowess, their limited supply will equally factor in causing a rift between the two – neither will hesitate to try and take full control over an oil or natural gas field if and when these resources inevitably become scarce.

The economic opportunities prompted by the emergence of new trade routes and natural resources in the Arctic will ultimately drive a resource competition for Russia and China's own needs. While both countries presently benefit from their joint economic venture there, the collapse of the Arctic into a tragedy of the commons is an unavoidable outcome that will force all states, including Russia and China, to take actions that prioritize their own needs above all. If Russia or China's economic and regional security is put at risk, the "no-limits friendship" will not be given any special consideration. It may not happen soon, but as the world awaits this eventual breakdown of Sino-Russian relations in the Arctic, it will be up to the United States and its Arctic allies to be ready to deal with the ramifications.

Impeachment in Korea: Rethinking U.S. Regional Strategy

Tristan Witzig, 2025

South Korea's political landscape has undergone a significant transformation following the Constitutional Court's unanimous decision on April 4, 2025, to uphold the National Assembly's impeachment of President Yoon Suk Yeol. This ruling, prompted by Yoon's unconstitutional declaration of martial law in December 2024, has not only reshaped the nation's governance but also introduced complex security dynamics in the region. The martial law lasted only six hours because lawmakers managed to enter the assembly building and unanimously voted to strike down his decree. This was the first time South Korea had been placed under martial law since 1980.

By removing Yoon, South Korea's legislature exercised one of the most powerful tools in a democratic system: the ability to hold the executive accountable. Despite the unprecedented nature of Yoon's actions—including the martial law order and crackdowns on protests—South Korea avoided violence or institutional collapse. Instead, the country turned to the rule of law.

According to the South Korean constitution, a new presidential election must be held within 60 days of the vacancy, setting the deadline for no later than June 3, 2025. The country is awaiting Acting President Han Duck-soo to announce the exact date, with indications pointing toward early June.

Yoon's removal has elicited varied reactions from neighboring countries, each assessing how the newly elected government might influence regional stability and their strategic interests. North Korea has closely monitored developments in the South. State media reported on Yoon's ousting, emphasizing the unanimous court decision. Analysts suggest that North Korea may see South Korea's government transition as an opportunity to advance its military objectives. The recent unveiling of a new class of North Korean warships—capable of housing dozens of missiles—may imply this intent. These vessels, equipped with vertical launch systems, enhance North Korea's maritime strike capabilities and could alter the strategic balance in the region.

China and Russia are also poised to capitalize on South Korea's political change. Both nations may seek to expand their influence by exploiting any perceived weakening of the U.S.-South Korea-Japan trilateral alliance. China, in particular, might intensify efforts to sway South Korea away from U.S. influence, using economic incentives and diplomatic overtures. Russia could similarly pursue closer ties with a new South Korean government to disrupt the current security stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

The political change in Seoul brings some uncertainty to the trilateral security pact among the United States, Japan, and South Korea. This alliance is crucial for countering regional threats and needs to remain strong and stable to avoid delays or reevaluations of joint military exercises and intelligence-sharing agreements. Maintaining cohesion and trust among the three nations is imperative to deter adversaries and reassure allies during this transition period.

The impeachment and removal of President Yoon Suk Yeol mark a pivotal moment in South Korea's democratic journey. While the nation's institutions have demonstrated resilience, the ensuing political transition presents challenges both domestically and internationally. The upcoming presidential election and potential constitutional reforms offer avenues to fortify democratic governance. Concurrently, vigilance is required to navigate the complex security landscape, ensuring that regional adversaries do not exploit this period of uncertainty. Strengthening alliances and maintaining a unified front with key partners will be essential to uphold stability and deter opportunistic actions by neighboring states.

A Chance for Peace in Syria and Eastern Turkey

Floyd Cross, 2025

Though facing several potential pitfalls, there is a historic opportunity to create sustainable and lasting peace in Turkey and Syria. Overlapping developments in both nations have created circumstances that mutually reinforce the potential for regional reconciliation.

In Turkey, the ruling coalition is beginning to build support for a constitutional amendment allowing two-decade President Erdogan to further extend his tenure. The government seems to be considering courting Kurdish-aligned factions in the lead-up to this process potentially to gain direct support for the amendment from those factions, to frame an end to the decades-long conflict as a political triumph for Erdogan, or both. The imprisoned leader of the Kurdish PKK has called for disarmament and dialogue with the Turkish government, further creating the most fertile grounds for resolution since 2015.

In Syria, diversions of Russian and Iranian / Hezbollah attention and resources in the conflicts in Ukraine and Lebanon respectively weakened support for the embattled Syrian regime. Since the fall of the regime in December 2024, Syria has been essentially split between the Turkish-backed pseudo-government composed of various rebel groups west of the Euphrates and the US-backed, Kurdish-aligned SDF east of the Euphrates. Given the brutal civil war that has enveloped the country for over a decade, the process of disbanding various armed groups and unifying embattled factions into a central government has continued at a steady pace. The fledgling Syrian government and SDF accepted a peace plan that would merge the forces east of the Euphrates into the Syrian government in March, which is in the process of being implemented.

After decades of tensions and conflict, there is low trust between Ankara and the Kurdish region. Ankara is under pressure from its base to appear as the party 'in control,' framing the PKK disarmament as a unilateral surrender of a terrorist group to the government rather than a step in negotiations. If this narrative is pushed too far without moves to demonstrate a willingness to engage in constructive dialogue, it is likely the conflict will resume. If Ankara wishes to bring a resolution to the conflict without being seen engaging in talks, they must meet unilateral PKK disarmament with their own unilateral demonstration of good-faith steps towards reconciliation.

Freeing Abdullah Ocalan, who was responsible for the PKK disarmament, would both serve as such a gesture and would make future dialogue-less tenuous. Halting lethal military operations in Kurdistan would also serve to decrease tensions and the likelihood of reigniting violence.

In Syria, the various agreements designed to bring disunified factions under a single government have so far been highly successful. The process of developing a Syrian constitution, which must guarantee the rights of various religious and ethnic minorities within Syria, will be a slow process. So long as good faith progress is being made, the international community should seek to ease Assad-era punitive policies and normalize relations with its new government.

International investment in rebuilding Syria would serve to provide additional stability to the war-torn nation. The international investment would also create positive cooperation between the new government and foreign nations, reduce its vulnerability to Iran and Hezbollah, and provide positive reinforcement for continuing constructive dialogue. It would also expedite the return of the over 6 million Syrians who are currently externally displaced.

The United States stands to gain greatly from a potential end to both conflicts. Both conflicts have caused tensions within NATO. Tensions between the US-backed SDF in Syria and Turkey have strained cooperation against Daesh, and it was support for Kurdish dissidents that caused Turkey to delay the entry of Sweden and Finland. The creation of a stable Syrian state capable of preventing a resurgence of Daesh would allow the US to withdraw from the region with its missions accomplished.

The US can support the resolutions by mediating discussions between Turkey and Kurdish groups. The United States is uniquely positioned to do so as it is both a NATO ally of Turkey and a longtime supporter of the Kurds in Iraq and Syria. It could also lead the international community in normalization with the new Syrian government and regional investment contingent on continued dialogue and progress toward an equitable constitution.

Lessons from Ukraine: The Case for Further Standardization of the European Defense Industrial Base

Dharma Bhatt, 2025

This year marks the third anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. To support the Ukrainian military's defense against the Russian military, many European countries have supplied a substantial amount of material to the Ukrainian military. Non-European countries, such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and South Korea, have also provided military aid to Ukraine. Ukrainian units have been able to integrate these new pieces of equipment into their military operations. The successful deployment of various equipment, such as tanks and howitzers, has enabled Ukraine to effectively utilize the equipment against a conventional standing army in modern times.

Despite the various weapon systems provided by supporting nations, an issue has arisen regarding the ease of use and interoperability among the different types of equipment. One country's howitzer systems may have different fire control mechanisms than others. The training needed to operate one system is already time-consuming and resource-intensive- something that Ukraine may not be able to afford as political and geographical dynamics shift and casualties continue to rise. Much of Ukraine's arsenal consists of a significant amount of Soviet-era weaponry, which significantly differs from the equipment and systems donated by NATO nations. All these factors underscore a prominent issue in the European Defense Industrial Base (EDIB): a lack of standardization. Numerous intergovernmental organizations exist to promote general industry standardization, but this remains a contentious issue. Therefore, regardless of whether the organization takes the initiative, the European Union must increase measures to increase standardization for military equipment manufacturers.

The limited standardization guideline is deeply rooted in the broader structural fragmentation of the EDIB, which experts would classify as fragmented, with equipment manufacturers distributed across various countries and companies, leading to duplicated efforts. This fragmentation has depleted critical resources that otherwise could be utilized to develop and manufacture additional limited military equipment. Another issue with the fragmented sector is the limited number and high cost of manufacturing specific equipment and components. Given the manufacturing limitations and the associated fee, governments must commit to more extended procurement contracts. For instance, the U.S. has two variations of howitzer systems, while Europe has 27 different howitzer variations. The distinct differences among howitzer systems comprise a significant portion of the overall EDIB, particularly in EU member states.

To facilitate standardization procedures, the European Defense Agency (EDA), under the EU's purview, developed and suggested guidelines for arms manufacturers to follow under the European Defence Standards Reference System (EDSTAR). EDSTAR provides "best practices" for equipment standardization in the defense sector. The EDA, however, does not implement standardization procedures; instead, it works in conjunction with other organizations, such as NATO, to advise member nations to adopt these measures. Hence, this means that a majority of policies regarding standardization are non-binding and voluntary. Many European NATO members have adopted some guidelines, such as the 155mm artillery shell capability in most European-designed howitzer systems. Recently, 10 NATO member states, such as Germany and the United Kingdom, signed a letter of intent to strengthen joint standards. While the EDA does not have a binding effect, it does play a crucial role in providing areas of standardization for specific components in weapon systems that the EU can further expand upon.

While such initiatives provide some solutions, the broader issue of equipment standardization remains unresolved. It continues to be a problem for European defense policymakers and companies manufacturing said equipment. There have been attempts to introduce standardization in critical equipment areas, such as aircraft development with the Eurofighter Typhoon. Developed in a joint venture among Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom, it is considered Europe's most extensive joint program for military equipment development. These joint venture projects are an aspect that the EU can encourage more member states to pursue. European countries have also engaged in other initiatives; however, the fragmented system remains a significant issue despite the current measures. For example, calls to standardize main battle tanks (MBTs) have been hindered by the high number of multiple models with different variations, which affects interoperability.

Particular political concerns and resistance by industry would be more likely to oppose increasing standardization measures. Equipment manufacturers may view standardization as a restriction or limitation on innovation. Many argue that the current standardization policies are sufficient, suggesting that additional guidelines impede the development of new technologies. EU member states may also perceive this as overreaching and creating questions about sovereignty. However, those utilizing the equipment in the field, such as the Ukrainians, have observed it differently.

The fragmentation of the EDIB has been a pressing issue among EU leaders. New and emerging threats in the 21st century have pushed EU leaders to create mechanisms that encourage the standardization of military equipment to enhance interoperability and maximize efficiency. However, despite initiatives to establish guidelines, some EU member states have not fully embraced voluntary integration as the basis for standardization. Instead, only certain key aspects of standardization have been adopted. Consequently, not all equipment, particularly those likely to be used in joint operations, has vastly different usage requirements. The EU must encourage its

member states to adopt more standardization measures through incentives or joint venture projects to increase interoperability, especially with the current state of affairs.

Hydropolitics in Kashmir: Rising Potential for a Renewed Conflict

Aydin Guven, 2025

The world has once again witnessed a conflict between India and Pakistan, following recent terror attacks of Pahalgam Valley of Indian-administered Kashmir. New Delhi swiftly accused Pakistan of supporting these attacks, a claim that Islamabad denied. In a sharp response, India announced the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), a decades-old water-sharing agreement that has historically endured through wars and political crises. This decision reflects a deeper issue: water, once a symbol of cooperation, is now increasingly weaponized as a tool of coercion.

The water-related tensions, fueled by competing infrastructure ambitions, climate pressures, and unresolved treaty limitations, now pose a growing risk to peace and stability in South Asia. As both countries try to expand their control over transboundary rivers, the politicization and weaponization of water between two nuclear-armed states raises urgent questions about the future of conflict and cooperation in the subcontinent.

The IWT, signed in 1960 with the mediation of the World Bank, divided the Indus River System between the two nations: India received full rights over the Eastern Rivers (Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej), while Pakistan was granted rights over the Western Rivers (Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab). While the treaty has survived multiple wars (1965, 1971, 1999) and periods of intense hostility, its durability is now being tested by new geopolitical realities.

What makes the situation more dangerous is the declining efficacy of the IWT's conflict resolution mechanisms. As per Article IX of the treaty, disputes are to be first addressed by the Permanent Indus Commission, and if unresolved, escalated to a Neutral Expert or even an international court. However, in recent years, the mechanism has been mired in procedural delays and mutual distrust. India has questioned the neutrality of international arbitrators, while Pakistan has expressed frustration over India's unilateral moves. The system appears increasingly unable to manage the complex, fast-evolving nature of the dispute.

Furthermore, the treaty contains no provisions to address contemporary environmental challenges such as glacial melting, changing rainfall patterns, and sedimentation. According to reports, in the transboundary Indus River Basin, climate change is expected to reduce streamflow significantly by the end of the century, placing growing stress on existing water-sharing agreements both between countries and within subnational administrative regions. These environmental factors are likely to deteriorate existing tensions between India and Pakistan, as both countries depend heavily on stable and predictable river systems for agriculture, energy, and human consumption.

Over the years, India has repeatedly claimed that Pakistan is misusing the treaty to obstruct its legitimate hydropower development. In 2023, India formally requested the modification of the treaty, expressing dissatisfaction with its current provisions and the functioning of the Permanent Indus Commission.

Following recent attacks, Indian officials have emphasized a multi-phase approach to water management, outlining short, medium, and long-term infrastructure plans on the Western Rivers. While India maintains that its recent dam construction and hydraulic infrastructure projects on the Western Rivers are consistent with the technical provisions of the IWT, Pakistan argues that these developments are in violation of the treaty and threaten its guaranteed water allocations. Pakistan contends that India's cumulative infrastructure development, including the Kishanganga and Ratle dams, allows it to manipulate downstream flows, thereby threatening Pakistan's food and water security. India's infrastructure is not yet capable of fully diverting or halting flows to Pakistan. However, the long-term implications of projects that enhance India's control over river flows will be more and more profound. Such developments could significantly heighten regional instability, particularly as Pakistan has repeatedly warned that any attempt to block or significantly restrict water flows could be considered an act of war.

The stakes for Pakistan are particularly high. Nearly 70–80% of Pakistan's irrigated land depends on the Indus River system, which provides water for over 80% of the country's food production and supports the livelihoods of millions. Agriculture represents nearly 23% of GDP, contributing over 24% of national exports, and employing more than a third of the labor force. Disruptions to this system, whether seasonal or strategic, could have catastrophic consequences for food security, rural livelihoods, and economic stability. Beyond agriculture, Pakistan's energy sector is also vulnerable: more than 20% of the country's electricity is generated through hydropower, and almost all its hydroelectric plants are located within the Indus Basin.

The restriction of water also presents a severe internal challenge for Pakistan. Water insecurity is not only a geopolitical issue but also a critical domestic vulnerability. Pakistan's water crisis is compounded by internal political fragmentation, poor governance, and competing provincial interests. These structural weaknesses threaten to turn external water pressures into domestic instability, as regions and sectors within Pakistan struggle over scarce water resources.

In conclusion, water security is no longer a peripheral issue in the Kashmir conflict. The IWT, once praised as a model of transboundary water cooperation, is showing its age and fragility. The treaty's ineffective dispute resolution mechanisms, and inability to adapt to new environmental and geopolitical realities render it insufficient for present and future needs. Therefore, unless

constructive diplomatic mechanisms are initiated or international mediators like the United States become involved, the weaponization of water is likely to escalate, with dire consequences for regional peace and security.

III. Modern Threats

From Operation Mincemeat to Social Media Deceit: Misinformation in Modern Warfare

Jonathan Walberg, 2018

"The Trout Fisher casts patiently all day. He frequently changes his venue and his lures. If he has frightened a fish he may 'give the water a rest for half-an-hour,' but his main endeavour, to attract fish by something he sends out from his boat, is incessant." –An excerpt from The Trout Memo, by Admiral John Godfrey and Ian Fleming, comparing deception to fly fishing.

In 1943, the British were faced with a challenge. They, along with the allied forces, aimed to land in Sicily in order to initiate the Italian campaign. However, in the spirit of 'fighting where the enemy is not,' they sought to avoid landing in the middle of a German stronghold.

Operation Mincemeat — the use of a body dressed up as a Royal Marine officer carrying documents that signaled an allied plan to invade Greece and Sardinia instead of Sicily — is one of the most famous examples of deceptive information warfare. This haversack ruse was not the first deceptive head fake in history, but the Allies invaded Sicily quicker than expected and with fewer losses than projected.

This is just one of many times that information and deception has been used to gain an edge in warfare. CENTCOM's "Two Corps" deception plan in the 1991 Gulf War kept Saddam's forces in the dark about where the Coalition attack was coming from. Air Force planners within the JFACC floated ideas such as faking an aircraft crash as a pretense to shut down Saudi airspace. The list goes on and on because information and, equally as important, its access and validity, are at the very center of planning and fighting.

As technology progresses, information becomes even more accessible and spreads even quicker. Satellite imagery of force-posturing and positioning ends up on social media in near-real time. Social media has become the battleground for modern information warfare, where controlling the narrative is critical to shaping the public's opinion and response to events. Distorting details about responsibility for an airstrike is not a new occurrence, but now creates more of a response than ever anticipated. State and non-state actors alike can manipulate perceptions of reality with greater consequence.

As the United States prepares for future conflicts, it needs to continue preparing for the role that information warfare and deception will play. The rise of social media provides new avenues for deception in warfare that did not exist previously. Adversaries can now directly target both domestic and foreign populations with false or misleading narratives aimed at undermining support for military actions. Deepfake technology will allow the creation of faked videos and images that appear authentic but depict events that never occurred. These will spread rapidly online, obscuring the truth, and making verification difficult. Bots and fake accounts can amplify content and shape narratives in a way that gives the illusion of grassroots support for certain messaging.

During a conflict, an adversary may employ these techniques to weaken resolve on the homefront or with allies abroad. False claims of civilian casualties, war crimes, or false flag operations could manipulate public opinion against military action. Doctored footage could exaggerate battlefield losses or setbacks, as well as being used to redirect the migration of civilians to compromise the success of operations. Overall, the diffusion of narratives is much harder to control in the social media age. Social media provides adversaries an asymmetric advantage. To address this, we must focus on developing technological capabilities for detecting and generating manipulated images, videos, and accounts on social media platforms. Algorithms that can identify manipulated content will make it harder for adversaries to rely on deep fakes. America should also strengthen its own information operations apparatus to respond rapidly to false narratives and flood the space with counter-messaging. Shaping the information environment proactively can help blunt the impact of enemy deception efforts after they are launched. Overall, the US will need to match and exceed the creativity of its adversaries who capitalize on new technologies and social media. Developing strategies with allies to establish “digital alliances” and collaborate on countering misinformation could also counter the asymmetric advantages of US rivals in this space. With advanced preparation across many fronts, the US can gain the upper hand against deception via social media. Objective facts and a free press are important counterweights. But deception via social media will remain an ongoing challenge in 21st-century conflicts.

The Propaganda Pandemic: China's Misinformation Campaign

Ayah Abdul-Samad, 2018

While countries attempt to protect their vulnerable populations and limit the death toll as best they can, China has launched a vigorous and calculated disinformation campaign amidst the ongoing worldwide COVID-19 crisis. The global pandemic would not have spread as quickly or as far as it has if the Chinese government accurately reported on the virus and properly handled the onset of the crisis. One study has shown that if China intervened even three weeks earlier, cases could have been reduced by as much as 95 percent, and the global spread of the virus would be a fraction of the current size. Instead, the Chinese government has promoted irregular reporting on the virus's impact domestically, resulting in a lack of accurate statistics and information for researchers and officials outside of China. As a result, the international community's readiness for this latest security issue has been weakened, and China's population remains at risk.

Evidence indicates that the virus originated in bats and was and could have transferred to a pangolin carrier via a wet market – a marketplace selling live animals of different species considered to be a perfect breeding ground for viruses to spread from carrier animals to human hosts. However, in recent weeks, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has propagated the idea that rather than the virus originating in Wuhan, China — as is the general scientific consensus — the virus was actually brought to China by the U.S. Army in October 2019. If this were true, though, the COVID-19 timeline would likely trace the earliest transmissions of the virus back to the U.S. military presence in China or the United States. Other conspirators have theorized that the virus deployed from a Wuhan biological research facility and may have been a consequence of a biological weapons program, but analysis of the COVID-19 genome supports the fact that the virus originated naturally.

Despite this, Chinese officials began laying the groundwork for this conspiracy by casting doubts on the virus's association to a Wuhan wet market, mainstreaming dubious claims rampant on Chinese social media, and building upon the case that the virus was imported to China. Other states, such as Iran, Russia, and North Korea, have since echoed China's claims, sowing further distrust and chaos.

Among its latest attempts to control the narrative, China revoked reporting privileges for journalists from The New York Times, The Washington Post, and the Wall Street Journal with a deadline for media passes to be returned to the Chinese government within 10 days of the decree. Further, Chinese officials are requiring journalists from these papers, along with Time and Voice of America, to relinquish any reports regarding COVID-19 to the Chinese government. China has

resorted to these steps after initially blundering its early response, censoring medical experts in Wuhan and slow-rolling international assistance for weeks.

While China claims to now be ahead of COVID-19, much of the reporting on China's statistics and figures needs to be taken with a grain of salt. China has displayed irresponsible inaction in the early stages of the virus, shown inconsistent and inaccurate reporting throughout the pandemic, and has even attempted a narrative change regarding the origins of the virus. At this point, states must rely on the available data from domestic cases and on trusted international institutions, like the World Health Organization. Italy and Spain are among the most severely affected, and the US is preparing for an exponential growth of cases in the coming weeks. As the first state to see the crisis evolve, China had a responsibility to the international system's security and ultimately chose not to act or cooperate. The international community must currently focus on combating the virus; however, a blind eye cannot be turned to China's role. China ultimately should be held responsible for its handling of the crisis by international condemnation or sanctions from countries like the United States and international organizations like the United Nations.

Cyberterrorism: Defining the New Vector for the Tactics of Fear

Robert Lee, 2018

In June of 1982, a Soviet gas pipeline in Siberia exploded with such spectacular force that the flash and ensuing flames were clearly visible from space. While no accident, the explosion was not the result of a controlled detonation or any sort of conventional physical sabotage. Instead, it is now widely considered to be the first recorded case of physical infrastructure damage as a result of intentionally malicious computer code. By some accounts, the CIA engineered the Soviet purchase of gas pipeline control software manipulated to "go haywire"; in other words, weaponized code.

Nearly four decades later, an attack that hinged on getting someone to purchase physical media carrying the weaponized software seems crude and clunky. Additionally, subsequent alleged successful uses of code to achieve physical destruction have only ever been attributed to state actors. But what if inspiring fear is a sufficient goal for a non-state cyber attacker? Doesn't terrorism seek simply to inspire terror? Researchers at the University of Haifa found evidence to suggest that the psychological effects of cyberterrorism were similar to those experienced in the wake of more conventional terrorist attacks, yet even they struggle to pinpoint just what cyberterrorism actually *is*. To try and tackle this definition, it might be useful to start with what cyberterrorism *isn't*.

Okay, I'll play along – what *isn't* cyberterrorism?

Cyberterrorism isn't simply the use of the Internet or digital technology to facilitate the planning, funding, or execution of more conventional terrorist attacks. While it's true that the advent of the Internet presents both terrorists and counterterror agencies with an ever-growing variety of tools and methods, simply using the Internet in the pursuit of terrorism doesn't automatically make you a cyberterrorist.

In the same vein, cyberterrorism isn't simply terrorist information warfare. This can get very confusing, since successful modern terrorist organizations are proficient in the use of the Internet to spread propaganda and recruit. Information warfare has been around for millennia, whereas "cyber-" anything necessarily involves software. Information warfare is often mistakenly referred to as occupying the "fifth domain" of warfare, when in fact that designation officially belongs to cyberspace (after the four domains of land, air, sea, and space).

Even cyber warfare isn't synonymous with cyberterrorism. It's true that cyber warfare consists of using code to sabotage or spy, as we worry terrorists may do. However, the term refers to ALL uses of software to damage or collect information on strategic or tactical resources, including by governments or sub-national organizations for conventional military purposes. So while both

cyber warfare and cyberterrorism include the employment of cyber attacks, the primary purposes differ.

Cyberterrorism is also distinct from hacktivism, or the use of the Internet to further social or political goals in a manner that is transgressive (or not within accepted social boundaries) and civilly disobedient rather than violent. This is an important distinction; because hacktivism is politically motivated, typically anti-establishment, and can employ some of the methods employed by cyber warriors and cyber terrorists, hacktivists run a high risk of being confused with cyber terrorists.

Finally, cyberterrorism is distinct from what is usually labeled "cyber crime". To be sure, all terrorism is a form of crime, but the prevailing usage of the term "cyber crime" is typically understood to be crime undertaken for purely or predominantly financial reasons that lacks the motivation of seeking political or social change.

That's a long list. So what *is* cyberterrorism?

Like terrorism itself, cyberterrorism doesn't have a universally accepted definition, but rather exists as a consensus topic. We'll use a modified version of the United States Department of Defense definition of terrorism proposed by noted cybersecurity engineer Irving Lachow:

"...a computer based attack or threat of attack intended to intimidate or coerce governments or societies in pursuit of goals that are political, religious, or ideological. The attack should be sufficiently destructive or disruptive to generate fear comparable to that from physical acts of terrorism."

This definition should help crystallize the reasons that cyberterrorism is distinct from logistical uses of the internet in support of conventional terrorism, cyber warfare, information warfare, hacktivism, and cyber crime. The key components are: 1) a computer-based attack or threat; 2) having intimidation, coercion, and/or fear as a primary goal; 3) in pursuit of political or ideological goals; and 4) of a magnitude to inspire as much fear as a conventional terrorist act.

What would a cyberterrorist attack consist of? How would we know when one occurs?

Cyberterrorists avail themselves of the same basic tools as are sometimes employed by cyber criminals, hacktivists, and cyber warriors; however, while those other groups may make use of only some of these methods and/or impose limits on their use, cyberterrorists could see all manner of techniques and any magnitude of employment justifiable to inspire fear.

Denial of Service (DOS)	DoS attacks use code designed to overwhelm or impair networks or applications, typically by reconfiguring network settings or generating more traffic than a network can handle.
Malware	Malicious software, or "malware", damages or compromises a computer system without the knowledge or approval of the administrator or owner. Once a system is compromised, malware may reconfigure its functions or give control of the system to the attacker.
Botnets	Once a number of computers are compromised while connected to a network, attackers can use them to host automated software programs or "bots" to carry out further attacks or malicious actions en masse. The use of a botnet to execute a large- scale DoS attack is known as DDOS (Distributed Denial of Service).
Social Engineering	Social Engineering is not an exclusive term to cyber attack, but in this context it means using misleading digital communication to gain information about or access to networks, systems, or users in order to compromise, attack, or exploit them. Phishing is a particularly prolific social engineering technique where attackers pose as legitimate institutions or companies via e-mail or phone and trick targets into giving up sensitive information.

The main methods of cyber attack

While the table above should enable us to imagine any number of nefarious aims for the detailed techniques, would-be cyberterrorists' incentive for employing them are on the rise thanks to rapidly increasing reliance on supervisory control and data acquisition, or SCADA. Successful anti-SCADA attacks present the most realistic chance for weaponized code to achieve a directly physically destructive effect (as in the pipeline example) due to SCADA's central importance to many extremely hazardous military and industrial systems and resources. A successful disruptive attack on the control software of a nuclear power plant is just one of many catastrophic examples.

That's a little unsettling. Who would do that stuff and why?

As we discussed, cyberterrorism is fundamentally terrorism executed in the domain of cyberspace – so cyberterrorists would be terrorists who possess the motives and expertise to employ the methods detailed above in order to instill fear in support of their political or ideological goals. However, just as in conventional warfare, the reality of cyber warfare is that the vast majority of destructive capacity resides with state actors and their clients.

How prevalent could cyberterrorism become, and how soon?

Essentially, any network-connected computer system is vulnerable to attack to some degree, particularly from motivated, skilled attackers who use penetrations as the basis for more damaging attacks (rather than bragging). Power infrastructure is particularly susceptible to cyber attack, and

the combination of physical damage and widespread fear and panic that a power grid compromise would yield places it squarely in the realm of the desired effects of terrorism. A number of terrorist groups already display proficiency in social engineering, though they mainly use this to position operatives or obtain financial resources in support of conventional attacks. That extant capacity and a range of clear incentives imply that the advent of the "pure" cyberterrorist attack is close.

Yikes! So what do we do about it?

There is some good news: while the Global War on Terror and its reliance on monitoring terrorist communications have led terrorist groups to decentralize and avoid electronic coordination, cyber attacks would require terrorists to assume a highly elevated risk of their activity being detected by electronic surveillance. Additionally, disciplined conventional practices of cyber security and information assurance designed to counter cyber crime are largely effective against all but the most sophisticated cyber attacks.

State actors' possession of the vast majority of cyber capability worldwide could mean good news, bad news, or both for those seeking to prevent the rise of truly destructive cyberterrorism. States' near-monopoly on cyber capabilities could help to buy enough time and space to prevent successful cyberterrorist attacks while pursuing a comprehensive strategy to reduce the underlying regional and local causes of terrorism. Alternately or concurrently, as the IC Threat Assessment fears, the states who already enjoy some success in the pursuit of unscrupulous cyber activities could see sponsorship of cyberterrorists as a convenient way to advance their own agendas.

Maintaining the Triad: An Analysis of the United States Nuclear Policy

Rebecca Cooper, 2019

For decades, deterrence and the threat of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) has kept the onset of an all-out war between the world's nuclear armed powers at bay. However, there has been debate in the last several years that the United States should abandon its nuclear triad – the combination of bombers, intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), and submarine launched missiles – and shift to a monad posture. This monad would abandon ICBMS and bombers and consist solely of submarine launched missiles.

Critics of maintaining a nuclear system based on three delivery mechanisms insist that deterrence is still possible with a monad, and that it would save the US billions of dollars. They also posit that nuclear armed submarines are capable of the same functions as ICBMs and bombers. Switching to a submarine-only system and decreasing its nuclear arsenal, though, would cost the US credibility and weaken its deterrence capabilities.

The United States needs to maintain the triad due to its importance to signaling and credibility capabilities and its ability to compete with rising nuclear powers. Each leg of the nuclear triad serves a unique purpose. ICBMs are the cheapest, most reliable leg of the U.S. triad, and they can respond the fastest to a threat. They are also difficult for adversaries to target and destroy.

Heavy bombers can be dispersed throughout the world to increase second strike capabilities while providing a wider range of maneuverability. Bombers serve as visible signals of protection and assurance to more than thirty allies under the nuclear umbrella of the United States because they can be forward deployed in a crisis. Bombers also are efficient signaling mechanisms to adversaries. According to one policy maker, "nothing demonstrates American resolve better than putting fully loaded strategic bombers on alert. The ability to signal in a nuclear crisis is a characteristic found only in the bomber force."

The largest consequence of abandoning the nuclear triad would be the loss of signaling and flexibility that bombers provide. Bombers are the only leg of the triad that can be recalled quickly, making them strategically irreplaceable in terms of signaling and coercion.

Additionally, switching over to a submarine-only approach would counteract the greatest advantage of nuclear submarines: their ability to hide for months at a time. This would be lost if they were to try to take over the signaling capabilities of the bomber.

An additional reason that the United States should maintain its nuclear arsenal stems from the fact that other rising powers are increasing their nuclear capabilities. According to the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review, "[China and Russia] have added new types of nuclear capabilities to their arsenals and increased the salience of nuclear forces in their strategies."

As more states increase their nuclear capabilities, the United States should focus on maintaining its existing arsenal, rather than decreasing it. It would be unwise, and possibly seen as a lack of commitment and credibility, for the United States to be reducing its arsenal and delivery mechanisms while other great powers are focusing on advancing or gaining their nuclear capabilities.

If the US were to reduce its nuclear capabilities, this would threaten the credibility of the United States' nuclear umbrella. If states relying on the US for protection cannot trust in its nuclear posture, they are likely to start developing their own nuclear weapons programs or turn to the others for protection.

Though many scholars and policy makers are of the view that shifting to a nuclear monad would save the United States billions of dollars, maintaining the triad is critical to the national security of the United States and its allies because the three legs all have unique functions guaranteeing a deadly second-strike response, provide signaling mechanisms to potential adversaries and reassure those under the United States' nuclear umbrella, and shifting to a monad could be seen as a lack of commitment and credibility.

PREDICT-ing the Next Pandemic?

Michael Krug, 2019

The recent resurgence of Ebola virus in the Democratic Republic of Congo has brought back memories of the Ebola epidemic in Western Africa. In 2014, media coverage and fears of the disease spreading to the US fueled heightened interest in health security. In the end, the West African Ebola epidemic (2014-2016) ended with more than 28,600 cases and 11,325 deaths. But, the Ebola crisis is just the most recent reminder of the catastrophic nature of disease outbreaks.

Pathogens now move farther and faster than ever before, magnified by increasing political insecurity, urbanization, and climate change. To combat the spread of epidemics and pandemics, disease surveillance, or biosurveillance, techniques have rapidly advanced to allow for detection and characterization of dangerous pathogens. This process requires the active-gathering and interpretation of health data to assess emerging infectious diseases. Electronic medical records, genomic sequencing data, and even Google search queries provide insights into disease movements. Early warnings can help mitigate catastrophic loss of life, as well as crippling economic recessions, due to disease outbreaks.
However, even with the billions of dollars spent on ensuring a robust global biosurveillance network, it remains unknown if this network can predict what the next disease will be or where the next outbreak will occur.

To forecast disease outbreaks, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) started the PREDICT project in 2009. PREDICT, which falls under the Emerging Pandemic Threats (EPT) program, was tasked with identifying zoonotic diseases before they could 'jump' into human populations. The 1918 flu pandemic likely came from birds, HIV likely jumped from a similar virus in monkeys, and the recent Ebola outbreaks have been hypothesized to come from bats, rats, and/or gorillas. Identifying diseases such as these before they infect human hosts is crucial to the success of any biosurveillance network.
However, last week, the U.S. federal government decided to end PREDICT, a move made despite the recommendations of public health experts. At a cost of $207 million, PREDICT aimed to develop comprehensive detection capabilities, especially in "hot spot" areas such as central Africa, South and Southeast Asia, and Latin America. To do so, PREDICT sent scientists to capture viral samples from wildlife in areas where spillover into new species was likely. Although the program was said to have identified the sequences of over 1000 viruses, it missed predicting diseases like Ebola, Zika, and MERS.

The PREDICT project shutdown has raised alarms surrounding the current climate of U.S. biosurveillance infrastructure as a whole. The consensus became that forecasting of such diseases simply didn't provide enough practical value. Several disease researchers even urged the U.S. to focus on much more straightforward and cost-effective ways to mitigate outbreaks through proactive, real-time surveillance of human populations rather than tracking pathogens in non-human species. The 2018 National Biodefense Strategy calls for improvements in domestic and international biosurveillance and information-sharing systems to ensure coordinated and timely responses.

The termination of the PREDICT project has cast doubt on the goal of slowing emerging infectious diseases outside of U.S. borders. The PREDICT program demonstrates the difficulties with implementing effective biosurveillance programs. Ending PREDICT won't break the U.S.'s biosurveillance network, but it is one component in an increasingly apparent trend of declining efforts to combat infectious diseases. The U.S. government simply does not take pandemic preparedness seriously, and it is not investing enough in spreading the expertise and best practices needed in the case of a global pandemic. The real-time surveillance of the world's diseases may not be the most cost-effective idea, but such costs are worthwhile if we want to avoid the next 1918 flu pandemic or Ebola-like outbreak.

Pandemic potential disease threats span the globe and, unfortunately, not every small town has the means to perform diagnostic tests. This needs to be one of the U.S. government's top priorities. Altogether, a uniformly strong disease detection network across the world is crucial to avoiding a weak link that could be exploited by the next pandemic pathogen.

Quantum Supremacy: Harnessing Qubits for the National Defense

David Mendes, 2019

In late October, Google announced that it had achieved quantum supremacy using its 54-qubit Sycamore Processor to perform a complex mathematical calculation in just 200 seconds that would take the world's most powerful "traditional" supercomputer 10,000 years to solve. This milestone opens the path for future quantum technologies which will impact key aspects of national security and defense. Quantum computing is expected to revolutionize key defense systems and technologies. Three promising applications include quantum key distribution, quantum cryptanalysis, and quantum sensing.

In the United States, both the government and the private sector have invested heavily to develop quantum computers and related quantum technology. In the private sector, the leaders are Google, IBM, Intel, Microsoft, and D-Wave Systems. Within the United States government, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, the military services, NASA and the Department of Energy have led both research and funding for research into quantum technologies.

In December 2018, President Trump signed into law the National Quantum Initiative Act, which directs the Executive Branch through the National Science Foundation and the Department of Energy to implement a ten-year program aimed at accelerating the development of quantum computing, in part by establishing at least two research centers, and provides for substantial funding for research by the public and private sector.
China and Russia, among others, have also invested in quantum research.

China has established itself as a leader in quantum research and at present China spends more than $2.5 billion a year on quantum research, roughly times what the United States spends. In 2016, China launched the first quantum satellite, a feat the United States has yet to replicate. China has used its quantum satellite to successfully test quantum communications technologies which if implemented in the future, could make its communication secure from foreign observation and collection efforts.

The first advancement made possible through quantum computing is quantum key distribution or "QKD," which promises near unbreakable encryption. This has broad defense applications, the least of which would be to allow for sensitive communication to remain secret from foreign adversaries.

A second advancement, quantum cryptanalysis, encompasses efforts to use quantum computing and quantum algorithms to decode encrypted information. At present, encryptions used for highly sensitive information, would take billions of years for a traditional supercomputer to break via a brute force (trial and error) attack. By using quantum computers current encryptions could be broken in much shorter time frames, akin to the 200 seconds it took Google's Sycamore Processor to solve an otherwise 10,000-year quantum supremacy problem.

Finally, quantum sensing promises advances which include the ability to see through the oceans and solid ground to detect enemy submarines and underground bunkers. The ability to track an adversary's ballistic missile submarines would upend established nuclear deterrence strategies, as these rely on submarines for second strike capability. Quantum sensors are also expected to lead to much more accurate precision targeting systems and non-GPS dependent inertial guidance systems.

Beyond these three areas, quantum technologies also are expected to have prolific applications in other key areas, including space applications, within the world of finance, and the ability to harness big data in ways which up until now have not been feasible. As such, the development and acquisition of quantum technologies is vital to national defense. Google's recent landmark achievement opens the way for greater advances toward a quantum future. To achieve this future, and for the United States to achieve a competitive advantage in quantum technology, sustained investment by both the public and private sector is essential.

Reckless Response: North Korea Should Come Clean on COVID-19

George Hutchinson, 2019

On March 14th, North Korea's state news agency praised countrywide efforts to raise COVID-19 awareness and urged continued public vigilance to keep the number of cases in the country at zero. Indeed, North Korea is notably absent from among the 127 countries currently listed on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's COVID-19 World Map website. Considering the virus originated in China and the first country outside of China to experience a spike was South Korea, North Korea's claim of zero cases is highly dubious, and hiding a contagion is incredibly reckless. While the scope and scale of the virus in North Korea is only guessable at this point, the country's response to the problem is tiresomely predictable.

This is not the first time the country has demonstrated stubborn adherence to opaqueness and misinformation. The 1990s bore witness to a disastrous famine in North Korea made worse due to delayed international relief caused by information suppression designed to preserve the power of the party system and the Kim regime. The welfare of the North Korean people has long been subordinate to the "big rocks" of the Kim regime—keeping the party elite happy and advancing the nuclear program. During the famine of the 1990s, as North Koreans in the outlying provinces starved, the government continued funneling resources into its nuclear program while supplying priority rations to the Korean Workers Party and redirecting international food aid to the military. Robert Collins' seminal report, "Marked for Life," describes in intricate detail the Songbun caste system through which these abuses were carried out.

A safe assumption is the current iteration of the Kim regime will resort to the same tactics previously deployed during the famine. Prioritized efforts to contain the spread of the virus and triage infected patients will favor party elites and the military. While this caste system approach has an obvious deleterious impact on those in the outlying areas, it could also wind up harming the regime. The approach threatens the viability of one of the few remaining sources of regime revenue—the markets that the regime regularly extorts through compulsory fees, kickbacks and bribes.

North Korea's system of interconnected markets located throughout the country is fed through a logistical network that begins at points located along the border between China and North Korea. Disruption to this network would dry up streams of revenue that would otherwise flow into the regime's coffers. Acutely aware of the regime's dependence on the market system and the potential for disruption, Kim Jong Un is left with two payoff scenarios: (1) go back to the negotiating table with the U.S. and seek sanctions relief for some denuclearization or (2) seek attention by

conducting a military provocation that exceeds even the Trump administration's threshold of ignorability. COVID-19 creates complications for both scenarios.

Global attention is now entirely focused on containing the spread of COVID-19. The U.S. has adopted an "all of government approach" that will preempt any interest in near term diplomacy with North Korea. If not for COVID-19, the timing might be perfect for North Korea to conduct a provocation. There is past evidence of North Korea conducting strategically timed provocations to influence approaching South Korean National Assembly elections or to garner attention during stalled nuclear negotiations. With National Assembly elections scheduled for April 15 and nuclear negotiations with the U.S. going nowhere, both conditions are currently applicable. However, due to COVID-19, North Korea would risk tremendous scorn by the international community, and possibly more sanctions, at a time when it needs international support.

Although incompatible with the usual repertoire of maintaining opaqueness and distorting information to preserve the regime, the most optimal payoff for North Korea would be to meld with the international community and immediately begin transparent reporting of COVID-19. This would add North Korea to the global accounting of the pandemic, with the obvious benefit of being eligible for obtaining international support during a critical window of time while virus rates are rapidly increasing throughout the world. Resorting to the failed caste system tactics from the 1990s famine will not only bring great harm to the North Korean people, but could also, in a twisted sort of irony, cause insurmountable problems for the regime.

Human Security Challenges with COVID-19 in Forgotten Communities

Gerry Moss, 2020

COVID-19, or Coronavirus, has become an international health crisis that has seen schools and universities cease in-person classes, travel restrictions, and a rise of hypochondriacal behavior. However, these responses are coming from people and governments (both local and federal) that have the monetary and physical means to respond to this pandemic. What will this virus mean for those who don't have these resources? What will COVID-19 mean for those living in refugee camps should the virus infect these densely populated areas?

Of the 25.9 million refugees 40% of them, or 10.36 million, live in refugee camps. This is a concern for many of the camps stretching from Bangladesh to Europe. While the UNHCR is trying to get ahead of this potential disaster, none of its measures will matter so long as the systemic issues that make refugee camps a potential disease hotbed are addressed.

Furthermore, racist sentiments and actions towards refugees from individuals and governing bodies will only increase the likelihood of the disease spreading, putting themselves and the people they claim to be protecting at greater risk.

Refugee camps neither have adequate access to medical facilities, nor the ability to provide enough food or blankets to keep refugees' immune systems strong enough to combat infection. Making matters worse, the average refugee camp is inhabited predominantly by children, who do not have fully developed immune systems. Additionally, these camps are typically overcrowded. Together, this creates the perfect breeding ground for illness to spread.

While the World Health Organization (WHO) states that the mortality rate for COVID-19 is somewhere between 3% and 4%, it admits that mortality rates are largely determined by access to and quality of healthcare. With access to and quality of healthcare lacking in refugee camps and refugees' (especially children's) already compromised immune systems, these people who risked their lives to flee their home countries are now the most vulnerable to this novel Coronavirus.

The UNHCR and other organizations are aware of this increased vulnerability and have begun taking necessary steps. For example, the refugee camps in Bangladesh have begun training 280 of their medical staff in disease prevention with special attention given to COVID-19. Doctors Without Borders has requested COVID-19 testing kits for their facilities that span 70 countries, but the testing kits remain limited in wealthy countries.

Unfortunately, while these measures are absolutely the right steps forward, they will not be enough. These measures do not address the core reasons as to why these refugees are more vulnerable in the first place; lack of access to clean drinking water, improper nourishment, improper shelter, and overcrowding. Medical training will not change these systemic problems that plague these camps.

For refugees not residing in camps, the knowledge that they are more susceptible to COVID-19 has added a new dimension to the refugee hysteria seen in Europe and the United States. Turkey, for instance, has opened its northern border for refugees to cross into Europe. Greece has responded with the use of tear gas, beatings, and forcing refugees to strip to their underwear in freezing conditions.

Greek officials fear that these refugees will bring the Coronavirus into Greek territory. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said on March 5th that "Greece will tighten border controls to prevent the spread of coronavirus, focusing on island routes used by migrants to enter the country." However, Greece has a previous history of mistreating refugees coming into the country, and has created stellar breeding grounds for the virus to spread in camps like that on the island of Samos, which is built for a max occupancy of just 648 but houses 7400 refugees. Greece is merely using this new threat to continue its ongoing mistreatment of refugees.

During this time of crisis, it is in all our best interest at the individual and state level to stop this virus from spreading. Part of how we do that as a global community is by protecting the most vulnerable. Turning refugees away and stopping them from being able to acquire medical care is not a viable way forward. Not fixing the very real and systemic problems within refugee camps is not a viable way forward. Using racism, be that anti-Asian or anti-refugee, is not a viable way forward. Coronavirus has presented a human security risk that has the potential to worsen existing human security risks. Now is not the time for global isolationism, it is time for global cooperation in protecting all the people within each country's respective borders, be them nationals or not.

One Minute Closer to Midnight: A Return to Nonproliferation and Arms Control

Ayah Abdul-Samad, 2020

The issues of nonproliferation and arms control remain prevalent in the international security field and fundamental to the incoming administration's foreign policy strategy. More specifically, highlighting the role and importance of existing multilateral agreements would reaffirm the United States' continued cooperation with the international system in supporting a nuclear disarmament policy. Through President-Elect Joe Biden's commitment in adhering to the following three primary issues: support for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and noncompliance in ongoing international agreements by member-states, the future Biden administration could potentially focus on related secondary issues that would further bolster nonproliferation as a whole.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Review Conference
With the upcoming NPT review conference in April 2021, Biden's active participation in the conference would reaffirm the treaty's role as the leading disarmament agreement for nuclear stockpiles and clearly signal the United States' dedication to implementing and adhering to nonproliferation policies, ensuring member-state cooperation, and gaining potential support from non-member-states. Since the NPT has reduced the nuclear threat from potentially 20-30 states to only five legitimate programs, support of the NPT would highlight the US' commitment to nuclear disarmament and compliance to international norms and agreements surrounding existing nuclear technology. Additionally, US participation in the NPT review conference would reinforce US policies that would eliminate the risk of future nuclear weapons use and distance the US from current potentially risk-inducing policies of the Trump administration.

With Biden taking a crucial first step in acknowledging a more practical look at the role of nuclear weapons within the international system, major players should follow suit in adherence to the NPT and like-minded agreements. Greater collective support of arms control would also minimize risks associated with proliferation outliers, such as North Korea and Iran. The continuation of a multilateral agreement on nuclear disarmament reinforces existing international restrictions and norms regarding nonproliferation and ensures that states seeking illicit or unauthorized weapons programs are not internationally accepted.

Ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)
Ratification of the CTBT would highlight Biden's commitment to the eradication of risks posed by testing weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and lead to a potential secondary action that

Biden should implement: the elimination of the Trump administration's initiative on the creation of low-yield tactical nuclear weapons and a refocus to maintenance of existing nuclear technology. Such an endeavor would retain the deterrence desired for diplomacy with Russia and similar states, while ensuring the current nuclear stockpile is maintained in a safe and secure manner. The Trump administration has cited the added benefit of tactical weapons to deterrence, the increase in threshold for the use of such weapons, and enhanced flexibility of a US military response to threats on US national security. However, the creation of such weapons presents a challenge in which the US would embark on research, development, production, and testing of nuclear weapons — violating established international norms and resulting in possible escalatory rhetoric and action from states like North Korea and Iran. Nuclear weapons testing creates a precedent for testing in the modern era and opens the door for other nuclear-capable states in similar pursuits. CTBT ratification would ultimately aid in ending the Trump program for tactical nuclear weapons and eliminate risks of reimplementation of the program.

Noncompliance Issues and WMD Uses by Member-States

The international system continues to face risks due to noncompliance with international nonproliferation and arms control agreements by member-states and continued uses of WMDs by non-member-states. Violators of the NPT, Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), or Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) have continually ignored international protocol and faced little repercussions for their actions, despite condemnation from a majority of the international community. Such violations include Syrian chemical weapons uses of nearly a decade, Russia's use of chemical weapons against political adversaries, and the pursuit of illicit nuclear weapon ambitions by rogue states. Chemical weapons violations by Syria have been investigated and attributed by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations; however, the US has failed to take decisive action. Since the Obama administration's declaration of a 'red line' regarding chemical weapons use, and the Trump administration's continuation of a weak policy, Syria and like-minded states likely view using chemical weapons as a viable option with limited consequences from the international community. Similarly, Russia's own use of chemical weapons has gone largely unpunished given their comfortable perch on the UN Security Council and despite membership in the CWC. Passive enforcement and a lack of retribution will encourage states to pursue illicit weapons programs, employ unsanctioned technology, and ignore international norms centered on nonproliferation.

While support of the NPT and CTBT would reaffirm Biden's commitment to multilateral agreements on international disarmament, enforcing compliance on proliferation issues remains vital in international security. Responsible action by the US should include a treaty similar to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran, and potentially North Korea, and support of existing bilateral agreements like the New START with Russia. Ultimately, the Biden

administration should focus on policies that would promote a positive relationship and strategic stability with states like Russia and China and that would support disarmament and nonproliferation amidst growing concerns over non-state actors and WMD-pursuant states.

The Tag along Tourist: COVID-19

Chris Keller, 2020

Currently, the Corona Virus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) is rapidly spreading across the globe. The growing rate of contagion suggests that containment is not going to be possible. For the majority of infected, the virus produces flu-like symptoms and may lead to pneumonia. For others, however, it can be life threatening. The spreading COVID-19 is already disrupting global markets, has shut down borders, and has been wreaking havoc on the worldwide psyche. What could have fueled such a widespread pandemic? It is understood that the early cases of COVID-19 came from Wuhan, the capital city of China's Hubei province, but how did the virus reach every corner of our world? Perhaps, the answer lies with people wanting to see the world, to interact with new cultures, and form new memories with others. Tourism may have helped the virus reach the distances that it has. Some people travel to learn, to grow, and to become versed in the ways of the world in their pursuit to become more "worldly" individuals. However, as the virus spreads, it allows the virus to do the same and evolve.

In January 2020, over 7 million Chinese chose to celebrate the Chinese New Year by traveling abroad. Just a month earlier, COVID-19 began rapidly spreading in Mainland China. While Chinese health officials acknowledged a problem with the growing outbreak, the Chinese government initially downplayed the epidemic and did not take the adequate precautions for the safety of the rest of the world, such as restricting tourism. As the Chinese government did not restrict tourism, tourists may have spread the virus.

It is now known that COVID-19 is extremely contagious. It is believed that infection can occur within 6 feet of someone carrying the virus. An asymptomatic person may still spread the virus unknowingly and continue the contagion. Furthermore, COVID-19 infection becomes possible from the surfaces in which an infected person has contact with. On contaminated surfaces, COVID-19 has been observed to live up to 9 days.

As of today, the majority of tourist hotspots have infections. It is possible that each hotspot may have acted as an amplifier of the virus. Italy, for example, has exploded with the virus and is now the most infected country outside of China. Two weeks prior to the massive Italian outbreak was the carnival celebration in northern Italy, where tens of thousands came to celebrate in northern Italy. Once tourists become infected, they transmit the virus to other tourists, other tourist locations or back to their home countries as what may be evident with Iran.

As COVID-19 continues to spread across our globe and becomes more a "worldly" tourist, it has a faster rate of mutating into a more successful virus. As a virus mutates, it may become more successful at transmitting throughout the world. All viruses mutate in its genome the more it transmits and enters into a stage of natural selection. Evolution may become a more significant threat if COVID-19 has an outbreak in another densely populated country, such as India, which currently has a few dozen documented cases. The mutated form of the virus that can transmit the fastest and replicate the most effectively in a host's body will be most resilient and most likely to continue. Chinese researchers say that the virus has already mutated and has created at least two strands, the aggressive "L type" and the "S type."

The mutations that occur from traveling and that are not beneficial to COVID-19 will be discarded through natural selection. The mutations that lead to the COVID-19 being more resilient during its transmission will become incorporated into the virus's core genome. COVID-19 can only become its most resilient form by evolving through a large number of genetically different hosts. In other words, like the Chinese proverb, the virus "learns more from traveling a thousand miles." However, the more the COVID-19 spreads throughout the world, the more mutations the virus undergoes and the greater an effect on the globe it may have. Unfortunately, we will know what the effects on national security and cooperation will be when the pandemic is controlled. We are very well at the front end of the COVID-19 pandemic and I am sure the "tag along tourist" has a lot more to see.

The National Security Implications of Supply Chain Disruptions

Kristofer Garriott, 2020

Among the many wake up calls stemming from the coronavirus pandemic, the fragility of global supply chains has taken center spotlight. As these supply lines are disrupted, consumers are beginning to see shortages of products that were taken for granted just weeks earlier. The most visible shortage has been at grocery stores with barren shelves where food and toilet paper are normally fully stocked. However shocking these shortages are, they are mostly the result of panicked buying instead of strain on their supply chains, at least in the United States. Other products, particularly medical products, like personal protective equipment (PPE), rely heavily on imports from China and elsewhere. The disruption of supply chains in necessary products like these poses a threat to national security that policymakers must address with the same level of attention afforded to past national security crises.

The US has already prepared some emergency measures. Chief among these is the Strategic National Stockpile, a strategic supply of medical equipment for emergency use since the 1990s, including drugs, PPE, and ventilators, though it was intended for responding to smaller scale emergencies, not a nationwide pandemic. As the stockpile's resources have been depleted, the federal government has encouraged individual states to procure the equipment on their own. However, the overwhelming demand for these products that COVID-19 has generated is forcing states to compete with each other on the open market. Bigger states like California can muster much greater purchasing power than smaller states, leading to inequitable distribution of supplies.

This ultimately puts people's lives at risk, as supply shortages force hospitals to make decisions about who gets treated and, even, who gets resuscitated. When hospitals are unable to provide enough PPE to health care workers, people inevitably die, including doctors and nurses. The death toll in the United States has already surpassed that of the 9/11 terrorist attacks many times over. For an even more visceral example of the extent to which the pandemic is a challenge to national security, one need look no further than the U.S. aircraft carrier USS Roosevelt, where over 600 sailors have tested positive for COVID-19.

Developments in the world economy have brought many benefits to both firms and consumers – when the economy is functioning. Lower labor costs abroad make products cheaper for consumers at home. Companies use just-in-time inventory (keeping only a few weeks' worth of inventory on hand), which has made them more profitable. But this system assumes that raw materials and products will continue to move through the world without major disruptions. In the event of a

major disruption, like the one we are witnessing now, these benefits quickly turn into liabilities as countries enact restrictions on exports of vital medical products.

In the United States, activating the Strategic National Stockpile and invoking the Defense Production Act are important actions the federal government can take to shepherd resources to where they are most needed in a crisis. The Defense Production Act allows the federal government to order private companies to prioritize federal contracts ahead of all others for national defense purposes. But these moves have shown to be insufficient, as the stockpile's cache of ventilators and masks is already almost completely depleted, and the Trump Administration has received criticism for invoking the DPA too late.

When the crisis has ended and policymakers review what went wrong, they should pay considerable attention to the problems caused by our tangled, fragile supply chain. To start, the private sector needs to better understand its supply chain. The government can lead the charge by identifying the most crucial products (e.g., medicine, PPE, devices), mandating that companies fully map out their supply chains, and ensuring they are robust enough to withstand a supply shock in the event of a global catastrophe. Global pandemics are, unfortunately, inevitable in our increasingly interconnected world and we should treat them with the level of urgency and attention we have ascribed to other national security threats in the past.

The World vs. COVID-19: Potential Models for Stymying the Spread of COVID-19

Michael Krug, 2020

Humanity has struggled to learn from past experiences. Over the last 20 years, disease outbreaks, including both Ebola crises, the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, and other coronavirus outbreaks, like SARS and MERS, have failed to prepare the world for the COVID-19 pandemic. The virus continues to tighten its grip around the world with confirmed case counts soaring over 1.5 million this week and the number of worldwide deaths surpassing 100,000. Leaders have turned to drastic measures to reduce the spread; however, until countermeasures are developed, tested, and validated, it is hard to imagine when the world will return to 'normal.' As the war against COVID-19 persists, it is imperative that the world recognizes successful strategies. Effective measures for containing COVID-19 spread include ensuring sufficient testing kits for the population, mitigation through social distancing, and, most importantly, the ability to work quickly and collectively. So far, there have been places (e.g., South Korea and Washington State) of effective suppression and mitigation that provide model responses for 'flattening the curve.'

Despite a sudden spike in infections, South Korea quickly put together a well-established strategy to mitigate the spread. Many countries have attempted to use a whole-of-government approach, but South Korea implemented a plan that integrates federal, regional, and local governments responses to COVID-19. Involving the entirety of the government meant that hospitals were not fighting for testing kits or bed space, instead they operated together to compensate for harder hit areas. Another imperative step was ensuring adequate testing kits for all patients suspected of having COVID-19. South Korea established from the beginning that maintaining enough testing kits was needed to not only identify positive case numbers, but also to monitor the actual transmissibility of a fast-spreading virus. In a virtual forum with the World Economic Forum, South Korea's Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha elucidated that "[South Korea] has tested over 350,000 cases so far – some patients are tested many times before they are released, so we can say they are fully cured. Altogether, we are talking about one out of 145 or one out of 150 people having been tested so far." South Korea has proven successful in achieving this feat, evident as a majority of South Korea's workforce has returned to their occupations.

Another example of success has been Washington State's response. In early March, the state had one of the earliest clusters of confirmed cases in the U.S., but the disease trajectory subsided by employing disease suppression and mitigation methods, like mandatory social distancing. The state, guided by Governor Jay Inslee and Mayor Jenny Durkan of Seattle, declared a state of

emergency on February 29th. On March 23rd, when Governor Inslee announced a statewide order requiring citizens of the state to stay home, except for essential activity. These timely efforts bought Washington communities precious time, in addition to "flattening the curve" of infections, even though the state did not necessarily have the high case numbers to justify such measures.

In a recent webinar forum with the Nuclear Threat Initiative, Mayor Durkan mentioned that the "pace and scope of this [outbreak] is something that no one can prepare you for." This was evident by the rapid progression of COVID-19 in the Seattle area. The first confirmed case in Seattle was announced on February 28th, the first death was announced on February 29th, and by March 4th Seattle was closing most of its economy. Per Mayor Durkan, one of the vital factors in combating COVID-19 was the city's ability to pull resources from its local community. Most of the large employers within Seattle complied with the stay at home order by pushing teleworking to all employees. Mayor Durkan's most pressing piece of advice for other cities and states was to "act quickly," citing the need to reduce contact among citizens as soon as possible. Her statement resonates an essential takeaway that the longer the virus is circulating in a community, the more likely transmission is to happen.

During the April 4th White House press conference, Dr. Anthony Fauci stated that countries that have "implemented very strict kinds of programs of mitigation, clearly [show] it works. In our own country, we have seen indications of that in Washington." Together the measures mentioned above have made a significant difference in combatting COVID-19. The hope is that other countries and states take notice and act quickly. As the case numbers rise, economies and global travel grind to a halt, and misinformation spreads rapidly, it is critical that humanity look to successful models, like South Korea and Washington State, until the production of viable countermeasures. Defeating COVID-19 will be difficult, but a separated and disjointed global response will only exacerbate the pain and suffering of the world.

Curfew: A Tool for Global Pandemic Response

Saffanah Zaini, 2020

At 3:00 pm on Wednesday March 25th, 2020, it is peak rush hour time in Riyadh, but there is not a car to be seen, except for police vehicles patrolling the streets. Saudi Arabia had just issued new regulations, tightening its coronavirus counter-measures, two weeks after the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic. The world is scrambling for ways to contain the outbreak, and, as a result, countries have taken different approaches to handling COVID-19. Nationwide curfew is one of the counter-measures to COVID-19. Has curfew been effective? Was there a significant drop of confirmed cases after its implementation? In Saudi Arabia, the answer to both is no. Without establishing a solid social distancing campaign, curfew is ineffective.

By April 20th, Saudi Arabia's confirmed COVID-19 cases reached over ten thousand. Due to Saudi Arabia's centralized authoritarian system, it was able to implement counter-measures to COVID-19 nationwide without any visible opposition. Saudi Arabia's regime is authoritarian in nature, meaning, it makes decisions and the public is supposed to fully obey, otherwise they would be severely punished. The kingdom enforced a strict curfew in all of its cities starting March 23rd from 7pm to 6 am for 21 days. Two days later, the kingdom tightened measures in Riyadh, Mecca, and Medina by adding four hours to the curfew, starting from 3 pm to 6 am. Entry and exit from the three cities is also restricted, as well as movement between the provinces in general. The Saudi government escalated measures on April 2nd, placing a 24hr lockdown on Mecca and Medina. Additionally, the regime is using its law enforcement apparatus to enforce lockdown and curfew, issuing large fines and jail time for repeat offenders.

Despite the curfew and lockdown, the outbreak continued to spiral out of control in Saudi Arabia. The trend of reported cases is only moving upward, reflecting a constant increase in confirmed cases, even after the government expanded lockdown and partial curfew on April 4th. Curfew does not seem to cause a steady decrease in confirmed cases. To measure the effectiveness of curfew, John Hopkins University Center for Systems and Engineering (CSSE)'s indicates that there was a slight increase in detected coronavirus cases between March 25th and April 2nd , going from 133 cases a day to 165 cases. Relatively speaking, an increase by 32 cases is not significant, however, the curve reflecting the general trend of detected cases shows a steady increase. In fact, there was a spike in confirmed cases between April 8th and April 9th, going from 137 to 355, thus creating a sharp incline in the overall curve.

One reason for the rise in confirmed COVID-19 cases is that curfew creates crowding issues in local grocery stores. Curfew regulations restrict residents movement to only small grocery stores in their neighborhoods. These local grocery stores can be easily crowded due to the small window of time for movement. Curfew, while intended to limit physical contact, unintentionally defeats its purpose.

Another possible reason for the rise in cases is the lack of a strong informational campaign on social distancing. This is not to say that the government did not initiate a social distancing campaign, and the religious establishment in Saudi Arabia also played a role in emphasizing the importance of social distancing. The government produced videos of prominent clerics urging social distancing, tying it to the Muslim duty of preserving life. The population, however, did not cooperate due to its deeply rooted social norms. The family-based Saudi society resisted social distancing from family to the extent that the government had to suspend visitation rights of children of separated parents.

Early in the crisis, prior to curfew, school attendance was suspended, and work from home mandate was issued. The population treated the crisis as a government forced vacation as a result. It did not stop any family functions, such as weddings and other celebrations; they merely moved them from closed public spaces to their homes. Without a firm public understanding of the importance of social distancing, curfew loses its effectiveness. Saudi Arabia's society utilizes its private sphere, their homes and property, for social interaction more so than in the public sphere. The existence of cultural norms, such as prioritizing private family intermingling over interacting with strangers in restaurants and other public spaces, made it difficult to comply with social distancing. If the Saudi government invested more on its social distancing campaign prior to curfew, the number of cases might have been different.

The Role of Intelligence in Public Health

Voké Ashley Kalegha, 2020

For more than a decade, the United States National Security Strategy (NSS) has focused primarily on counterterrorism; however, the current pandemic has highlighted issues with the lack of public health in this strategy. COVID-19 has already caused more than ten times as many deaths as 9/11. With both the 9/11 attacks and the current pandemic, the government and military officials had a strategic intelligence warning of the coming crises and failed to utilize it.

Intelligence is the collection and analysis of information that typically assess the intent and capability of an adversary. Policymakers have not prioritized public health intelligence. Infectious diseases, such as COVID-19, pose a significant threat to U.S. national security – with health, social, military, economic, and political effects. To best understand and mitigate these threats moving forward, intelligence must be utilized adequately and promptly to support policy.

An essential task for intelligence during disease outbreaks is to determine whether foreign officials are trying to minimize the effects of an outbreak or taking steps to hide a public health crisis. At the State Department, personnel have been tracking early reports about the virus. U.S. intelligence agencies were also issuing classified warnings in January of 2020 about the global danger posed by COVID-19. Throughout this effort, the Trump administration and lawmakers alike downplayed the threat. While many intelligence reports did not precisely predict a timeline for the virus, they did track the spread of the virus in China, and later other countries, and warned that Chinese officials appeared to be minimizing the severity of the outbreak.

Pandemics are not new, and modern governments have to be highly cognizant of the threat they pose. As such, when the Trump administration became aware of the threat presented by numerous intelligence reports, they failed to utilize this intelligence – which intensified the threat. Moving forward intelligence capabilities must be utilized accurately. The collection of intelligence plays a large role in infectious disease outbreaks, through both public reporting and organizational analysis. The World Health Organization (WHO) has already utilized these methods successfully, and it seems likely they will only expand in usage moving forward.

Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) is defined as intelligence 'produced from publicly available information.' It is a broad definition that encompasses any source openly available –including media sources that can be accessed instantly – with potential use in outbreak alerts. The public health community has begun to recognize the scope of these services, and many R&D projects currently are exploring how OSINT might further help identify and monitor diseases that

constitute a public health threat. The WHO operates a program to assist in the collection and assessment of OSINT in disease intelligence – the Global Public Health Intelligence Network (GPHIN). GPHIN is a semi-automated early warning system that continuously scans global media sources in nine languages, searching for keywords, phrases, and any potential signs of disease outbreaks. OSINT tools applied to surveillance, such as GPHIN, can automatically collect and collate data, thereby referencing much larger quantities of information.

The use of Social Media Intelligence (SOCMINT) in public health is also being explored. SOCMINT uses social media and web forums globally to provide information on a specified topic or theme. However, the geographic availability of SOCMINT is less limited than that of OSINT.

Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) is also very significant. Signals Intelligence is the collection of communication data, often through telephone and email interception. Proposals have been made for the employment of SIGINT as a tool in outbreak surveillance, including the collection of mass communication data. Other proposals suggest that SIGINT may be useful in contact tracing—identification and diagnosis of people who may have come into contact with an infected person.

The COVID-19 outbreak demonstrates that public health will continue to be a threat to national security if intelligence capabilities are not utilized wisely. The complex issue of when and how to utilize intelligence capabilities concerning public health must now be researched further. Intelligence tools are not sufficient on their own as they only detect the presence and surrounding dynamics, therefore proper dialogue among all actors in the National Security Strategy must be necessary for combating the national threat as outbreaks unfold.

Refugees Left Behind: The Consequences of Restrictive Border Policies in the Time of COVID-19

Yihyun Andrea Kwon, 2020

Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is undoubtedly today's biggest national and global security threat, situated precariously at the intersection of public health, military, and economic concerns. With many states still struggling to respond to domestic infection levels, governments are responding to the pandemic with increasing patterns of isolationism – lockdowns, stricter travel policies, and border closures are the new norm. The pandemic is transforming the current understanding of global migration and mobility, with refugees and other displaced persons being left behind and forgotten in the process.

The UNHCR estimates that 167 countries have implemented some degree of border closure for virus containment, with 57 of those countries making no exception for asylum seekers. This adds a new layer of complexity to refugee entry systems which were over-run, under-digitalized, and generally ineffective even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Europe, the European Union asylum processing remains technologically stunted and all hearings have been halted for an indefinite period time. Greek refugee camps that are infamous for overcrowding have been rendered virtually incapable of meeting basic human needs due to the spread of the virus, opting for strict containment to meet the demands of panic-stricken citizens.

Such pre-existing issues are being further exacerbated as available social safety nets are pulled away, and there are a number of ramifications that can be expected from increasing border closures and restrictive entry policies.

Policies that are meant to mitigate COVID-19 infection rates may be counter-intuitive and, instead, trigger mass refugee migration due to the lack of social safety nets, which are necessary to protect the economic and human rights for refugees and asylum seekers. Syrian refugees in Turkey are choosing to return to the Idlib, Syria, rather than remaining in refugee camps where concerns about virus infection are growing exponentially. Venezuelan refugees in Columbia, Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, and Argentina have little option but to return home as joblessness and homelessness become prevalent.

Furthermore, human rights for refugees and asylum seekers are less likely to be prioritized in immigration systems and border security following the pandemic. Countries that have hardline stances on immigration and refugees are using COVID-19 as an opportunity to toughen policies that include refusing entry and deportation. In April, Malaysia denied 200 Rohingya refugees

entry, adding to the number of refugees trapped at sea and dying in cramped boats after being turned away. Even host countries that have a reputation for open immigration policies, such as Canada, have closed their borders with no exceptions for displaced persons and will likely face difficulty loosening restrictions.

The impact of extended border control will be especially difficult to mitigate post-COVID-19 as governments are increasingly weaponizing fear and anti-refugee sentiment, which will negatively influence host community perception of displaced persons. For example, government leaders in Hungary and Italy have made open, accusatory statements regarding the presence of migrants and COVID-19, which will directly affect the ability of refugees and asylum seekers to request protection in respective host countries.

As global mobilization is minimized and new security issues emerge by the day, COVID-19 is exposing new and old challenges of humanitarian protection for refugees. It is likely that signatory countries to the 1951 Refugee Convention will increasingly resist the practice of non-refoulment, or the practice of returning refugees to their country of origin, in the post-COVID era, signaling danger of perpetual displacement for refugees and asylum seekers. Developing flexible solutions for those situated in refugee camps will prove to be an even more difficult task. Current methods of deportation, containment at detention camps, and refugee camps do not address key issues or prevent further vulnerability to COVID-19. To prevent a future where refugees are no longer left behind, it is essential that governments work to retain and constitute social safety nets and intentionally accommodate refugees and displaced persons in their border policies.

The Dark Side of the Supply Chain

Faith Hawkins, 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has shed light on the fragility of global supply chains. Medicine, personal protective equipment (PPE), and other crucial resources are in short supply, yet the pandemic has also had an unexpected effect on the supply chain for a more dubious product: fentanyl. Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid 50 to 100 times stronger than morphine that is prescribed to treat severe pain and has been the cause of thousands of overdoses and drug-related deaths. The disruption of fentanyl's supply chain is likely to lead to a rise in drug prices or a shift in the use of fentanyl during the pandemic. Policymakers will need to prepare for these possibilities and anticipate how they may affect current drug policy after the crisis is over.

China has long been recognized as one of the primary sources of illicit fentanyl. The majority of illicit fentanyl and its precursor chemicals are shipped from China to Mexico in bulk cargo. Mexican cartels, like the Sinaloa Cartel and the New Generation Jalisco Cartel, then funnel fentanyl into the United States. As China adopted isolation tactics to counter the spread of COVID-19, the production of drugs and drug manufacturing chemicals has been significantly reduced, if not halted in the country. The standstill in trade has halted the air and sea transportation of drugs, as well. The pandemic has also raised border crossing standards in the United States, making it harder for those who have been ferrying drugs from Mexico to do so.

The reverberations of the sudden decline in fentanyl are worrying. Firstly, those who suffer from substance abuse will not simply break their habits. The lack of fentanyl is likely to increase the risks users are willing to take to obtain the drug. Additionally, as the supply of fentanyl falls off, we can expect that dealers will raise their prices to compensate. Darknet dealers are already warning customers of potential price increases as their sales begin to drop.

Secondly, substance abusers are also likely to turn to other drugs to get their fix. Authorities need to identify what other illicit drugs remain unaffected by the COVID-19 supply chain disruptions, are still readily available, and where they originate. It is possible the epicenter for illicit drugs may shift away from China as the pandemic wears on and countries continue to adopt isolationist tactics. The prevalence of fentanyl use by meth and heroin users makes them the most likely substances for substance abusers to turn to under current conditions.

The DEA has already relaxed production limits on controlled substances, including fentanyl, to address medicine shortages for the duration of the emergency. Criminals are likely to exploit this policy modification to bolster their own supplies by targeting larger stockpiles and diverting larger

quantities of these substances to the black market. Both policymakers and the relevant enforcement agencies must be prepared for this possibility and the impact it may have after the pandemic winds down. Law enforcement agencies will need to anticipate new routes and methods of smuggling as border security remains heightened.

Further, the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act, originally written to provide resources for the prevention of opioid use and the treatment of substance abusers, will need to be amended to account for the increased use of meth and heroin. The legislation addresses short-term investment in prevention, treatment, and recovery programs for addiction services, but it does not promise long-term funding. Without a commitment to sustaining the program, it may not receive adequate resources or endure long enough to be as useful as it could be. Furthermore, the SUPPORT Act needs to change opioid data monitoring so that it addresses the use of illicit substances in conjunction with opioid use instead of primarily on prescribed substances.

The coronavirus pandemic is clashing with the opioid epidemic, and though COVID-19 requires our utmost attention, we should not lose sight of the damage fentanyl has and will continue to cause. The narcotics trade relies on the constant movements of its products and while the pandemic endures, drug traders will adapt to their new limitations. Policymakers will have to adapt alongside them or risk losing what little ground they have managed to gain.

The Real Danger of the Microsoft Exchange Hack

Kevin McKenna, 2020

Earlier this month, Microsoft announced that a group of hackers exploited previously unknown vulnerabilities in its Exchange Server software, compromising the email security of tens of thousands of organizations across the globe. While Microsoft swiftly released security patches, many of the affected servers remain unpatched and vulnerable. News of the Exchange hack sparked vigorous debates in the cybersecurity policy community about how the U.S. Government should respond, both in terms of holding guilty players accountable and preventing a similar security breach in the future. While it is critical for the Biden administration to get both of these aspects right, it must also prepare for the second-order effects of the Exchange hack. Specifically, it needs to take concrete steps to limit the threat of ransomware.

Ransomware on the Rise

Since the introduction of cryptocurrencies allowing for relatively anonymous online transactions, ransomware attacks have become increasingly popular among cyber criminals as a means of harming adversaries, generating income, or both. According to the cybersecurity research firm CrowdStrike, the frequency and sophistication of ransomware attacks rose dramatically in the last few years. The main reason for this trend is simple: ransomware pays.

Victims of ransomware – whether major corporations, small organizations, government entities, or private individuals – typically have a strong incentive to pay the ransom in hopes of regaining access to their systems. This creates a vicious cycle: When more victims pay ransoms, it makes ransomware attacks more profitable for attackers and, therefore, more attractive to a broader variety of malicious actors. The cybersecurity research firm FireEye noted that the increased profitability of ransomware drove a trend in which "threat actors that historically targeted sensitive information such as personally identifiable information (PII) and credit card information turned to ransomware to monetize access to victim networks."

Not only are more threat actors executing ransomware attacks, they are employing innovative new tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) to maximize effectiveness and profit. A growing trend among threat actors is the use of ransomware-as-a-service (RaaS). They hone specific skillsets that represent the composite parts of a ransomware attack – intrusion, automated distribution, or the development of ransomware are most common – and offer these services to other threat actors on the dark web in exchange for a cut of the ransom. Some threat actors are even starting affiliate programs that increase the spread of ransomware by offering their malware tools to third-party affiliates to use in ransomware attacks. When affiliates successfully use the provided tools to extort a

ransom payment from a victim, the malware provider receives a share of the ransom. By leveraging other actors' expertise, ransomware attackers are maximizing the efficiency and impacts of their attacks.

Threat actors are increasingly targeting victims that are most vulnerable and most likely to pay ransoms. Common examples include state and local government agencies that offer critical infrastructure, but lack the cybersecurity measures to prevent ransomware attacks.

The Exchange Hack: Adding Fuel to the Fire

In late February, the threat actors responsible for the Exchange hack – identified by Microsoft as the Hafnium group, which most security experts believe is affiliated with the Chinese government – learned that Microsoft planned to patch the vulnerabilities they exploited to gain access to mail servers across the globe. In a recent Lawfare Blog post, Dmitri Alperovitch and Ian Ward of Silverado Policy Accelerator, described the attackers' response: "[They] decided to take the truly unprecedented step of automatically scanning practically the entire internet for vulnerable Exchange servers and then compromising every single one of those servers before they could be patched." In effect, China opened a pro bono ransomware affiliate program and provided their intrusion expertise to any moderately competent ransomware threat actors who wanted to attack the thousands of vulnerable organizations with unpatched instances of Microsoft Exchange.

At an event on election security hosted by the Hayden Center in October of last year, then-Director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) Chris Krebs said of the ransomware threat, "We are on the verge of a global crisis, and state and local [governments] are feeling it every day." In an interview with Foreign Policy last week, Jonathan Tepperman asked Krebs about the real-world consequences of the Exchange hack. Krebs replied, "I think that story has yet to be told, frankly. If a number of organizations were compromised by cybercriminals that are looking around their networks to see what's there, the potential ransomware attacks are still a couple of days to a couple of weeks out. That's when you're going to know the real consequences. And this hack was classic fodder for a ransomware attack. The attackers got access. They could move around [inside the compromised servers]. They'll lock them up, and then they'll demand payment."

The ransomware crisis may become markedly worse in the coming weeks, and could present the most urgent national cybersecurity challenge for the Biden administration. To help mitigate the risk of ransomware attacks, the administration needs to invest in federal programs that can:

- offer federally-funded cybersecurity support and training to state and local institutions,
- incentivize information-sharing between the public and private sectors – especially the disclosure of ransomware incidents and coordination of cyber threat intelligence, and

- encourage the inclusion of cybersecurity and information security in public school curricula to strengthen the future of America's cybersecurity talent.

The Challenges of Combatting Domestic Terrorism

Kimberly Talley, 2020

Domestic terrorism poses a unique challenge to the US government. For the agencies and organizations tasked with protecting the homeland a bevy of issues accompany combatting domestic terrorism. We begin with the most basic: terminology.

Terminology

There is no universally agreed upon definition of domestic terrorism. Variations in terminology – such as the interchanging use of domestic extremism and violent extremism with domestic terrorism – inhibit cooperation among federal, state and local levels of law enforcement. Authorities conflate ideology with action, obscuring the nature of threats. This lack of cohesive communication restricts the flow of intelligence between federal authorities and local counterparts, damaging the accuracy of threat assessments.

An FBI report issued in November 2020 defines domestic terrorism as "acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any State; appearing to be intended to: intimidate or coerce a civilian population; influence the policy of government by intimidation or coercion; or affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination or kidnapping; and occurring primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States." This definition, formulated by FBI and DHS and commissioned by congressional law, has not yet become standard across all levels of government —an issue that continues to hamper interagency communication, particularly between state and federal authorities. In fact, prior to this report, the federal government had no official definition of domestic terrorism. Inability to even define the problem highlights the government's lackluster response to an urgent national security threat.

Legal Mechanisms and Civil Rights

Unanswered legal questions regarding civil liberties pose a unique obstacle in the fight against domestic terrorism: "Legal mechanisms available to some foreign partners, e.g., to ban DT [domestic terrorism] groups, are at odds with US civil liberties. Creating a DT designation in the United States could be perceived as government overreach and/or unconstitutional." Some advocate for modeling the government's response to domestic terrorism after its response to foreign terrorist threats; however, the US citizenship of many domestic bad actors restricts this course of action. Tactics used against foreign nationals are often not permissible against US citizens. US officials are confronted with a goldilocks conundrum, not knowing if they are doing too much or too little when monitoring US citizens.

Challenges regarding travel surveillance illustrates this point – it is often difficult to discern whether a subject is travelling to exercise a Constitutional right, such as protesting, or if they intend to commit a crime. Another ambiguous arena is the limits of free speech, particularly online. It is difficult to distinguish constitutionally protected (yet potentially extremist) political discourse from mobilization-to-violence indicators. Too much surveillance or premature action by government officials threatens private citizen's civil rights, yet the failure to halt a domestic terror incident despite an abundance of online discourse has devastating implications.

Even when extremism metastasizes into terrorism, detection is often difficult. In this era of online radicalization, most domestic terrorists are lone actors or based in small cells, not large well-known groups like al-Qaeda. The ODNI's 2021 Unclassified Summary of Domestic Violent Extremism highlights the threat of lone offenders, noting "DVE [domestic violent extremist] lone offenders will continue to pose significant detection and disruption challenges because of their capacity for independent radicalization to violence, ability to mobilize discretely, and access to firearms." As online resources become more widely available, new tactics will need to be developed to track, deter, and prevent the spread of domestic terror.

Posture

Since 9/11, the government has dedicated a tremendous number of resources to addressing foreign terrorist threats. DHS and the National Counterterrorism Center were created to prevent another attack on the homeland. With an initial 2004 budget of $39 billion to counter terrorism (among its many duties), the DHS budget has grown to $81 billion in 2021. The 2021 budget summary lists the phrase "domestic terrorism" once – in a 2019 accomplishments section. By comparison, "terrorism" is used 56 times throughout the 106-page document. Failure to recognize threats festering at home in our effort to stop another 9/11 is tragic. Nearly all terror attacks since 9/11 have been homegrown. The data is clear. Addressing this growing scourge calls for calibrating the government's overall posture toward terrorism – we must commit more resources to combatting domestic terrorism.

Domestic terrorism lives here. It most often rears its ugly head in times of high political polarity, permeating the public discourse. It is distinct from domestic extremism, yet closely interlinked – domestic extremism is not inherently violent or illegal, yet extremism can lead to terrorism. This presents unique challenges to US authorities seeking to protect the homeland from domestic terrorism. Identifying these (and additional) challenges is the crucial first step to combatting domestic terrorism.

Approaches to the Development of AI Under Competition

Caroline Wesson, 2021

Artificial Intelligence (AI), a concept that dominates the focus of those working in technology, adjacent in technology, and concerned about technology, is often misunderstood by outsiders. Medium offers an easy explanation: "(AI is) algorithms to classify, analyze, and draw predictions from data" or "using computers to do things that traditionally require human intelligence." AI has widespread implications for economic development, income inequality and employment, and importantly – national security. These implications have encouraged governments to become involved in catalyzing innovation and development in AI.

It is no secret that international competition between the U.S. and China continues to grow with increased tension in security, technology, and privacy. In June 2021, the Biden administration launched the National Artificial Intelligence Research Resource Task Force. The accompanying press release emphasized the importance of AI for economic development and maintaining America's place as a leading innovator of breakthroughs in science and technology. This rhetoric is not new; the Trump administration's AI platform prioritized research and development. Given this continued fear over the power of AI and who will lead the industry – how are the U.S. and China both fostering AI?
The U.S. federal government has developed AI policy since 2016. The Obama administration outlined key areas of importance including research, public uses such as business intelligence and optimization, governance, and of course security. Trump's National Science and Technology Council, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Defense, and other federal entities published a flurry of AI related plans, strategies, and executive orders. These plans outline the importance of maintaining US supremacy in AI, emphasizing the need to invest in research and set technological standards for AI development.

In 2021 the U.S. Department of Commerce announced a larger push to improve U.S. technological capabilities and competitiveness. This plan created regional innovation clusters, some of which are focused on AI that will attract top talent, investment, and favorable regulation to specific geographic locations. AI development has increased tensions domestically due to growing U.S. income inequality and increasing concerns about the economic and political power of big tech companies. Other implications of AI that have resulted in public anxiety include automation and concerns about data privacy. These concerns are real. In hopes of mitigating these impacts, the Biden administration is prioritizing diversity and inclusion while focusing on technological development, aiming to increase the number of U.S. citizens that benefit from innovation in and adoption of A.I. and other related technologies. Meanwhile, the Chinese government has not had

to worry as intensely about these concerns, due to their one-party system, relatively high social mobility for the middle class, and social control via fear and surveillance.

Chinese leadership has consistently emphasized the importance of key technologies including AI. The Made in China 2025 plan outlines the importance of AI for national defense, articulating the importance of combining AI and military systems. Chinese leadership sees AI as key to both economic and military success. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) seeks greater AI research and development while reducing dependence on technology imports. To meet its long-term goals, the CCP has implemented a massive set of national AI strategies, which Medium classifies as the most comprehensive of any national plan. Chinese plans include massive government investment into research and education; targeted innovation programs on relevant technologies including robotics, drones, and autonomous vehicles; the creation of an AI research park in Beijing; and attracting top AI talent to work in China or collaborate with Chinese researchers/industry.

The Chinese government has worked to set guidelines and standards for the development of AI – designating a class of national champions, or designated firms within a specific industry to receive preferential regulation and support, to oversee the development of different AI platforms and competencies. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) also has their own approaches and initiatives, as statements from officers indicate the technology is of interest to them as well. It should also be said that there are many applications of AI which the Chinese government has been testing to use for internal security purposes and governance, such as facial recognition software, social credit scores, and internet restrictions. These are just some notable examples of AI's internal security applications.

Both nations have clearly pivoted towards AI – and both readily note that international competition is a key focus. There are, however, domestic applications for economic wellbeing. Each country's approach is different, but with largely the same goal: gaining and maintaining supremacy in AI. The implications AI will have for security are great, yet there is much to be gained by developing the technology and harnessing it for public good. The question is: how will the international community grapple with AI capabilities being applied in the security space, and how will this be handled with continually rising tensions between the U.S. and China?

COP26: Dedication to Climate Action, or Climate Talk?

Kimberly Talley, 2021

Last week, the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) concluded, ending three weeks of multilateral discussions surrounding the impacts and mitigations of climate change. Lauded as a breakthrough conference, COP26 will be remembered for many milestones including the last-minute and parties' efforts to build "a bridge between good intentions and measurable actions". Failure to meet previously declared targets, coal capitulations and a lack of diverse inclusion contradict the conferences' achievements.

Missed Targets and Capitulations

Previous conferences established financial aid targets to raise $100 billion per year by 2020 to assist heavily-impacted in mitigating climate change. This figure has not been met, and is not expected to be met until 2023. Tangible targets, like nationally determined contributions (NDCs), a target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, did not meet the 2015 Paris goal of maintaining a sub two-degree Celsius global heating limit. A ratchet mechanism requiring tougher NDC targets designed to keep warming below 2 degrees was due by the end of 2020. However, most countries failed to submit new NDCs by the deadline, citing COVID19 as the main inhibitor. China, the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gas, has failed to submit any NDC to date. Additional challenges, including COVID19, the collective-action problem (where all states are better off cooperating, but free-riding inhibits and disincentivizes action), and states' unwillingness to meet financial goals leading up to COP26, led states into the conference with breached trust.

The Glasgow emission reduction pledges fall short of the more recently established 1.5-degree Celsius global heating limit. States will return to emissions negotiations next year in Egypt, but time is running out to keep global heating below catastrophic levels. Remarkably, coal is included in the UN climate text for the first time, undermining the spirit of the Glasgow agreement. China and India cowed negotiators into changing phrasing from "phase out" coal to "phase down" coal threatening the aspirational 1.5-degree limit. This concession could prove fatal for many parts of the world. As noted by the Maldives' environment minister, "The difference between 1.5 and 2 degrees is a death sentence for us."

The Global North Club

For a meeting billed as "humanity's last and best chance to prevent the worst of what climate change has in store," the summit excluded some of humanity's most at-risk groups. Despite expressed desire for COP26 to be the most inclusive ever, only an estimated one-third of the usual number of participants attended compared to previous summits. COVID19 restrictions, including

the UK's "red list," banning certain countries, were lifted only two weeks before the conference – much too late for many to make accommodations and travel plans. Previous pledges to increase vaccine availability for attendees fell short and travel routes and visas were difficult to obtain. Additional issues with housing and event-venue disability accommodations further dampened the conference; even prominent Western allies were impacted, such as Israeli Energy Minister Karine Elharrar, who was "unable to take part in the COP26 summit at the start of the week because the venue was not wheelchair accessible." (Meredith, 2021).

Shockingly, 503 delegates from the fossil fuel industry appeared at COP26 forming a delegation that was "larger than the combined total of the eight delegations from the countries worst affected by climate change in the past 20 years." The interests of the fossil fuel industry directly conflict with the movement toward climate action. The International Emissions Trading Association (IETA) hosted 103 delegates, many of whom represent oil companies "promoting offsetting and carbon trading as a way of allowing them to continue extracting oil and gas." Such strategies are not climate action – they preserve the status quo and protect the fossil fuel industry's bottom line.

Closing Statement

COP26 successfully met despite delays surrounding the ongoing pandemic, achieved written agreements with previously excluded fossil fuels, and reiterated pledges for climate related funding. Yet, with global security at stake, ever-moving goal lines and exclusion of some of humanity's most at risk cloud COP26's achievements. Only by taking firm ownership of greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets, financial targets, fostering renewable energy technology, and including all relevant voices can this multilateral annual conference hope to succeed in mitigating the effects of climate change.

The Evolution of America's Nuclear Weapons Policy

Christopher Gettel, 2022

Since their first use during the closing days of World War II, nuclear weapons have not been utilized in war. However, they have been used as a deterrent every day since to maintain the peace between world powers. America's nuclear weapons doctrine has evolved several times over the decades. Starting off in 1945, the concept of Massive Retaliation was meant to counteract any aggression on the part of the Soviet Union. This lasted until the early 1960s when America needed a doctrine with more options to keep outbreaks of violence between adversaries from reaching the nuclear threshold. Flexible Response evolved into the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction, which was the mainstay nuclear weapons strategy of the Cold War, lasting from the late 1960s to 1991. Since then, America has relied on calculated ambiguity to deter large-scale warfare among near-peer adversaries and terrorist groups alike. While each of these strategies was successful in preventing nuclear war, they all were not without their downsides.

Massive Retaliation was America's first nuclear doctrine. In the aftermath of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War, America was outnumbered in troops, vehicles, and equipment by the Soviet Union in Europe. However, America was not outnumbered in terms of nuclear weapons. The Soviet Union would not join the nuclear weapons club until 1949, and during the early stages of the Cold War, America would possess more nuclear weapons than the Communist bloc. Massive retaliation ensured that any act of aggression on the part of the Soviet Union, no matter the scale, would be met with an overwhelming nuclear response from America. This allowed America to deter conflict despite its outnumbered conventional military in Europe at the time. However, the Soviet Union would catch up and achieve near nuclear parity with America by the onset of the 1960s, thus signaling a need for nuclear doctrine evolution.

By 1961, President Kennedy was beginning to see the flaws in Massive Retaliation. A doctrine called Flexible Response emerged as Kennedy was keenly aware that a massive and overwhelming nuclear response was not a realistic option to address the proxy conflicts of the mid-Cold War era or small acts of aggression on the part of the Soviet Union. America and the Soviet Union also had established intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and submarine-launched ballistic missiles by this time, allowing for a means of delivery besides nuclear-armed bombers. President Kennedy was thus set on fighting and winning wars from the smallest proxy to the largest nuclear level, pouring money into boosting America's conventional military in the hopes that, if war broke out between the Soviet Union and America, it would never go nuclear. This allowed for a multitude of options, from using newly established Special Forces units for training, advising, and unconventional combat operations in proxy wars, to employing nuclear weapons by missile, submarine, and

bomber. This increase in military spending also contributed to the innovation of MIRVs, or Multiple Independently-targetable Reentry Vehicles, first tested in 1968. This brought about the final stage of Cold War era nuclear doctrine, as the nuclear weapons of the Soviet Union and America saw a massive, and mutual, increase in destructive power.

MIRVs, capable of being delivered from either SLBMs or ICBMs, allow for up to 14 nuclear warheads or dummy warheads to be delivered by a single missile. Once over their target location, each warhead would strike a different designated target. Dummy warheads may be included to confuse enemy radars or to saturate ballistic missile defense systems. Submarine-launched missiles had advanced past their inception during the late 1960s, ensuring that any nuclear first strike would not overwhelm either the Soviet Union or America. It was almost impossible to eliminate every nuclear-armed submarine, so even if a first strike destroyed every nuclear bomber or ICBM silo, nuclear warheads could still be launched from sea in a retaliatory strike. Mutually Assured Destruction, more accurately known by its acronym MAD, thus became the longest-lasting nuclear weapons doctrine of the Cold War, persisting from the late 1960s to 1991. Neither side could reliably destroy the other without a retaliatory nuclear strike being launched, making a nuclear war unwinnable. This kept tensions from escalating and maintained peace between the two superpowers. Although America's nuclear strategy would change slightly after the demise of the Soviet Union, it is likely that large portions of this doctrine successfully deter Russia and China today.

The end of the Soviet Union in 1991 saw America emerge as the world's sole superpower. An era of peace was thought to emerge as America had no major adversaries. A decline in military spending took place as America looked inward to improve its economy during the relative peace of the 1990s. However, the events of 9/11 changed everything. Almost 3,000 Americans were killed, not soldiers defending Europe, but mostly civilians working in New York City, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Decades of global war would result, but nuclear weapons would not be needed to fight this adversary. However, tensions with nuclear-armed nations would escalate decades after the Cold War. North Korea, Iran, China, and Russia all emerged with ambitions to challenge America's role as global hegemon. North Korea developed nuclear weapons despite the best efforts of the global community, while Iran advances a similar agenda with negotiations ongoing to this day. China is also increasing its small nuclear arsenal and has plans to add a nuclear-capable stealth bomber to its arsenal. Russia recently suspended the last remaining bilateral nuclear arms treaty with America, signaling a possible future devoid of arms regulation for the first time in decades. As a result of these issues, America does not publicize its nuclear weapons doctrine. This leaves uncertainty in the minds of adversaries, while not committing American nuclear weapons to wartime use. It allows for flexibility, ensuring that an event such as nuclear terrorism would not be treated the same as a nuclear strike from Russia. While this doctrine has successfully navigated the end of the Cold War

through the Global War on Terror, it may need to be updated if nuclear arms are not regulated, China emerges as a stronger nuclear weapons state, or if North Korea achieves its goal of launching a nuclear-armed MIRV.

The future is often unpredictable. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 was not accurately predicted more than a few weeks in advance. The international community has failed to stop North Korea from continuing to develop its nuclear arms program. Although Iran has not fully developed a nuclear weapon, it may not be that far from completion. America must regularly modernize its nuclear warheads, delivery systems, and policy to accommodate these rapidly changing times as it has since 1945. Nuclear weapons have not been used in war since the end of World War II, but their daily use as a deterrent has prevented large-scale war throughout the world. The evolution of American nuclear weapons policy has much to do with this successful non-use.

Food Security as an Aspect of Terrorism

Sarah Wells, 2022

Food security plays a major role in much of the world today as climate change, conflict, poor governance, and socioeconomic issues continue to make it harder for all people to have access to food. Terrorist organizations are one group that have been able to take advantage of food insecurity to gain and maintain support in many regions around the world. While food insecurity is not typically the sole driver of terrorist activities, it can work in conjunction with bad governance and political and economic repression to motivate groups.

At the World Food Summit in 1996, food security was defined as existing "when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life." There are two important pillars that help to clarify the definition within the context of terrorism: availability and access. Availability refers to the supply aspects of food and whether a country has enough resources to meet the demands of its population. Access is related to the government's ability to actually distribute food resources to all of its population and includes both the physical and economic means that citizens have to acquire food. When access is restricted, it is often due to low incomes, market fluctuations, and global food prices.

Terrorism is "the deliberate use or threat of force against non-combatants by a non-state actor in pursuit of a political goal." There are two key elements to the drivers of terrorism: grievances and relative deprivation. Grievances refer to "a feeling or belief that one has been wronged, oppressed, or is the victim of an injustice." Relative deprivation is a phenomenon that exists when "people feel that their expectations for material well-being are not being met" and can result in an increased proneness to radicalization or political violence. Groups that are often the most likely to resort to terrorism are those that face minority economic discrimination based on ethnic or religious classification in the workforce, health and social services, housing, and other economic opportunities; these groups tend to have more grievances and can be more susceptible to radicalization.

A government's inability to respond to food insecurity as well as other security threats, such as militia groups, makes it easier for terrorist groups to garner support, especially among groups facing the discriminatory conditions outlined above. Terrorism is most likely to occur in states classified as medium- or low-development/income countries and in states that have medium levels of repression by the government. While terrorism is often a multi-faceted issue with multiple drivers, the ability to manage one pathway for radicalization – food insecurity – could make a

difference in hindering recruitment efforts. If a state is unable to ensure that the two pillars of food security, availability and access, are able to be met, then that provides an avenue by which terrorist organizations can operate. Many groups today are able to take advantage of these gaps and can run parallel to states by providing food and other needed resources. If a group has no viable political outlet where they can legitimately express their grievances, then the likelihood that they will turn to violence increases. The risk can be amplified when the organization is running social services or food to these communities in order to increase support and to further radicalize those members against the state and broader population.

Though food insecurity is neither a necessary nor sufficient cause of terrorism, it can combine with government incompetency, political repression, and human rights violations to increase the likelihood of terrorism. In addressing these issues, it is important that developed states include food security into their counterterrorism strategies and that they shape counterterrorism strategies to specific groups/regions. To address terrorism, the drivers must be understood from the bottom-up in order to disrupt the radicalization and recruitment process. Lowering the risk and likelihood of terrorism will be a long-term project that will involve solving large, systemic issues in many countries that also have to contend with the changing status of climate change and the impacts of globalization.

Preparing for the Next Pandemic Requires Addressing Global Health Security's China Threat

Danyale C. Kellogg, 2022

As Shanghai nears a month of lockdown, residents of Beijing are rushing to stockpile food and supplies following reports of new cases in the city and the Monday night announcement that 11 of the city's 16 districts will be subject to mandatory testing. As the Chinese Community Party (CCP) clings to its "Zero-COVID" policies, the realities of China's lackluster inactivated vaccines combine with the threat of further supply chain issues as the Yangtze River Delta region shuts down to make it clear once again—China poses a major threat to global and US national health security that is unlikely to be effectively addressed through international organizations and laws.

A History of Cover-Ups

At least twice before the COVID-19 pandemic, the People's Republic of China (PRC) concealed major outbreaks, including the HIV/AIDS blood scandal in Henan in the 1990s and SARS in the early 2000s. In the case of the latter, at least 8,098 contracted the novel disease globally, with 774 confirmed deaths. Chinese health officials were aware of the unusual outbreak as early as mid-November of 2002, but a media blackout on the topic was implemented and the PRC shared little information with the World Health Organization (WHO) until April of 2003, at which point it was already spreading internationally.

The world has now grappled with COVID-19 for nearly two and a half years now, enduring economic devastation and racking up a death count estimated as high as 15 million. Though this disease first attracted attention in Wuhan in late 2019, its precise origin has not been definitively determined, despite the global hardship it has caused. In fact, the 2022 Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community reaffirmed that the IC still cannot reach a consensus on the origin of SARS-CoV-2 (the causative agent of COVID-19), something that becomes even more unlikely as time drags on. These failures to report outbreaks and share critical information with the international community cost lives by delaying response efforts and wasting precious time.

Combatting Future Chinese Health Threats

China's repeated failures to notify the WHO promptly of the initial outbreaks of SARS and COVID-19 violate the International Health Regulations (IHR), a legally binding instrument of international law designed "to prevent, protect against, control and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease in ways that are commensurate with and restricted to public health risks, and which avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade."

Despite this, it is unlikely the PRC will be more forthcoming in notifying the international community the next time something like this happens, likely opting instead to once again conceal the outbreak in a bid to quash it before it has the opportunity to harm the Party's image. The IHR lack an enforcement mechanism and, given global dependence on China, it is unlikely the international community will turn to other means of enforcement, such as sanctions, at a level sufficient to compel better cooperation with the IHR in the near future.

Two of the three pandemics of this century so far have been caused by novel diseases that emerged in China. Southern China has also been identified as a hotbed for emerging infectious diseases, so there is a good chance something similar will happen in the coming decades. Because of the health security threat posed by an uncompromising and non-cooperative China, the US should take actions to improve its own health security preparedness. The US has a number of gaps in its preparedness, some of the most important of which are susceptibility to health mis- and disinformation, a patchwork public health funding system, and challenges in healthcare access and equity and chronic disease management. Addressing challenges like these will improve public health and health outcomes generally while also preparing for the realities of poor international enforcement of global health laws and a rival great power that does not abide by these rules.

The ramifications of dealing with a great power that views global health as another convenient avenue for competition will likely be severe. This can already be seen in China's attempts to spread the lie that the US Army introduced SARS-CoV-2 to Wuhan during the 2019 Military World Games and the country's efforts to leverage pandemic response to expand its influence in Southeast Asia. These efforts detract from the severity of this pandemic, making it instead international political fodder. The fundamental problem with this is that global health security is not a zero-sum political game, but a threat area where everyone can lose badly, an especially pressing fact as climate change and human population growth further drive infectious disease threats. As it is unlikely that the PRC will change its behavior, the US should take major actions in the coming inter-pandemic period to improve its preparedness in time for the next major global health crisis.

Why Denuclearization is So Difficult

Christopher Gettel , 2023

Some of the most pressing concerns for American foreign policy relate to hostile nations developing nuclear weapons and subsequent efforts to eliminate these weapons. North Korea and Iran are determined to acquire nuclear warheads and delivery platforms to increase their domestic support, improve their bargaining positions as it pertains to international relations, and supplement their outmatched conventional forces. America, and other like-minded nations and organizations, seek to denuclearize these nations, as the more nuclear warheads there are in the world the higher their chance of use is. However, there are some problems with denuclearization.

America, other friendly nations, and international organizations like the United Nations all oppose the acquisition of nuclear weapons and their delivery platforms by irresponsible nations. But eliminating nuclear weapons is inherently difficult to accomplish. Not much may be known about the capabilities of emerging nuclear powers. If these powers lie about their complete denuclearization, it may be impossible to verify the absence of nuclear arms. Hidden warheads and missiles may be tucked away in remote locations unknown to those seeking to recover them and render them inert. Since it may be impossible with the complete absence of nuclear weapons, doubt will be created in the minds of the nations or non-state actors who want to denuclearize a nation, lessening the chances of efforts to go forth with denuclearization in the first place.

In addition to verification issues, the technology behind nuclear weapons engineering and delivery platforms is even more difficult to undo. Blueprints can make nuclearization possible in the future. In the modern age of mass information, the means to design simple nuclear weapons can be found on the internet. Even if a nation is sincere about denuclearization and conforms completely and transparently, succeeding leaders could decide to go forth with a nuclear program once again. Crude nuclear weapons are not difficult to construct if a nation has the components. Little Boy, the nuclear weapon dropped on Hiroshima, was not even tested. Its engineers at Los Alamos were so confident that it would work that they quickly moved on to its improvement, Fat Man, which was the first nuclear weapon ever tested. A similar weapon would be dropped on Nagasaki, ending World War II. Diagrams and designs for a gun-type nuclear weapon are available on the internet, and if a nation has the required components, a small nuclear weapon can be put together using tools found in every nation on Earth, regardless of past denuclearization deals or treaties.

Nine nations currently have nuclear weapons. Only one has ever given up their nuclear arsenal; South Africa. North Korea and Iran are both increasing their nuclear weapons and delivery platform capabilities, despite the will of many powerful and influential nations. Verification and

the impossibility of uninventing widely known technology are the two main obstacles to complete and permanent denuclearization. These challenges can only be overcome by trust and inspections, two practices that elude those who seek to denuclearize North Korea and Iran today. If denuclearization is to work, then those in power must be willing to completely, verifiably, and permanently ensure that their nuclear weapons programs and delivery platforms are inert with no future plans of nuclearization.

Perilous to Ignore: The Impacts of Climate Change on Australia's Security

Steven Wachter, 2024

In addition to its dramatic impacts on the natural environment, climate change is also increasingly intersecting with national security. As a consequence, failing to adequately address the risks generated by this intersection will increasingly threaten to undermine a country's national security regardless of its standing in more narrow traditional conceptions of security. Australia is an illustrative example of how the effects of climate change can generate serious national security risks. However, it is also an example of how a government can respond to this challenge by raising awareness of these dangers and introducing policy adaptations and resilience measures to address them. Addressing these climate-driven risks is becoming an integral part of effective national security policy and is set to remain one for the foreseeable future due to the long-term and multifaceted nature of the climate change challenge.

A 2022 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report found that climate change was causing Australia to experience warmer temperatures, more heatwaves, sea level rise, changes in precipitation, more extreme fire weather days, and higher frequency extreme events such as fires, cyclones, and floods. These are already having serious consequences for Australia's environment, ecosystems, population, economy, and infrastructure and the IPCC expects them to worsen in the coming years. While these are multifaceted challenges, a critical risk is that they could strain Australia's ability to respond to them effectively, especially if their shocks compound and cascade in ways that amplify their negative effects. Another serious risk is disruptions to Australia's critical infrastructure endangering Australia's population, economy, and the Australian Defense Force (ADF), which are all heavily reliant on it.

Looking at Australia's broader region, a source of serious climate security risk is regional instability resulting from conflict driven or exacerbated by climate change. The most likely risk is that climate change endangers human security in neighboring states. This can result from a vicious cycle of low climate resiliency leading to political unrest after a disaster and further eroding states' legitimacy and ability to respond to climate change. The recent Defence Strategic Review identifies climate change as a potential driver of regional risks that may lead to "...increased demands for peacekeeping and peace enforcement, and intrastate and interstate conflict." This is concerning as many states in Australia's region exhibit multiple risk factors for climate-related conflict, including India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Pacific Island States. Climate change may also increase the danger of conflict between states as it generates regional shocks or crises that interact with the ongoing strategic competition in the region between China and Australia's ally the United States. Finally, there is also the risk of conflict emerging from competition over diminishing climate-impacted resources, such as fisheries.
The most serious overall national security risk Australia faces from climate change is the Australian government and ADF capabilities being overstretched if they are forced to respond to multiple, simultaneous crises. Australia's 2023 Defence Strategic Review found that responding to domestic

climate disasters detracts from the ADF's primary defense mission, causes concurrency risks, and decreases ADF readiness. Resolving this dilemma will be a key part of Australia adequately confronting its climate security risks and one of the challenges that the current government under Prime Minister Anthony Albanese is addressing.

Upon entering office in May 2022, the new Labor Party government inherited a significant policy gap on climate change and its national security implications. While the Albanese government's major security policy documents are still in development, both the strategic review it commissioned to inform its future national defense strategy and the array of policies it has adopted so far indicate that it is serious about addressing the challenge. Together these are a promising start to raising Australia's awareness of climate change's national security implications and enhancing climate adaptation and resilience.

Raising awareness is a key part of mitigating climate risks and sustaining adaption and resilience-building efforts over the longer term. Including a climate change chapter in the strategic review and the government's commitment to incorporate climate security issues in the upcoming national defense strategy should help ensure its consideration in long-term strategic planning alongside more traditional defense concerns. A related initiative is the classified Office of National Intelligence report that the Albanese government ordered to examine regional climate security risks. Alongside similar assessments, it should raise awareness of the challenge and inform Australian national security policy.

Several initiatives aimed at bolstering climate adaptation and resilience also demonstrate the array of policies needed to contribute to an effective response. In its first year in office, the Albanese government established the National Emergency Management Agency to lead disaster response and recovery so that the ADF can focus on its primary defense mission. The government also established the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment, and Water to oversee Australia's climate change efforts, and the government's inaugural budget included $29 billion of climate and energy spending. This was followed in 2023 by further resilience bolstering initiatives, that include establishing the Disaster Ready Fund, developing Australia's National Adaptation Plan, and making climate adaptation and mitigation efforts a central part of Australia's development aid. A further initiative, to be completed later this year, is Australia's first National Climate Risk Assessment. This should help Australians understand the danger posed by climate change and inform further government initiatives. While these initiatives are a promising start, the real test will be if Australia sustains and builds on these efforts over time to ensure that they keep pace with climate change.

A final example demonstrating how climate change and security concerns can be addressed through creative policy is the Australia-Tuvalu Falepili Union Treaty. The November 2023 treaty combines climate and security through its provisions to provide Tuvaluan citizens special pathways to live in Australia, expanded Australian commitments to support Tuvalu's adaption efforts, and an obligation to come to Tuvalu's aid in the case of military aggression, natural disasters, or public health emergency. The treaty also includes the unique ability for Australia to vet potential political and security agreements Tuvalu considers establishing with other states. The agreement is an innovative combination of climate and security that increases Australia's influence and ability to shape the Indo-Pacific region. Australia's domestic and international policy actions demonstrate that it is starting to fully recognize and address climate change's impacts on its national security. Moving forward, the Albanese government—and all future governments—will need to maintain their awareness of how climate change interacts with national security and ensure that policy adaptations and resilience measures are implemented effectively. Failing to implement, sustain, and update these policies over time will lead to increased national security risks. Other countries, the United States included, should take heed, as Australia is not unique in facing these dangers: over the coming years and decades, every country will be forced to respond to their own combination of climate risks or face mounting consequences for their national security.

A New Opportunity: The Urgent Need for Trilateral Nuclear Arms Control

Jared Sofia, 2024

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, the Cold War officially came to an end and inspired the promise of a fresh start to geopolitics as the United States emerged victorious as

the dominant world superpower. Yet, only three decades later, the world is once again moving closer to another nuclear arms race. Russia, the Soviet Union's heir apparent, and a resurgent China have been modernizing and expanding their nuclear arsenals. The United States, facing a choice to either uphold the norms of the last 30 years and get left behind or modernize its nuclear arsenal to strategically compete with its adversaries, has chosen the latter and invested $634 billion over the next decade to revamp everything from new nuclear submarines to the warheads themselves. With multiple conflicts occurring around the world such as Israel's war with Hamas in Gaza and Russia's war in Ukraine, full-throated participation in a three-way nuclear arms race only heightens the volatility and dangers of world affairs, especially after Putin threatened to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine. Despite all of this, the United States can still find areas of mutual cooperation with Russia and China in order to negotiate an arms control agreement that can not only alleviate boiling international tensions but significantly mitigate a trilateral nuclear arms competition from spiraling out of control.

China's willingness to participate in a nuclear arms control treaty with the United States may hold the key to securing an agreement that both secures Russia's commitment to actively engage in trilateral discussions and follow through in its implementation. After China's President Xi Jinping and U.S. President Joseph Biden met in November 2023, the latest signs of a softening relationship between the two countries have provided a unique opportunity to seek nuclear arms control, particularly as there have been signs of mutual cooperation in other areas such as climate change and military-to-military communication. China had previously shown no willingness to engage in bilateral nuclear arms control talks with the United States, however, the improvement in relations between the two countries, along with the "no limits friendship" between President Xi and Russia's President Vladimir Putin now offers a unique opportunity to mobilize discussions.

While stabilized relationships are a necessary factor to jumpstart serious dialogue on trilateral nuclear arms control, a sign of good-faith and seriousness by all actors will also likely be required. President Xi and President Putin's relationship is largely a product of their similar grievances and mistrust towards the United States so it would mostly fall to the United States to take the initiative in signaling to China its sincerity in recognizing them as a co-equal partner and their willingness to engage on this issue. A major and noteworthy step the United States could take to effectively accomplish this would be to abandon its current nuclear weapons doctrine and squarely commit itself to a No First Use policy. During the 2020 campaign, President Biden committed to reconsidering the adoption of a No First Use policy, but he quickly reversed course and continued with the established reliance on First Strike policy after assuming the presidency. If President Biden were to announce an actual shift in policy, particularly as a measure of good faith towards China, it could significantly help to fully engage China in nuclear arms control discussions. China's commitment to No First Use has been In effect for decades and has also been one of the major

points of contention in previous arms control talks with the United States. In adopting a No First Use policy, the United States would strategically recognize China's outlook on nuclear weapons and signal its seriousness in committing to discussions as partners.

If a successful and productive meeting between the U.S. and China on a nuclear arms control agreement could occur, it is possible that Russia could then be similarly engaged. While there are clearly limits to the "no limit" friendship between Putin and Xi, the use of their relationship may provide the vehicle to start the necessary conversations. An attempt by the United States or President Biden to engage Putin on arms control would likely not amount to any real consideration, especially as the war in Ukraine rages on, however, Putin may consider listening to Xi. President Xi can underscore the necessity of their participation or convey the consequences of Russia's refusal – they can either work together or Russia can degrade its status as a serious nuclear world power and be left behind.

While so much can happen to undermine this opportunity, there is a very clear and present need for additional nuclear arms control between the United States, Russia, and China that can hopefully be accomplished if this moment is properly seized.

Transnational Criminal Activity in the Tri-Border Region: How Hezbollah Finances through Legitimate and Illegitimate Businesses

Meredith Hutchens, 2024

Hezbollah, a powerful political and military organization based in Lebanon, operates a global network funded primarily by Iran, as well as lucrative revenue streams from South America and the Lebanese diaspora. Heavily armed and financed, Hezbollah's mission centers on rejecting foreign interference in Lebanon and countering Western influence in the Islamic world, particularly opposing Israel's existence. Their actions impact political stability, energy markets, and humanitarian aid across the Middle East, especially in Israel, Syria, and Yemen. Given Hezbollah's

potential to disrupt the region, it is in the U.S. and Israel's interest to curb its funding, particularly by targeting its cocaine trafficking network in South America.

The Tri-Border Area (TBA), where Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay converge, is a hotspot for transnational crime. The porous borders and weak law enforcement of the TBA encourage illicit activity, such as drug trafficking, movement of counterfeit goods, and money laundering. Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay face weak institutional structures, high levels of corruption, and are cash-based economies which makes financial transactions difficult to monitor. As such, transnational criminal organizations and foreign terrorist groups have established themselves in the region as a means to finance themselves through various illicit activities.

Domestic organizations in the region, such as the Barakat Clan based in Ciudad del Este, Paraguay, operate through a combination of legal and illicit businesses. In order to circumvent the law enforcement agencies and partners in the region, these groups have invested heavily in legal businesses in which to operate and engage in trade-based money laundering, which includes over-and-under invoicing and falsifying trade documents. Examples include real estate and construction companies, duty-free shops, and retail stores. In an effort to reach the European markets, the Barakat Clan has partnered with terrorist organizations, such as Hezbollah, to facilitate the trade.

Hezbollah, a Lebanese Shiite political and terrorist organization, has deep ties to the region dating back to the 1990s. Argentina and Brazil host the largest portion of the Shiite Lebanese diaspora population, on which Hezbollah relies heavily. While Hezbollah does not directly engage in terrorist activity in the TBA, they use the region to finance their organization and terrorist plots in the Middle East. Hezbollah expert Emanuele Ottolenghi speculates that while it is largely believed that Hezbollah receives 30% of its operating budget from illicit activities, Ottolenghi argues that it is highly probable that this figure is an underrepresentation. In the past few years, Hezbollah has pushed into narcotics trafficking and smuggling, which provide a significant portion of its financial support for both its political and military activities. Hezbollah has a significant share in cocaine trafficking and distribution to Europe. It is likely that cocaine trafficking alone generates between $300-400 million annually. Furthermore, the Shiite Lebanese population serves to support the hawala network, which is an informal money transfer system that allows money to move between countries without leaving a paper trail. In general, Hezbollah partners with groups in South America who run legitimate retail and trade businesses to operate through and profit off of.

As the war between Hezbollah and Israel increases in severity, it is highly probable that Hezbollah will seek to increase funding to assist in humanitarian assistance for displaced Shiite Lebanese, restock weapons, and prepare for an extensive Israeli ground invasion. To finance these objectives,

they may begin taking measures to ramp up illicit activity in the TBA region. This is of significant strategic concern for the US, as Hezbollah is an internationally recognized terrorist group operating in the Americas. Secondly, Hezbollah generates significant revenue from drug trafficking, but also from arms shipment and smuggling. There are activities the US is firmly against.

While disrupting Hezbollah's financial presence in South America may not have immediate benefits in the short term, taking steady action against Hezbollah will pay off over the long term. It has been shown that force and assassination have historically not stopped Hezbollah from their political and military objectives. In 1992 after the death of Nasrallah's predecessor Abbas al-Musawi, the Islamic Jihad Organization bombed the Israeli Embassy in Argentina.

The group has been linked to Hezbollah and Argentina. Since these targeted killings have not historically stopped the organization, the U.S. should prepare for long-term engagement in the economic and financial markets to deny Hezbollah the opportunity to use the South American region as a hotspot for financial crime.

The United States should seek to leverage partnerships with Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay's law enforcement and intelligence agencies in the TBA region to gain insights into how Hezbollah may pivot or increase illicit activity within the region. This could include leveraging both Middle Eastern and South American experts to identify key individuals, organizations, and financial patterns that allow Hezbollah to operate in the region. The U.S. may be positioned to bring together multiple regional experts to identify and disrupt these financial crimes and illicit activities either at their origin, in the TBA, or at their destination, the Middle East, Africa, or Europe. Secondly, by working with regional partners the U.S. is able to draw upon tacit knowledge that otherwise would be difficult, expensive, or timely to obtain. This could include working with financial crime experts in the TBA who have familiarity with the partner organizations, such as the Barakat Clan.

The TBA provides protection for transnational criminal organizations and foreign terrorist organizations to engage in significant illicit activity with little oversight and surveillance. The porous borders allow for easy movement of goods, money, and individuals. By working to identify these the businesses and partnerships Hezbollah has cultivated in the Tri-Border Area, the United States is positioned to work with Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay to cut off Hezbollah from one of its most lucrative means of financing itself. This in turn could help further U.S. interests in the Middle East by restricting Hezbollah's means of arming itself.

The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Facilitating Access to Biological Threats

Meredith Hutchens, 2025

Artificial intelligence (AI) has permeated the international system in a way that encourages research, collaboration, and learning across all levels of inquiry. The use of AI, built upon the power of Large Language Models, has the capability of lowering the knowledge threshold necessary for scientific discovery and research in biological areas of study. However, this dual-use technology can do as much harm as good in the hands of hostile actors. Soon, technological advances in AI will have the capability of accelerating the conceptualization, planning, and implementation of biological threats by lowering the knowledge threshold for the development and production of biological weapons by malign actors, requiring more robust regulation and oversight to mitigate the rising threat.

Today, the Global Terrorism Database records that over the past 50 years, only 36 attacks (out of 209,706) employed a biological weapon. Despite significant technological advances, biological weapons are difficult to produce due to the various complex steps of virus procurement, mass

production of the agents without loss of pathogenicity, and efficient delivery. Yet there is growing concern that the power of AI can bypass these difficulties. LLMs have proven useful in providing assistance and troubleshooting various stages in production for traditional agents, such as anthrax, botulinum, and the plague. While current LLMs are unlikely to be of much use to subject-matter experts now, advances in these technologies could prove critical to individuals and organizations with enough resources to develop and produce biological weapons. Once deliverable, these weapons can injure and cause a significant number of casualties making them appealing to terrorist organizations and non-state actors.

At present, subject matter expertise is needed across all stages of designing, developing, and producing a biological weapon. However, reports from the RAND Cooperation and the Center for a New American Security identify that LLMs can compensate for these educational and knowledge barriers by troubleshooting where previous testing has gone awry and quickening the design-build-test feedback loop. While AI cannot solve all the problems of building a biological weapon, such as procuring the agent and physically building the delivery system, it is assisting in ways that have historically been a challenging part of the cycle. As LLMs continue to develop, AI will only prove to be more competent in troubleshooting problems and improving the feedback loop.

While it may not be easily feasible for rogue actors to develop biological weapons, should they succeed in producing a viable weapon, the impact on society would be enormous. This is otherwise known as a black swan event. This is in part because there is no way to detect biological weapons before the attack leading first responders, law enforcement, and intelligence agencies to be reactive as opposed to proactive. While COVID-19 was not a biological weapon, the pandemic highlighted how devastating a global biological event can have on the economics and security of a country. The weaponization of viruses and illnesses dates back to the Middle Ages; in the modern era, the United States must build resilience towards biological weapons, whether they be weaponized pandemics or biological attacks.

As President Trump establishes priorities for his administration and begins to strengthen connections with America's tech elite, it is important to consider the dangerous implications that AI can have for biological weapons. While current LLMs do not lend themselves as viable tools for streamlining the development and production of biological weapons, models are increasing in capability and scope every year. As biological weapons are not something militaries can counter with other conventional weapons, this requires nonconventional ways of mitigating the threat. This could include a whole-of-society approach, which focuses on community-led early warning systems, local adaptations, resiliency. At the federal level, this could also include stronger regulations on the sale and transfer of biological agents and toxins. Furthermore, oversight of

academic scientific laboratories and cloud labs should be closely monitored for suspicious activity. By regulating biological agents and toxins, coupled with denying malign actors safe labs to experiment in, the United States would be better positioned to be proactive against the threat of biological weapons.

Advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) have the potential to be a key tool for malign actors to seriously pursue the development and production of biological weapons. Careful regulation and oversight of this technology and biological agents and equipment are necessary to deny malign actors the capability of creating biological black swan events leading to mass injuries and casualties. Underscoring these fears is that the detection of biological weapons is near impossible until after the attack has commenced, leading responders to be reactive, not proactive. As AI continues to develop and new models are implemented across various platforms, policymakers need to be mindful of these implications and identify ways to be proactive where possible.

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The Center for Security Policy Studies (CSPS) is housed within the Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University. CSPS supports rigorous, student-led research and discussion on global security challenges, fostering a dynamic community of scholars and practitioners committed to advancing strategic thinking in international affairs.

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