THE FUTURE OF CONSERVATIVE INTERNATIONALISM

A Collection of Essays from the Reagan Institute Strategy Group

Convened in Beaver Creek, Colorado, in July 2019

Edited by Rachel Hoff

Table of Contents

Introduction.....**3**

• Rachel Hoff

Defining the Debate: Is Conservative Internationalism Dead?.....**4**

• Gabriel Scheinmann
• Matthew Continetti

Democracy and Authoritarianism: Should Values Still Matter in Conservative Foreign Policy?.....**13**

• Daniel Twining
• Jakub Grygiel
• Colin Dueck

A Post-American Middle East? U.S. Policy After 17 Years of the Long War.....**28**

• Mike Singh
• Vance Serchuk
• Michael B. Greenwald

Is the GOP Still the Party of Free Trade?.....**45**

• Phil Levy
• Jonathan Burks

The Return of Strategic Competition: How to Develop an Enduring Strategy.....**55**

• Elbridge Colby
• Dan Blumenthal
• Kurt Volker

Future of Conservative Foreign Policy: Political Realities & Electoral Viability.**67**

• Paul Lettow
• Kori Schake
• James Jay Carafano

Defense Strategy and Priorities: Topline or Transformation?.....**83**

• Mackenzie Eaglen
• Roger Zakheim

How the Post-9/11 Generation Views American Power.....**93**

• Kristen Soltis Anderson

Introduction

Rachel Hoff

The Reagan Institute Strategy Group (RISG) is founded on the notion that America's role in the world is indispensable to preserving the free, open, and peaceful political and economic system that provides the foundation for how countries interact. While in recent years there has been much discussion of the decline of the American-led, rules-based international order, it is worth stepping back to assess what is really at stake. In the context of rising threats from authoritarian regimes, the question of America's global leadership is crucial to the survival of the free world itself.

While President Reagan led our country through a different geostrategic environment, the Reagan Institute is dedicated to using the timeless principles and vision he championed as a lens through which to view the current set of challenges and opportunities before us. That is why in July of 2019, the Institute gathered a group of leaders from the foreign policy and national security arenas to discuss the way forward for those who believe President Reagan's example offers a roadmap for navigating today's world. The essays collected here reflect the discussions that took place at the first annual RISG summer retreat in Beaver Creek, Colorado.

The Reagan Institute Strategy Group is committed to a core set of beliefs: that American leadership, including military strength and economic engagement, is the best guarantor of peace, security, and prosperity; that America's national success is inextricably linked to the that of the free world; and that American values are universal, as freedom and human dignity are the birthright of all peoples regardless of their country of birth.

The goal of RISG is to chart a course for reviving a Reaganesque approach to foreign policy and national security. Any set of policy ideas is only valuable insofar as it is politically viable. And with American leadership under assault from both ends of the political spectrum, we need fresh thinking to sustain its relevance. Our hope is that the following essays will serve as the start of a conversation about the principles and policies that will promote a world where freedom and opportunity will flourish—but also that are responsive to the shifting political environment.

Fundamentally, the Reagan Institute Strategy Group is not a nostalgia exercise yearning for a bygone era that will not return. Rather, it is a forward-looking endeavor that focuses on the new ideas, priorities, and frameworks needed for meeting the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century based on the timeless vision and values of our 40th President.

Conservative Internationalism Is Dead;
Long Live Conservative Internationalism
Gabriel Scheinmann

American misadventures in Iraq and Afghanistan and the somewhat heretical approaches of the Trump administration are belatedly spurring conservative foreign policy elites to reevaluate the rightness—and righteousness—of their convictions. The ensuing frenzy has failed to escape the Trumpian centripetal force, but has, nevertheless, shrouded, buried, and eulogized conservative internationalism, the dominant conservative foreign policy outlook of the last generation. While conservative internationalism ought to be reassessed, reports of its death are greatly exaggerated. First, it remains the most natural manifestation of American conservatism. Second, despite its significant post-Cold War era achievements, it has suffered mightily due to the failures of both the Bush and Trump administrations. Third and finally, winning the competition with China will—to paraphrase both Ronald Reagan and Donald Trump—make conservative internationalism great again.

What Is Conservative Internationalism?

Conservative internationalism is an ideological outlook that favors the advancement of human dignity and freedom against totalitarian forces through the preservation and projection of strength. It seeks to promote a world that favors individual liberty, republican government, and popular sovereignty and believes doing so would best advance the security, prosperity, and liberty of the American republic. It is the natural manifestation of four core conservative values:

- *Absolute truth:* To believe in absolute truth is to believe

in the existence of both absolute good and absolute evil, an inherently conservative proposition. Reagan's clear-cut and straightforward view of the inherently evil nature of communism and the Soviet Union and the necessity of their defeat marked a sharp break from his Republican predecessors' desire for containment and détente. If one favors containment of evil, one is more likely a conservative realist or a liberal internationalist—although the shared view would be held for different reasons. If one favors the defeat of evil, one is more likely a conservative internationalist.

- *Prudence:* Conservatism means prudence, and prudence means selective use and measured judgment. The prudence of all major military commitments ought to be debated. However, even in the Unipolar Era, American military intervention has been fairly restrained by any historically hegemonic standard. Favoring the advancement of human dignity and freedom through strength is not synonymous with support for political revolution everywhere and at all times, as much as its critics like to portray it as such.

- *Respect and appreciation of the past:* Conservatism believes in the importance of inheritance. It is heartened by America's decisive victories over fascism and communism as well as chastened by its middling record against Islamism.

- *Man's natural desire for individual freedom and his inalienable right to it, but also his fallibility:* Just as conservatism acknowledges the imperfection of man in conjunction with his natural thirst for freedom, conservative internationalism accepts that the state of nature is the jungle, wherein the competition for power, prestige, and freedom rages.

Some have falsely cast realism as an alternative to or even antithesis of conservative internationalism. Such people misuse the term—sometimes purposefully—either to dismiss the roles of identity and ideology or to justify isolationism. Realism merely means accepting the situation as it is, rather than as we wish it were, which functionally means understanding that power is the defining feature and currency of our world. It is descriptive, not proscriptive. The Trump administration's National Security Strategy (NSS) appropriately employs the term "principled realism," but it is difficult to distinguish it from that of conservative internationalism. Today's self-styled realists would likely condemn Republican presidents historically considered realists as globalist imperialists (for example, Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon, and George H. W. Bush). Conservative internationalism is a realist outlook principally

because it understands that American power is the necessary, but not sufficient condition to realize American aims.

Alive, Yet Bruised

Frustrations with the seemingly high costs and few achievements of American misadventures in the Middle East have naturally driven questions about a foreign policy realignment. After multiple apogees following the fall of the Berlin Wall and destruction of the Twin Towers, support for conservative internationalism might be at its nadir. Yet, the "victories" embodied by conservative internationalism are clear and significant. In the last 30 years, the United States has both expanded and strengthened the frontiers of freedom across the entirety of the European continent and across the entire Asian littoral, at miniscule cost to blood and treasure. Today's difficulties with Russia and China are partly inevitable and partly the consequence of having neglected the "strength" part in "peace through strength" in the last generation. Examined on a generational timescale, the United States has executed a significant military drawdown from the Russian and Chinese frontiers, allowing these two powers to fill the void unchallenged.

In the Middle East, the failure of the George W. Bush administration to properly define the fight against Islamism did severe damage to conservative internationalism. Had it defined the nature and the threat of Islamism in the same clear way Reagan defined communism, the subsequent two decades may well have evolved differently. The Bush administration fought three separate wars: Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Global War on Terror. None of these wars involved ***both*** an ideological threat to the American way of life ***and*** sufficient power to effectively execute the war. Each war had one of these two elements but never quite both.

The Trumpian outlook is not the broadside against conservative internationalism it thinks it is. If it is simply that the nation-state is the sole arbiter of sovereignty and political authority, that the world is a competitive and dangerous place, and that the United States should look out for its own interests first, then this is nothing more than a new coat of paint on conservative internationalism. This would explain why the NSS's rebranding exercise—principled realism—has received wall-to-wall conservative internationalist support. Moreover, if, as the Trump administration routinely states, the only legitimate source of sovereignty is from the people, then it follows that our respect for sovereignty only applies to fellow democratic regimes, a strikingly Reaganite or Bush position. Even the rise of so-called "nationalism" amid the conservative movement is not actually a critique of conservative internationalism. Unlike the

fraught history of European nationalism, American nationalism is universal. It is particular because of the nature of our founding, but our founding also sermonized that these rights are God-given and inalienable. American nationalism is outward-looking, not inward-looking. Perhaps the Trump administration's approach might be better termed "principled nationalism."

More accurately, the Trumpian critique is a dead-on assault against liberal internationalism. It derides liberalism's view of global governance as the source of legitimacy and authority, it mocks liberalism's dismissal of the concept of a national interest and its aversion to the importance of strength, and it disdains liberalism's seemingly charity-work approach to foreign policy. It has inspired conservative foreign policy voices to "Trumpify" their rhetoric (see Messrs. Tom Cotton, Ted Cruz, Lindsey Graham, and Marco Rubio), but it does not fundamentally challenge the core truths of their approaches. Even Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's attempt at a doctrine speech at the Claremont Institute, where he rolled out (for the first and only time) the three-chord note of realism, restraint, and respect, was at best old wine in new bottles. The nomenclature was overtly Obama-esque, but covertly Reagan-esque. Realism, restraint, and respect were translated to mean that the United States should be powerful, prudent, and principled.

The sharpest broadside against conservative internationalism under a Republican banner can be found in a speech given by Congressman Matt Gaetz to Concerned Veterans for America, a group principally supported by the libertarian Koch brothers. The speech echoes many of progressivism's critiques of the George W. Bush administration and would be more at home under a President Bernie Sanders. Unsurprisingly, the Kochs have increasingly made common cause with progressive foreign policy goals that include a "restrained" America, with a small defense budget, and without a forward presence in the world. This outlook may rise in prominence, but it is more likely to remain on the fringes of conservative politics than at its center.

China Will Make Conservative Internationalism Great Again

So much of today's questioning of conservative internationalism rests on the lingering legacy of the Iraq War. It calls for a wholesale reevaluation of a generational outlook due to a single effort that was relatively cheap by historical standards—i.e., it is backward-looking, not forward-looking. This criticism assesses that conservative internationalism led to failure in Iraq, not whether it would lead to success against China. The threat posed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime will align conservative realists and

internationalists in much the way the Soviet threat did. While no one has yet defined what "winning the competition" means, most conservatives would broadly agree that we are competing over the borders of political freedom. The increasing audacity of the CCP's Orwellian surveillance apparatuses is triggering the same popular reaction among Americans that communism did. The United States is only at the beginning of a belated effort to counter Chinese subversion and coercion in the hopes of not having to counter Chinese invasion. This challenge will unite conservatives of all stripes behind what is essentially a conservative internationalist banner.

"...today's challenge is to get those who care about freedom to understand that it is dead in its tracks without American power."

Moreover, the behaviors of totalitarian regimes such as China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and ISIS are more likely to irritate and trigger the sensitivities of a younger generation than people realize. Today's young people are more aware of nefarious Chinese behavior in real time than their parents were of Soviet behavior or their grandparents were of Nazi behavior. Whereas Reagan was able to convince those who cared about American power to harness it for freedom, today's challenge is to get those who care about freedom to understand that it is dead in its tracks without American power.

Internationalism and the American Right

Matthew Continetti

What is "conservative internationalism"? According to Henry Nau, whose 2008 essay and 2015 book did so much to identify and publicize this tradition, conservative internationalism is a forgotten school of foreign policy that supports the expansion of freedom through the use of military force.

Unlike realists, conservative internationalists prioritize freedom over stability and the balance of power. Unlike liberal internationalists, they oppose international institutions and treaties that constrain popular sovereignty and self-government. They have some heavy hitters in their ranks. Nau says Thomas Jefferson, James Polk, Harry Truman, and Ronald Reagan were all conservative internationalists.

For Nau, conservative internationalism is a system of belief. He says conservative internationalists subscribe to core tenets. These include support for the growth of freedom, a concern with material threats to American security, an interest in the gradual and incremental expansion of democracy, a focus on states bordering democracies, belief in the utility and necessity of force, weighing force and diplomacy equally, skepticism toward international institutions, preference for free trade over foreign aid, the understanding that political liberty is the product of ideas and institutions rather than economic development, and a willingness to cut losses if public opinion turns against foreign interventions.

These are selective criteria. There is a reason so few presidents meet them. Oppose one and you become something other than a conservative internationalist. If you accept Nau's typology, conservative internationalism is dead. Its last champion was Reagan,

who left office 30 years ago. One day another president might come along who subscribes to the dogma. The current president does not, and neither do most Republican congressmen nor Republican voters.

Understood differently, however, conservative internationalism is alive and well. Let's say "conservative internationalism" is nothing more than the "ism" of American conservatives who are also internationalists. And let's conceptualize "internationalism" not as belief in abstract ideas but support for concrete practices—namely, the means the United States has used in the years following the Second World War to counter the Soviet Union and, in John F. Kennedy's phrase, "to assure the survival and the success of liberty."

These means include the forward presence of U.S. forces; alliances based on security guarantees with NATO, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines (as well as a commitment to aid in Taiwan's defense); protection of the global commons of air, sea, space, and cyber; free trade; membership and leadership in international institutions such as the UN, World Trade Organization, and International Monetary Fund; foreign aid; large conventional and nuclear forces; promotion of democracy and human rights; and a willingness to intervene overseas if circumstances warrant. Many conservatives, especially foreign policy elites, support most, if not all, of these policies. Conservative internationalism is contested and under strain, but it also has followers throughout the Republican Party.

This was not always the case. For much of its history, the American Right was both suspicious of the ends and hostile to the means of liberal internationalism. The right wing of the Republican Party in the 1920s and 1930s opposed immigration and permanent alliances and supported high tariffs. It saw no connection between the freedoms of peoples abroad and the freedom of the American people. The Right was particularly skeptical of intervention in and association with Europe and favored economic relationships with Pacific powers. The First World War was not looked upon as a success. It had led to the deaths of more than 100,000 Americans and the expansion of the federal government. A repetition under Franklin Delano Roosevelt would be a disaster. This was the Right of Charles Lindbergh, the America First Committee, the Hearst syndicate, and Robert Taft.

These attitudes began to change after the Second World War. Pearl Harbor delegitimized the arguments against U.S. intervention. The United States and the Soviet Union emerged from the conflict as the strongest military powers. Soviet forces occupied much of Central and Eastern Europe. The communist threat, both internal and external, became the dominant concern of the American Right. Right-wing former communists such as James Burnham, Frank

Meyer, and Whittaker Chambers framed the incipient Cold War as a struggle for the world. They were willing to back standing armies and security agencies to defeat the Soviet Union. Burnham and Chambers exercised tremendous influence over a young World War II veteran and Yale graduate named William F. Buckley Jr.

The Cold War conservatives supported most elements of the internationalist policy mix, while downplaying or even opposing other ones. They emphasized hard power, while rejecting the UN, democracy promotion, and human rights. And they went beyond containment to advocate for rollback and liberation of captive populations under Soviet dominion. With the death of Taft in 1953, leadership of the anticommunist Right passed to Joseph McCarthy, who supported NATO and forward presence of U.S. forces. After McCarthy's downfall, Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan took the reins.

The Right's turn toward internationalism accelerated after the 1972 election. The New Left's capture of the Democratic Party with the nomination of George McGovern alienated the liberal anticommunists who subscribed to the Truman-Kennedy-Lyndon Johnson-Hubert Humphrey tradition of internationalism. They placed a higher emphasis on human rights and were more supportive of Israel than conservatives at the time.

These liberals attempted to retake their party. Their leaders were senators Henry "Scoop" Jackson and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. They failed. Reagan's repudiation of the Richard Nixon-Gerald Ford realist policies of détente and the 1980 campaign coincided with the gradual integration of the Cold War liberals, also known as neoconservatives, into the Republican Party.

It wasn't a comfortable fit. Reagan's championing of democracy and human rights drew skepticism not only from some of the *National Review* internationalists but also from elements on the Right that hearkened back to its pre-World War II identity. These so-called paleoconservatives fashioned themselves in opposition to the neoconservatives, opposing not only democracy promotion and foreign intervention but also Reagan's positions on immigration, trade, and American exceptionalism itself. Paleoconservatism remained a vocal but minority tendency during the 1980s. The Reagan Revolution eclipsed it.

Victory in the Cold War reopened intra-Right debates that had been suppressed by the Soviet threat. The first test case was the 1991 Gulf War against Saddam Hussein. Opposition to the war crossed party and ideological lines. Patrick Buchanan led the paleoconservatives

against it. He lost. The success of the war reinvigorated the Right's view of America's power-projection capabilities. Buchanan twice lost the Republican nomination to internationalists of the Right, who both went on to lose to an internationalist of the center-Left.

By the end of the twentieth century, the Right was divided between internationalists, realists, and paleoconservative nationalists. The events of 9/11 provided a temporary substitute for the Soviet Union in the form of jihadism. But this consensus against terrorism did not last. It broke apart against the shoals of the 2003 Iraq War. The long and bloody occupation of Iraq led Republican voters, especially young ones, to question not only military intervention but also the very structures of the liberal international order.

The erosion of support for internationalism on the Right was apparent in Ron Paul's campaigns for the Republican nomination in 2008 and 2012. Barack Obama's policies in Libya and Syria were met with derision and criticism. The Right, like much of America, was turning inward.

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Despite all this, Republican presidential nominees since 1940 had supported the foundational policies of internationalism. That changed in 2016. The Republican nominee campaigned against foreign intervention, foreign aid, free trade, international institutions, and the alliance system. In his view, internationalism, whether liberal or conservative, had been a vehicle for weak allies to cheat the United States of its blood and treasure. His slogan was "America First." The Republican Party, it was feared, was reviving the legacy of Lindbergh. Except this time, Lindbergh became president.

The irony of the Trump presidency is that a chief executive opposed to internationalism oversees an administration that is nonetheless within the broad tradition of center-Right internationalism. Tweets and outbursts are not the entire story. Many of the instincts Trump displayed on the campaign trail have been sublimated or thwarted under the pressures of the office. The question for conservatives who are also internationalists, then, is what the next four years might bring for the beleaguered policies and institutions that for 75 years have supported a balance of power favoring freedom.

Democracy and Authoritarianism:
How Should Values Matter in Foreign Policy?
Daniel Twining

The old debates pitting interests against values in American foreign policy fall away in a new era when revisionist authoritarian powers are using sharp power instruments to subvert and weaken democracy in order to build out spheres of influence hostile to American interests. Authoritarians in Beijing and Moscow believe disrupting the democracies—through various combinations of disinformation, misinformation, united-front tactics, corruption, and subversion—is central to their goal of separating America from its allies and undermining the capacity of the United States to project power and influence globally. If our great power competitors understand the contest underway as an ideological one pitting free societies against authoritarian state capitalists, why would we in the United States shy away from describing the challenge in similar terms?

The United States defines our interests with respect to our values as a nation. We seek to promote democracy in the world because we understand that the health of our democracy is predicated on a global balance of power that favors freedom. We support free trade because we believe in the power of markets, not just for our people but in uplifting all people, creating a richer world that is in turn a better market for American businesses. Our most intimate military alliances are with fellow democracies in Europe and Japan, with our mutual security anchored in institutionalized ties between free peoples rather than personalistic ones with strongmen whose whims can change. We define our peer competitors with reference not to their material power—otherwise, Germany and Japan would have been adversaries not allies for the past 70 years, and India would be seen as a rising challenger—but with respect to the nondemocratic

values that make us suspicious of their power, as can been seen with China, Russia, and Iran today.

> ***"If our great power competitors understand the contest underway as an ideological one pitting free societies against authoritarian state capitalists, why would we in the United States shy away from describing the challenge in similar terms?"***

How should values matter in conservative foreign policy? One answer to the question is to unpack the primary security risks to the American people today. In no case can hard power alone manage the dangers they pose. The greatest dangers to America emanate from the ideologically driven strategies of Russia and China to weaken our democracy and those of allies and partners, from violent extremism that flourishes in ungoverned spaces and among populations that are politically alienated by poor governance, and from mass migrations that threaten to overwhelm our borders and that no wall can contain without addressing the root causes that push desperate people to flee their own nations.

Managing Great Power Competition

In his National Security Strategy, President Trump put the challenge we face from the so-called "return of geopolitics" starkly:

> China and Russia want to shape a world antithetical to U.S. values and interests. China seeks to displace the United States in the Indo-Pacific region, expand the reaches of its state-driven economic model, and reorder the region in its favor. Russia seeks to restore its great power status and establish spheres of influence near its borders.

The National Defense Strategy similarly warns that Russia and China both seek to export their authoritarian models in order to undermine U.S. leadership and the democratic world order the United States built with our allies after the Second World War.

As the National Endowment for Democracy's report on authoritarian "sharp power" explains:

> Over the past decade, China and Russia have spent billions of dollars to shape public opinion and perceptions around the world. This foreign authoritarian influence is not principally

about attraction or persuasion; instead, it centers on distraction and manipulation. These ambitious authoritarian regimes, which systematically suppress political pluralism and free expression at home, are increasingly seeking to apply similar principles internationally to secure their interests.

The Chinese government, led by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), utilizes sophisticated tactics to build and wield political influence around the world, with the aim of challenging, and ultimately supplanting, America's global dominance. China's vast economic resources and its efforts to tout rapid economic development under strongman rule as an alternative model to Western democracy allow it to have a deep and often hidden impact in any given country.

The CCP's authoritarian political model and the role of the state in steering Chinese economic engagement abroad for grand strategic purposes pose grave risks to smaller countries by pulling them into China's orbit in ways that undermine political pluralism. In addition to authoritarian sharp-power tactics, the Chinese government and government-linked companies use financial leverage and influence operations in other countries to silence critics of China's authoritarian model and influence domestic political decision making in China's favor.

Whether through sharp-power tactics or leveraging economic investments, the CCP seeks to build political influence in target countries through such efforts. These activities are often meant to influence local government decisions over time—contributing to societal divisions and political corruption, which in turn lead to state capture by China and an expansive illiberal sphere of influence hostile to the United States.

It is becoming clear that fragile democracies and authoritarian states are most susceptible to such influence. Weak governance structures are further undermined by the influence of large sums of Chinese investment that is linked back to the party-state in Beijing, feeding corruption and derailing non-Chinese leaders from representing the interests of their citizens.

Established and developed democracies may be able to more effectively address such foreign authoritarian influence, but even Australia's mature democracy was penetrated for years by agents of the CCP before the government in Canberra cracked down on these fifth columns. Chinese influence has also spread perniciously in Europe, undermining transatlantic solidarity on a unified Western response to the Chinese grand strategic challenge.

Yet the problem is worse in many developing countries, where CCP penetration succeeds in part because governments caught in Chinese debt traps have no choice but to work with the Chinese government and government-linked companies and organizations. In most cases, the West has not sought to actively compete with China nor provide alternatives for host governments.

It is well past time for the United States to confront this challenge. Helping countries build political resiliency to corruption and state capture by a hostile authoritarian power is an American national security interest. One important way of doing this is to invest in bolstering democratic institutions so that they can represent the interests of their people and resist this cryptocolonization.

Democracies also need protection from Kremlin-sponsored subversion. In Europe and beyond, the Putin regime is deploying a sophisticated information warfare campaign—including cybersecurity attacks on electoral systems and political parties and coordinated campaigns of disinformation—to undermine democratic institutions, exploit societal divisions, and erode citizens' confidence in democracy. Moscow's aim is to create an environment in which the postwar American-led democratic order is diminished and the Putin autocracy is free to continue stealing from its own people, deny the Russian people their basic rights, and extend Russia's sphere of influence into the heart of Europe—and in the process weaken NATO, America's most important security alliance.

What makes this form of political warfare particularly insidious is that it uses some of the core features of our democracy against us—exploiting free media to manipulate and spread false information and attempting to undermine confidence in our electoral systems. Our approach to this challenge must be to harness the strengths of democracy to expose these practices and create coordinated policies with our allies to push back against this campaign to subvert our open societies.

Countering Violent Extremism

Eighteen years after 9/11, we have grown accustomed to the ever-present threat of terrorism, and we are all too used to seeing lives destroyed and nations torn apart by this scourge. As the Trump administration's National Security Strategy points out, violent extremist organizations "thrive under conditions of state weakness and prey on the vulnerable as they accelerate the breakdown of rules to create havens from which to plan and launch attacks on the United States, our allies, and our partners."

In order to successfully combat extremism, we must look to the source of the problem. Sobering experience has taught us that a kinetic response, while necessary, is not sufficient to address violent extremism. We cannot simply fight our way out of this problem; we must also look to preventive measures grounded in the values of open societies.

The dynamics that enable violent extremists to flourish are not just confined to the Middle East. We see them in Africa's Sahel, in South and Southeast Asia, and even in Europe, to which many foreign fighters returned from the Syria front chastened but still radicalized and inclined to violence. In many countries, political alienation seeds extremism, with chasms between citizens and government creating feelings of hopelessness and exclusion that drive some toward the illusory promises of violent extremism.

Our approach to this challenge must be multifaceted. Democracy assistance is a vital tool on the preventive side, helping to create the conditions in which populations that might otherwise be vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremists have peaceful outlets to express grievances and have a stake in their societies. Support for the development of free markets to create jobs and opportunity would also help, as the statist economies of countries like Egypt reinforce the power of dictators to repress dissent even as they stifle broad-based prosperity.

Mitigating Uncontrolled Mass Migration

We are in the midst of the most significant refugee crisis since the Second World War. More people are fleeing across borders today than at any point since 1945, creating monumental security and societal challenges and destabilizing entire regions, including not just conflict states in the Middle East but also our close allies in Europe. In our own hemisphere, uncontrolled mass migration caused by failures of governance fuels transnational crime, including human trafficking and the drug trade, as increasingly desperate populations flee the breakdown of law and order and governance in places like Venezuela and Central America in search of a decent life elsewhere. The fallout from uncontrolled migration around the world for U.S. interests is enormous. It undermines core security interests, weakens our allies, radicalizes new generations of young people, and costs billions in both direct humanitarian assistance and indirect problems caused by this destabilizing trend.

Any successful approach to this complex problem must address the drivers of mass migration, which are often caused by the failure of government institutions to provide the conditions in which people

can live with security and support their families. Corruption, the breakdown of law and order, and citizen insecurity are key drivers of mass migration. If the United States can help foreign governments provide a minimum of citizen security and opportunity to their citizens, people are less likely to want to come to the United States and more likely to invest in their own country's future.

Conclusion

Democracies must make common cause in an era when they are under new forms of external authoritarian assault as well as pressures from violent extremists and mass migrations. They should also strive to continue providing a powerful counterexample to the new authoritarianism by demonstrating that free societies are the surest guarantors of human liberty and security, whereas tech-empowered dictators are a danger to their own people and to others. An important component of sustaining the free world lies in the digital domain. China's deployment and export of surveillance technologies is a dictator's dream and could put at risk the way of life Americans and our democratic allies have taken for granted for generations. As more of life moves online, sustaining an open Internet commons, at least within the free world, becomes a national security imperative, as recent debates over Huawei have demonstrated.

Finally, civic education is essential to help American citizens understand that our democracy risks penetration by hostile foreign actors. Our citizens also need to understand that America has risen to the challenge of ideological, totalitarian great power competitors before, but that our victory in the Cold War required a degree of national cohesion, self-sacrifice, and mobilization that is not fully evident today.

Democracy and Authoritarianism:
How Should Values Matter in Foreign Policy?
A Response from Jakub Grygiel

Ideas matter, in particular, what nations value and how they organize themselves. They influence what states do in foreign policy, establishing the parameters of what is desirable and what is acceptable. Not every course of action is open to states because of their traditions, history, and aspirations. Not every course of action is desirable because it is not aligned with the deeply held worldview of its nation. A U.S. foreign policy, therefore, that does not reflect the principles upon which this republic was founded is both unsustainable and undesirable.

"A U.S. foreign policy, therefore, that does not reflect the principles upon which this republic was founded is both unsustainable and undesirable."

But what this means in practice is not always clear, leaving room for vigorous debates on what the relationship between "values" and foreign policy ought to be. My argument here, seeded by Dan Twining's great paper, is that a Republican foreign policy has to start from a recognition of certain limits of universal principles and of democracy. For example, our geopolitical rivals (China and Russia, in particular) do not and will not accept liberal democratic principles, setting up the conditions for a long-term confrontation that we cannot wish away. At the same time, many of our allies (e.g., Hungary)

have particular articulations of democratic governance that do not perfectly match a liberal political model. Finally, in our own body politic, we do not agree on many "values" or rights, establishing clear limits on what it is appropriate to pursue abroad.

In brief, we need to rethink the relationship between our ideas and our foreign policy—first, because of the world; second, because of us.

The World

Deep cleavages are written in the history of nations. Moved by the annus mirabilis 1989, we thought that we could overcome these differences by restating the universal applicability of the liberal model. If democracy, based on separation of power and on the division of the secular from the religious, was a universal aspiration, then it would take root in distant lands, bringing liberty and stability. The world was thus converging—with hiccups, but still with inexorable determination—into something resembling a Kantian "perpetual peace" among satisfied individuals.

But this belief has met its geopolitical limits. What we value—liberal democracy—is not what everyone values and wants. The Arab world may not want democracy, only some sort of justice from perceived historical slights or, in some cases, the spread of Islam. Russia will not become a democracy because the longing for imperial grandeur trumps the desire to have multiple viable parties. China's middle class, albeit growing in numbers and in wealth, may be content to trade off political participation for stability, access to new markets, and prestige drawn from imperial expansion. Democracy and the political principles that are at the foundation of the United States are unlikely to take root in our rival powers and, therefore, cannot be the solution to international competition and conflict. Democracy, therefore, has reached its geopolitical limits.

The fact that we have rivals is in itself a symptom of the limits of liberal appeal. Great power competition—but, more broadly, any international competition—is a clash not merely of material forces but of ideas and beliefs. Ideological differences have never disappeared, and only our naïve faith that there were no viable alternatives to the liberal way of life has allowed us to imagine an ideological convergence of the world. But the world did not converge. U.S. rivals not only oppose our economic or military strength, but also are hostile to the principles that underwrite our political order. We may hope that they will change their minds and somehow different domestic regimes will transform our rivals into peaceful partners, but hope is not a strategy.

It is important to recognize that the root of the problem here is not a passing intellectual dispute. The divergences between the United States and its great power rivals are not determined by academic theories or ideas concocted by unemployed intellectuals drinking soy lattes on the Parisian Left Bank. They are civilizational and thus deeply embedded in the national identities of the states. They are long-term and cannot be negotiated away. And while it is natural and noble for the United States (and for many in the wider Western world) to believe that liberal democracy can be extended to our rivals, it is an unfeasible end goal at this point.

The geopolitical limits of the liberal democratic model are visible also within the Western alliance, albeit obviously to a much lesser degree. Because our allies are among the greatest assets we have in the world, giving us an enormous strategic advantage over our rivals, we have to be careful in how we treat them. We have to nurture them but we should not expect them to become uniform in their domestic political arrangements. Political liberty has various national expressions, which may not match ours. Some states may have a tradition of a tight connection between political life and religious faith; some may be more accepting of strong leadership, respectful of the law but not a coequal of other branches of government; and some are protective of their national way of life and may oppose the progressive definition of human rights as the satisfaction of self-preferences. In brief, to be legitimate and thus lasting, democracies must take particular national expressions. Universality is not uniformity.

A Republican foreign policy ought to recognize the legitimate value of these particular national expressions of liberty and not push for a uniform form of domestic political order. Calling some U.S. allies (e.g., Hungary or Poland) "illiberal" is not only analytically useless but also strategically dangerous. When we pursue policies to reverse what we consider policies that do not align with our views of what a liberal democracy ought to look like (e.g., insisting on the introduction of certain progressive rights or supporting groups opposed to the democratically elected governments), we end up undermining the strength of these allies by weakening their national unity. Instead of building resilience in these countries, we exacerbate internal divisions and put in doubt the legitimacy of the existing order, creating conditions ripe for further external (and nefarious) interference.

In the past two decades, our allies had few options but to accept our will. Now, they have the enticing alternative of receiving support from our rivals, including China and Russia. In a situation of enhanced great power competition, some allies may choose to seek backing from our rivals in order to avoid U.S. pressure that goes

against their national will. Imposing a uniform format of liberal democracy is therefore not a strategy of strengthening our alliances. On the contrary, it risks weakening the Western alliance in the moment we need it the most. We have to be very careful, therefore, not to advocate a solution that not everyone wants and that not every nation can accept.

The United States and "Values"

A Republican foreign policy has to recognize that there are limits to our domestic consensus, in particular on values. The term itself—"values"—is vague and can be filled with any meaning; every state or nation has values, after all, even though these values are not morally equivalent. And within the United States we have deep disagreements on the substance to put into this term. For instance, we disagree on fundamental questions of life, marriage, and death. We can discuss them as citizens within an ordered republic, seeking to win politically in order to advance the apparently inexorable march of progressive rights or to protect the immutable truths of human life. But we do an enormous disservice when we end these disagreements at water's edge and usually accept as the preferred option a very progressive and activist foreign policy driven by an expansive view of rights.

Pushing such progressive values abroad does a great disservice to our national security. It turns our allies and other states against us, opening windows of opportunity for our rivals. And it severs U.S. foreign policy from the support of a large, if not the largest, segment of the American electorate, weakening the long-term sustainability of the strategy and, most importantly, putting in question its legitimacy. A conservative foreign policy, in other words, has to reflect the limits of what we, as a nation, agree upon and not promote abroad what we, as a polity, have not decided internally as true and lasting.

Moreover, the limits of what is desirable to promote abroad are drawn by truth, elucidated by reason, and inlayed in tradition. There is nothing conservative in promoting a wholesale reengineering of society abroad as well as at home by undermining the key institutions that underwrite political order. Political order is not kept by a law or a constitution, however important they are. It arises slowly from within the nation, united and ordered by its foundational institutions—family, friends, churches. To redefine family and marriage as the satisfaction of self-preferences—a flagship objective of the progressive Left, both in the United States and abroad—is a recipe for large-scale geopolitical instability and a goal that is antithetical to U.S. interests.

None of this means that the United States should withdraw from the world—or, in more fashionable parlance, exercise "restraint" and pursue "offshore balancing." To the contrary, U.S. presence in Eurasia is indispensable to keep our rivals in check and sustain our security. And we should continue to advocate for unalienable rights, because the right to life is fundamental. Nobody deserves to be killed by a tyrannical regime, tortured by a psychopathic leader, or eliminated simply because they are deemed to be undesirable at any stage of human life. Similarly, the continued deportations and imprisonment of Uighurs by the Chinese regime or the beatings of peaceful protesters in Moscow or Hong Kong are clear violations of liberty. We should condemn them and impose costs on these brutal regimes.

But let's not confuse our respect for life and love of liberty with "progressive values," which are not universally appealing and whose infinite and elastic meaning defined by individual preferences weaken our reputation and undermine our national security.

Democracy and Authoritarianism:
How Should Values Matter in Foreign Policy?
A Response from Colin Dueck

It's a pleasure to be asked to respond to Daniel Twining's paper for the Reagan Institute on the subject of democratic values and conservative foreign policy. Twining identifies some of the most important international challenges facing the United States today, and he is right on a number of key points.

China and Russia really are attempting to revise and expand their own authoritarian spheres of influence against the United States, using a wide variety of policy tools and instruments. As identified in key Trump administration documents including the 2017 National Security Strategy and 2018 National Defense Strategy, the United States is thus faced with a new era of great power competition—and not by its own choosing. Twining is correct in suggesting that the United States must face this challenge in all of its ramifications. He is especially persuasive in some details on the disturbing phenomenon of Chinese Communist Party influence operations within existing democracies.

Having said that, Twining's paper raises a number of questions regarding precisely how to meet all of these challenges.

1. *How is this conservative?* Within the United States, both conservatives and liberals tend to agree that in the abstract it would be a good thing to see the spread of popular self-government overseas. American liberals tend to be optimistic that this can and will be achieved through a heavy reliance on multilateral institutions, cultural exchange, peaceful diplomacy, soft power, complex interdependence, the avoidance of

unilateral action, and the verbal reiteration of liberal norms. Presumably what American conservatives bring to the table is a more hard-nosed and realistic approach. It would be useful if Twining could outline some of those differences.

2. *To what values do we refer?* The paper takes for granted the promotion of democracy and human rights abroad as core American values. It does not specify which human rights are of central interest to U.S. foreign policy. The tendency over the years has been for the international community to expand the definitions of such rights, even as it often fails to respect them. A more focused definition of human rights would be helpful. For example, is the promotion of LGBTQ rights overseas a core American value, central to a conservative foreign policy? If so, why?

3. *Are we willing to admit policy trade-offs?* One indicator of a useful and realistic foreign policy framework is its willingness to admit and face up to genuine trade-offs. No doubt the universal promotion of democracy and human rights is an admirable goal. But in specific cases, depending upon the time and the place, there may also be other worthwhile foreign policy goals at stake, and in practical terms, these goals may sometimes be in conflict with one another. A simple declaration that American interests and liberal values are no longer in tension historically is not helpful in this regard. The well-intentioned desire to emphasize human rights, for example, may come into conflict with the promotion of U.S. economic and/or security interests in relation to multiple countries. A flat denial that such trade-offs exist is an improbable starting point for American foreign policy strategy.

4. *How should we approach undemocratic allies?* In the past, the United States has not prevailed against great power authoritarian competitors by insisting that it would only ally with other democracies. If it had, it might have lost those competitions. In multiple real-world cases, the United States possesses formal or informal allied and partner regimes that are either semidemocratic or frankly autocratic in nature. The belief that we should push these allies to be more democratic is no doubt genuine. But how exactly should this pressure be exercised, without leading to outcomes even worse from the perspective of U.S. interests, including, for example, the triumph of radical and/or anti-American insurgents? The dilemma was well highlighted by a leading neoconservative of the 1970s and 1980s, Jeane Kirkpatrick, when she noted:

> Hurried efforts to force complex and unfamiliar practices on societies lacking the requisite political culture … not only fail to produce the desired outcome, if they are undertaken at a time when the traditional regime is under attack, they actually facilitate the job of the insurgents.

5. *How can we fight salafi-jihadist terrorists without naming them?* Both Twining and the Trump administration are right to name China and Russia as authoritarian great power competitors of the United States. This is more than the Obama administration was willing to do. Unfortunately, transnational networks of salafi-jihadist terrorists, including ISIS, Al Qaeda, and regional affiliates, continue to wage war—by their own choice—on the United States, its civilians, and its allies. The challenge is not violent extremism, per se. Rather, it is specific groups of human beings with hostile intent toward the United States. We cannot develop satisfactory strategies to counteract these enemies if we cannot bring ourselves to identify them. To locate, capture, turn, or kill would-be suicide bombers who intend to murder innocent civilians ought to be considered of value.

6. *How should a conservative foreign policy address uncontrolled mass migration?* Twining correctly identifies uncontrolled mass migration as a grave challenge for the United States and many of its allies, with foreign policy implications. He proposes to address this challenge at its source, by addressing the root causes of migration out of war-torn and impoverished countries. Again, this is a commendable goal. But U.S. and allied efforts to help combat poor governance, corruption, organized crime, and civil conflict in various target countries have had only partial success in recent years, and in the meantime, uncontrolled mass migration continues. Twining does not mention any other possible solutions. But since the subject has been raised, we might suggest that treating the borders of the United States as actual borders is not an unreasonable proposition. The challenge of tackling uncontrolled mass migration cannot be addressed only by targeting domestic conditions in other countries. It must also be addressed through sensible immigration policy reforms within the United States and through strengthened U.S. border security.

7. *What is the example set by Ronald Reagan?* The Reagan Institute rightly looks to the 40th president's administration as a good example of how to promote democratic values in U.S. foreign policy. In doing so, we need to remember the real Reagan. President Reagan believed in the eventual spread

> of popular self-government internationally, and in his case, this belief went bone-deep. In practice, however, Reagan was successful precisely because he generally had a good feeling for how and when to push U.S. allies on the issue of their own domestic liberalization and when to support them against common threats. Reagan's starting instinct was always to support U.S. allies and partners against anti-American radicals. As he put it in 1980: "The basis of a free and principled foreign policy is one that takes the world as it is, and seeks to change it by leadership and example; not by harangue, harassment or wishful thinking."

Daniel Twining's useful essay provides a good starting point for discussion on the subject of the proper place of values in a conservative American foreign policy. No doubt there will be many points of agreement here, including around the need for strong national defenses, robust counterterrorism, expansive American trade, firm alliances, and coordinated strategies of counterpressure against Moscow and Beijing.

"Conservatives could do far worse than to remember the guideline laid out by the nation's first president: 'Our interest, guided by justice.'"

The hard point comes when Americans are asked to formulate case-specific policies in particular times and places where autocratic or semi-autocratic regimes are nevertheless allied to the United States against greater authoritarian threats. In such cases, conservatives could do far worse than to remember the guideline laid out by the nation's first president: "Our interest, guided by justice."

U.S. Policy in the Middle East Amid Great Power Competition

Mike Singh

If there are two points of broad foreign policy consensus among Republicans and Democrats today, they are these: The United States should not fight any more wars like Iraq, and the United States must shift to a strategy of great power competition in light of China's rise and Russia's rising aggression. Both points seem to forebode a diminished U.S. commitment to or even withdrawal from the Middle East.

Yet a longer view presents a different picture. The United States was deeply engaged in the Middle East long before the Iraq War, the Freedom Agenda, and the Global War on Terror. This engagement came not despite but because of the need to counter our great power competitor, the Soviet Union. Just as the British had sought to maintain control of the Suez Canal and the oil fields of the Persian Gulf—deemed vital to any war—the United States ramped up its diplomatic and military engagement in the region during the Cold War largely due to worries about Soviet dominance of the region's strategic assets. After the end of the Cold War, the Middle East was regarded as one of the world's last remaining sources of dangerous instability.

"The relative importance of the region has also arguably declined, not because it is any less threatening, but because policymakers have belatedly realized that the rest of the world is not as pacific as once thought."

That of course was then, and this is now. The absolute importance of the Middle East to American interests has irrefutably declined as the United States has gradually ended its dependence on the region's oil and ramped up its own hydrocarbons production. The relative importance of the region has also arguably declined, not because it is any less threatening, but because policymakers have belatedly realized that the rest of the world is not as pacific as once thought.
So, in the final analysis, should the Middle East be considered a distraction from great power competition, or—as it has been so many times throughout history—a theater for it? Russia and China have made their position on the matter clear. Russia has engaged in its most muscular intervention in the region in decades, swooping in to save the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in a move designed to thwart U.S. aims, prove Russia's value to client states, and demonstrate the efficacy of Russian military hardware to would-be customers. In a strategic sense, Moscow seems determined to ensure that there will be no reestablishment of the Northern Tier. It is courting Turkey, Iran, and even ramping up its engagement in Afghanistan.

China, meanwhile, has made the Middle East the centerpiece of Xi Jinping's "Belt and Road Initiative," a marketing slogan for the westward expansion of Chinese economic, political, and military power. Chinese investments in the Middle East—especially in Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Egypt—have increased disproportionately in the last several years. China has also ramped up its diplomatic engagement in the region, appointing special envoys for issues such as the Syrian war and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, dispatching senior officials for regional tours, and convening regional parties in Beijing in attempts at mediation. While Beijing has few diplomatic successes to show for these efforts, Chinese policy has shifted in pragmatic directions. For example, it has largely dropped its alignment with the Palestinians from the Non-Aligned Movement era in favor of a deepening relationship with Israel, and it has become somewhat more assertive in the UN Security Council on matters outside its traditional purview, exercising its veto power numerous times on Middle East issues.

Perhaps most ominously, China has ramped up its military engagement in the Middle East, whether out of a desire to protect its interests and citizens, project power, or both. China's first expeditionary naval operation was mounted in Libya in 2011 to evacuate tens of thousands of Chinese nationals amid the revolt against Muammar Qaddafi. Its first overseas naval base is located in Djibouti, just down the road from the United States' own military facilities. Chinese vessels and fighter aircraft have made stops in the region, and Lebanon's People's Liberation Army has reportedly

cooperated with Syrian military intelligence to counter Chinese foreign fighters. The scale of Chinese military engagement remains modest, especially compared with the United States' own, but the trend is clear.

In echoes of the Cold War, U.S. allies are responding to the mounting interest from Russia and China by hedging their bets. This appears to derive from three motivations: first, a desire to maintain good relations with Russia and China; second, a genuine concern regarding U.S. diffidence; and third, a desire to play great powers off one another to maximize benefits. U.S. policymakers tend to ascribe to allies whichever motivation best suits the American domestic debate of the moment. But in reality, all three can operate in parallel. In any event, the phenomenon is endemic. Israel has coordinated effectively with Russia in Syria and cultivated close relations with Beijing, the UAE and others have purchased armed Chinese drones, Turkey is on the verge of purchasing Russian air defense systems, and Egypt has cultivated its closest ties with Russia since the Nasser era, welcoming massive Chinese investment to boot.

U.S. policymakers increasingly have taken the view that the massive investment of American blood and treasure over the past two decades has yielded minimal return. They may be tempted to cede this boggy strategic ground to U.S. rivals. One prominent line of argument in the Syria policy debate, for example, is that the country will become Russia's Iraq; that is, Syria will prove a quagmire for Moscow, fruitlessly exhausting its attention and resources. Policymakers could also be excused for frustration that China—America's chief and richest competitor—continues to benefit from a free ride on the United States' provision of security in areas like the Persian Gulf. This is especially true because it is increasingly China, more than the United States, whose energy security is these days tied so intimately to stability in the region. The appeal of forcing China to shoulder these burdens itself is clear.

Despite its superficial charms, however, a policy of withdrawal would run counter to self-interest. Despite the United States' increasing self-sufficiency with regard to energy supply, vital U.S. interests remain at stake in the region. Foremost among these remains the flow of energy. This may no longer be crucial to the United States' war-fighting ability, but it remains vital to U.S. allies, especially those in the Indo-Pacific. These allies' dependence on just a few sources of oil has in fact increased as a result of U.S. policy toward Iran, in turn more deeply commingling their security with that of U.S. partners in the Gulf.

It is not just energy that flows through the Middle East, however.

A significant portion of global commerce passes through the Suez Canal, the Bab el-Mandeb, and the Arabian Sea. The region remains a major source of nuclear proliferation threats and threats from other weapons of mass destruction. And when it comes to terrorism—the national security issue that American citizens continue to care most about, even if U.S. strategists would prefer to move on from it—the Middle East remains central. While the United States' chief terrorist threat—both purportedly Islamic and otherwise—is domestic, Middle East-based groups continue to plot attacks on the United States and inspire or guide domestic actors to do the same.

At the broader strategic level, forcing Russia and China to take on greater roles in the Middle East would also backfire in the long run. Russia has demonstrated a desire not to control the Middle East, but to use the region to enhance other threats to the West. For example, its intervention in Syria drove millions of refugees into the arms of Europe, roiling politics there. And its courting of Turkey is likely aimed less at enhancing its regional influence than in splintering NATO and ensuring its mastery of the Black Sea and Caucasus. As for China, the capabilities it would have to improve in order to control Middle Eastern shipping lanes are largely the same that it would use to confront the United States—an effective blue-water navy with the logistical support one necessitates, long-range airlift, overseas bases, and the associated diplomatic assets. In addition, China's control of the region's maritime choke points would be a trump card in any conflict with American allies in Asia.

The Way Forward

The United States needs a strategy for securing its interests in the Middle East that both accords with its broader strategy of great power competition and seeks to accomplish what is needed at a lower, sustainable level of resources. Such a policy should feature a greater reliance on diplomacy and deterrence and a greater reliance on partners when conflict becomes inevitable. While some reallocation of military resources from the Middle East to other regions is inevitable, the United States should not withdraw them from the region entirely, as reinserting them when the need arises may prove difficult. However, we can and should refocus our own exertions where we add the greatest value and leave other tasks to partners. It is important that the United States not look at the Middle East as a series of problems that demand American solutions. Often a dollar invested in maintaining stability and security where they exist will yield a greater return for U.S. interests than one invested in seeking to resolve a conflict.

Viewing regional issues through a lens of great power competition

will necessitate painful trade-offs, of which policymakers must be explicitly cognizant. Difficult partners such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia, which have relevance not just in the regional but in the broader geopolitical context, will become more important. These and other partners in turn may seek to capitalize on this to extract from us maximum benefits. Pushing back will require the United States to take a tougher stance with allies and court more short-term risk to alliances than may come naturally to internationalists.

Looking at the Middle East through the lens of great power competition should not mean ignoring the threats posed by nonstate actors; indeed, these are arguably just as often wielded as tools by states as they are the result of "failed states." This may increasingly be the case as great powers seek to confront one another without risking direct conflict.

A U.S. regional policy along the above lines should include the following elements:

- *Strengthen capacity and security of allies.* The past two administrations have sought alternately to distance the United States from allies and to uncritically embrace them. But the ultimate objective has been roughly the same: to shift the burden of regional problems on to partners. Yet neither approach has enjoyed great success. U.S. partners have demonstrated a greater willingness to act independently of the United States but continue to suffer from significant deficits with respect to planning and operations, despite the United States having provided partners in the region with tens of billions of dollars of military aid and extensive training and education. These problems, combined with egregious human rights violations, have made the United States—and Congress, in particular—impatient with allies, especially Saudi Arabia. The right approach, however, is not to walk away from them, which would leave the United States with poorer strategic options in the region, but to engage critically and intensively with them.

  Washington's first step in doing so should be to reconsider its approach to security sector assistance and reform. The United States should shift its emphasis away from the sale of major weapons systems and efforts aimed at molding allies' armed forces in the American image. These strategies are better suited for Europe and Asia, where the United States spends a fraction of what it does in the Middle East on such activities. Instead, U.S. security sector assistance should focus on capabilities that correspond to the actual threats faced by our partners—

counterterrorism, border and maritime security, cybersecurity, and competent law enforcement. In doing so, the United States should seek to build upon the preexisting strengths of partner forces, while deepening our involvement in noncombat matters such as partner forces' organization and procedures, since corruption and cronyism are often just as great a hindrance to their performance as poor training.

Because U.S. global and regional adversaries are apt to seek opportunity in tumult or domestic division, the United States should also push allies to adopt a broader conception of security and defense, one that encompasses economic reform and political inclusion. While these issues have largely fallen out of favor in U.S. regional policy, they remain vital for the long-term stability of American regional partners. While such initiatives should be pursued gradually and in cooperation with allies, the United States should be explicit that we are no longer willing to help those states that refuse to help themselves via sensible economic and political reform. In addition, the United States should hold its partners to international norms regarding human rights; our criticism will have greater impact, however, if it is clearly issued from within a firm partnership.

• *Strengthen links between allies.* In addition to strengthening the individual capacity and resilience of our regional partners, the United States should seek to strengthen the links between them. The Middle East has a less integrated regional economy, and more poorly developed regional security and political institutions, than nearly any other region of the world. This is a legacy, in part, of recent history. The driver of the region's economy has been oil exported to the outside world, and political and security coordination has relied on the United States to act as a hub while our allies acted as spokes.

While U.S. partners have in recent years sought increasingly to act in concert with one another, these efforts have been stymied both by political divisions within the region—primarily the Saudi and Emirati split with Qatar and the Arab estrangement from Israel, which is fading—as well as issues of capability. The United States should seek to help our partners overcome both obstacles by mediating regional disputes to the extent possible and by coordinating efforts to improve regional cooperation. We will enjoy greater success, however, if our efforts are incremental and modest. We should not, for example, seek to build a grand military alliance of our partners, but should instead start with initial steps such as encouraging joint procurement planning, theater missile defense, and intelligence

sharing. Nor should we limit our efforts to the military sphere. Our allies' struggles in that arena underscore the need for greater regional economic and political cooperation to prevent conflict in the first place.

Finally, the United States should press allies to strengthen their commitment to international norms, such as respect for national sovereignty. This would stand in stark contrast to the methods of actors such as Iran, which aim to subvert those norms by creating or supporting transnational actors that answer to no local government, such as Lebanon's Hezbollah or the Shia militias of Iraq.

• *Improve policy design.* Whatever initiatives the United States may adopt, it is likely that American policy in the region will necessarily remain reactive, as events over which the United States has little control unfold in ways that threaten American interests. In such situations, it is vital that the United States learn from past mistakes if it is to avoid overcommitment.

The foremost of these errors is that of mismatched ends and means. The United States often articulates policy objectives that cannot be met without an investment of resources that Washington is simply not prepared to make and would not be wise to make in light of competing priorities. This was certainly the case in Iraq in 2003, as well as in Syria during this decade. Since increasing the resources we devote to the region is not tenable strategically or politically, policymakers must instead dial back expectations for what U.S. policy can achieve. With respect to Iran, for example, the United States has during recent administrations fallen prey to the notion that we can transform Iran, whether through diplomacy or sanctions. While well-intentioned, these attempts have led to a greater emphasis on Iran in U.S. international diplomacy than the issue merits. A better approach would be to focus on the long-term containment and deterrence of Iran and wait for internal forces to produce change.

Better matching of ends and means will also require a greater willingness by policymakers to use the full suite of policy tools available—coercion and diplomacy—rather than privileging one over another for reasons of ideology.

• *Improve strategic planning.* When interventions are necessary, the United States should look to work through local partners to the extent possible, as it did in both Yemen and Syria. We also should amplify partner efforts with higher-end capabilities

that the United States uniquely possesses—such as intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance abilities, special forces, and air power—as well as assistance with coordinating nonmilitary activities like stabilization or rule of law, which are areas in which our partners have invested less than in military capabilities. This does not mean that the United States can or should try to avoid long-term deployments to the region; some of these, as in the case of Iraq and Syria, can likely be done with a relatively small footprint that nevertheless delivers significant dividends. In other cases, once U.S. forces withdraw, the region's politics and gambits by rival powers might make it difficult for them to return. While there thus may be room to scale back the U.S. force posture in the region, it would be a mistake to adopt an "over-the-horizon" posture.

Finally, given that many of the region's conflicts are ultimately foreseeable, the United States should engage in more intensive strategic planning with allies. This should take place between periods of conflict, but even more critically should precede any commitment of U.S. aid during a conflict. Better advance planning, for example, might have yielded more realistic Gulf Cooperation Council goals and a timeline for achieving them in Yemen; instead, the United States is left with an open-ended commitment to a conflict over which it has little influence. The United States already engages in this sort of planning with Israel and should replicate it with other allies.

• *Prevent extremism.* Realistically, terrorism will remain a key national security policy priority for the United States, regardless of the strategic preferences of policymakers. It is difficult, if not unrealistic, to ignore the rise of groups like the Islamic State. Yet campaigns against such groups can prove a costly diversion from other priorities. Therefore, the United States should place a greater emphasis on the prevention of extremism in the first place, alongside kinetic counterterrorism operations. For all of the United States' success in counterterrorism operations, violent extremism has in fact spread significantly across the Middle East since 9/11.

The factors that underlie the emergence of extremism have been extensively researched, providing ample analysis on which to base a policy of prevention. The real challenge lies in the policy trade-offs involved. Two of the major factors motivating individuals to join extremist groups are political exclusion and abuse by security forces. However, it is often U.S. security partners, and sometimes security forces directly funded by the United States, who are responsible for these problems.

To address this, it is vital that the U.S. government come to a clearer shared understanding within the national security bureaucracy of the causes of extremism, and that steps be taken to ensure that these factors are weighed as U.S. policy in the region is formulated. This requires the integration of development tools with traditional national security tools, a challenge that has thus far proven difficult for the U.S. government but is nevertheless vital. In addition, where partners at the local or national level are willing to fight extremism but lack the capacity to do so, the United States should step in to provide funding and organize other Western allies to do the same. Such investments in prevention are undoubtedly far cheaper than the cost of eventual intervention. See the United States Institute of Peace for greater detail on preventing extremism.

The place of the Middle East in a strategy of great power competition has yet to be defined. It is naïve to think that the United States will simply be able to move on from the region, yet it is clear that the level of investment of the past two decades yielded poor returns and could not be maintained even were it desirable to do so. Nor should it be discounted that the Middle East could offer opportunities for cooperation among great powers. The United States, Russia, and China have already cooperated to a limited extent on issues such as counterpiracy and nuclear nonproliferation in the region. Whether such cooperation proves possible or not, it appears clear that it is neither in the U.S. interest nor a wise use of resources to adopt the zero-sum approach of the Cold War, seeking to exclude the influence of other great powers wherever it may crop up. Success instead will manifest itself by increasingly capable allies who can act autonomously but in close coordination with the United States, and who see advantage in aligning with a U.S.-led global order.

U.S. Policy in the Middle East Amid Great Power Competition

A Response from Vance Serchuk

Mike Singh has written a characteristically thoughtful paper whose analytic contours are, I think, broadly correct. In particular, Mike argues that

> 1. the greater Middle East ought to be understood as an arena for great power competition with China and Russia, not a sanctuary from it; and
>
> 2. the United States has vital national interests in the Middle East apart from great power competition, principally counterterrorism and nonproliferation, which will compel it to remain engaged in this region to a considerable degree even as Europe and Asia assume more importance.

"…intensifying great power competition is more likely to make the region both more dangerous and more consequential for U.S. foreign policy to navigate over the decade ahead…"

While both of these precepts are essentially right, the argument can be extended further. Far from relegating the Middle East to the strategic margins, as some foreign policy analysts have postulated, intensifying great power competition is more likely to make the region both more dangerous and more consequential for U.S. foreign policy to navigate over the decade ahead, due to several factors.

First, the Middle East is likely to continue to be the world's preeminent breeding ground for crises and conflicts, the majority of which will erupt according to their own internal dynamics rather than as a result of external instigation or influence. Yet as illustrated in Syria, what until recently would have remained essentially local disputes—to be dealt with, or not, on their own terms—now carry a much higher risk of entangling the major powers in opposing constellations. These, in turn, are likely to exacerbate and prolong the conflicts themselves. Thus, to paraphrase Bismarck, with every "damn fool thing" that blows up in the greater Middle East (and there is no shortage on the horizon) comes a heightened threat of not only intensified regional upheaval but also great power collision. In this respect, Syria—far from being the last of America's post-9/11 entanglements in the Middle East—is more likely a harbinger of challenges to come.

Second, contrary to the regionalist fallacy of American foreign policy—which holds that, in order to be successful on one corner of the Eurasian land mass, it is necessary for the United States to downgrade or curtail its involvement on the others—international perceptions of U.S. credibility and reliability are, to a great extent, indivisible. Consequently, perceived U.S. failures, missteps, and abdications in the Middle East—including any perception of American abandonment of long-standing security commitments there—are increasingly likely to carry systemic effects outside the region. America falling on its face in the Levant was bad enough when Europe and Asia were largely quiescent; now those reverberations will be felt more sharply, further afield.

Here, too, Syria has proven instructive, as the Obama administration's last-minute decision in 2013 not to enforce its self-declared "red line" on Bashar al-Assad's chemical weapons use set off alarm bells not only in the Middle East, but also among America's Asian and European allies. This problem is compounded by the fact that nowhere in the world has the United States consistently articulated more ambitious goals and repeatedly failed to deliver on its promises than in the Middle East. Moreover, while regionalists are wrong in thinking that the United States can neatly amputate its Middle Eastern limbs without serious danger of sending the wider U.S.-led system into shock, they are correct that certain American resources are inescapably zero-sum.

Third, while a broad bipartisan consensus has taken hold in Washington that maintains that great power competition ought to be the principal focus of American foreign policy, this consensus does not appear to extend yet to the American people. Polls consistently indicate that, while the Beltway has grown intellectually fatigued by problems like ISIS and the threat of another 9/11, the rest of the

country has not. Thwarting terrorism typically ranks as the American public's top foreign policy priority across party lines; upholding a nebulously defined Asian balance of power, not so much. That is a major reason why, repeatedly, recurrent crises in the Middle East have yanked American attention and resources back into the region, despite the initial proclivities of a succession of presidents to focus elsewhere. In this respect, proponents of a pivot toward great power competition have more of a Middle East problem than they imagine. In foreign policy as in economics, the argument "this time will be different" does not have an inspiring track record.

Finally, the recognition that there is some kind of Middle Eastern component in great power competition with China and Russia does nothing to instruct how the United States should compete with Beijing and Moscow in the region. Given the panoply of potential Russian and Chinese activities, how should the United States distinguish between that which is merely undesirable and that which is truly intolerable? For that matter, how should the United States reconcile its traditional regional objectives—which Washington over the past quarter-century has typically treated as natural zones for win-win cooperation among the major powers, on the basis of shared interests—with its newfound interest in gaining a strategic advantage against Beijing and Moscow?

While beyond the scope of this paper to resolve these questions in depth, approaching the Middle East through the prism of great power competition should at minimum imply a new or refined set of objectives and operational concepts for the United States in the region. The former could include

1. preserving U.S. naval primacy in the Persian Gulf and the region's other maritime choke points, given their criticality for both China's economy and that of America's Indo-Pacific allies and partners;

2. preventing China and Russia from establishing new military outposts in the greater Middle East or influence over critical infrastructure that could jeopardize U.S. power projection in the region;

3. frustrating regional military aggression that is backed by threat or use of Russian or Chinese military power;

4. avoiding diplomatic schemes that elevate Moscow or Beijing as coequal or preeminent arbiters of the region's fate, or that reward or incentivize countries for aligning with them;

5. countering Russian and Chinese influence operations in the region, including through exposure of corrupt or illicit activities with local actors; and

6. encouraging India and Japan toward closer cooperation and involvement in West Asian security in general and maritime security in particular.

In sum, rather than thinking about the Middle East as an autonomous sphere sealed off from the rest of Eurasia—containing a collection of free-floating problems to be solved for their own sake—it is going to be increasingly necessary to approach the region as part of a much wider whole. Given the U.S. foreign policy community's propensity to organize itself into regional silos, this will be challenging, both bureaucratically and intellectually. But it is the necessary precondition if the United States is to compete effectively there—as Russia and China themselves are already increasingly doing.

Financial Statecraft for the New Middle East

A Response from Michael B. Greenwald

Since the late 2000s, sanctions have become the preferred American policy choice in the Middle East, operating at significantly lower political and financial costs than direct military intervention. In contrast to the former blunt sanctioning approach—best characterized by the Iraq embargo in the 1990s, which led to dramatic humanitarian costs—sanctions have become more targeted, focusing on the economic foundations of a regime while exempting trade in vital supplies like food and medicine. These new smart sanctions include asset freezes, travel bans, arms embargoes, sectoral sanctions, and financial sanctions, which can be deployed sequentially to escalate pressure on a specific state.

In the Middle East, financial sanctions under Section 311 of the Patriot Act authorize the prohibition of correspondent banking. Correspondent banking enables entities to access financial services in different jurisdictions, which is necessary to engage in cross-border transactions.

Due to the dollar's disproportionate share of both global trade generally and the oil trade specifically, correspondent banking services are vital to operate normal trading networks, making the withdrawal of access a powerful tool. Like the Iraq sanctions of yore, however, the potential costs of targeting correspondent banking are often too high to justify constant deployment. To address this vulnerability and broader economic developments in the Middle East, it is vital for Washington to embrace a renewed, holistic financial statecraft strategy.

In the new era of great power competition, the United States is far

from the sole economic power in the Gulf, North Africa, and the Levant. Last year, Chinese firms invested more than $28 billion in the Middle East, second only to Europe. With the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Egypt as top recipients since the Belt and Road Initiative's start, China's presence at the core junctures of Middle Eastern commerce is a direct outgrowth of its overarching investment in European, African, and Asian infrastructure. At the same time, Russia has leveraged its role in energy markets—albeit with modest economic resources—engaging with Riyadh as a key player in OPEC+ talks and financing Turkey's first nuclear power plant. Further, Moscow's diplomatic flirtations with Libya's Haftar add to its economic and political clout, tying itself to an oil producer with a direct Mediterranean border.

Foreign investment is not the only changing variable in the region, as energy exporters pursue renewed commitments to economic diversification from hydrocarbons. Now used throughout the Gulf, these plans—most notably Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030—have provided renewed importance to sovereign wealth funds (SWFs), which are investment funds financed by government oil revenues. SWFs have invested disproportionately in Western markets throughout their history, but they have recently branched into more exotic investments, especially in venture capital for Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) and Abu Dhabi's Mubadala Investment Company. These investments are motivated not only by capital gains but also by Riyadh's and Abu Dhabi's desires to attract global start-ups into their markets to cultivate, over time, innovation economies similar to those present in the developed world.

Katerra, a start-up focused on real estate development, received $865 million from a financing round last year led by Softbank's Vision Fund—a $98 billion venture capital fund, of which PIF has committed $45 billion. In late October, Katerra reached a tentative deal to build 50,000 units of housing for Riyadh, as well as a separate memorandum of understanding to build as many as eight factories in the country. With development of the mortgage market and an expansion of the housing supply as key pillars of the Vision 2030 reforms, the Katerra deal is a model for what Riyadh is aspiring to in many of these deals. In spite of the clear benefits of greater funding for innovators in Silicon Valley, the case for tighter scrutiny of SWF investment is tied intrinsically to great power competition.

As Moscow has expanded its economic footprint in the region, the Gulf SWFs have flocked to Russian investments. Mubadala acquired a private equity firm, Verno Capital, last year; PIF has invested in Arctic natural gas projects; and the Qatar Investment Authority is the third-largest shareholder in Rosneft. Such deals undercut the spirit

of existing Western sanctions passed in the aftermath of Crimea's annexation, an event whose impact was not limited to the European theater. Since 2015, the acquisition of Crimea has enabled Russia to reconstruct its Black Sea fleet, establishing itself as a dominant player in the Black Sea, threatening the security of the Eastern Mediterranean, Southeastern Europe, and North Africa. To tighten the spigot on these deals, Washington should take a hard line on the Gulf's continued access to Silicon Valley's best and brightest. One potential option is to use the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States and other mechanisms it has employed to police Chinese investment.

Similarly, with the expanding Chinese footprint in the region, concerns about Beijing's strategy that have been highlighted elsewhere have emerged in a Middle Eastern context, most notably in Pakistan. By connecting landlocked Xinjiang to the Bay of Bengal via the Port of Gwadar, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is Beijing's largest commitment in the region, worth $62 billion. At the same time, rising oil prices and strong demand for imports has triggered a balance of payments crisis, with foreign exchange reserves falling to just $8.9 billion, barely enough to cover two months of imports. In May, Pakistan signed a $6 billion bailout with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) after receiving $7.2 billion in bilateral loans from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and China. Though CPEC was not the primary driver of the crisis, the IMF's bailout requires conditions, including deficit reductions and depreciation of the rupee, as well as disclosure of private terms on many of China's opaque deals in the country. In future instances, the IMF can lend itself as a key asset in assisting countries that are victims of unsustainable Chinese lending. Further, by limiting the ability of affected countries to use bailout funds to pay off unsustainable projects, the IMF can encourage China's state-owned banks to practice more sustainable lending in the developing world.

"Though sanctions have been the centerpiece of financial statecraft, it is long overdue for Washington to exploit its financial resources in a more creative manner."

In both presented cases, the end goal is not a maximalist stance of prohibiting all investment channels with rival great powers, but rather leveraging the financial resources in America's tool kit to foster a minimum standard of best practices. Though sanctions have been the centerpiece of financial statecraft, it is long overdue for Washington to exploit its financial resources in a more creative manner. The recent unilateral Iran sanctions demonstrate that,

even when met with compliance, the incentives for evasion can be high. In spite of the dollar's central role in international finance, loopholes like shell companies can enable hostile foreign actors to evade sanctions while operating within the dollar's ecosystem. It is long past time that, in tandem with its policy outreach, Washington address these flaws in its sanctions framework as well.

Financial statecraft itself should not be the sole policy option exercised by Washington, lest its effectiveness wane. Narrow, realistic policy goals should be coordinated with multilateral partners, both globally and locally. These tools must also be buttressed by efforts elsewhere, including engaged diplomacy, strategic deterrence, and, if necessary, targeted hard power to ensure a continued American edge in the region. The Middle East's strategic value is clear. It is Washington's obligation to not ignore this vital battleground in an era of great power competition.

Is the GOP Still the Party of Free Trade?

Phil Levy

"[President Trump] hasn't changed the Republican Party. We're still a party of free trade."

—Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-IA), 5/16/19

What does it mean to be the party of free trade?

It surely cannot mean opposing all trade barriers and backing all liberalization initiatives. In 1930, Herbert Hoover signed the Smoot-Hawley Tariff. In the 1950s, Senator Robert Taft helped block the creation of an International Trade Organization. In the 1970s, Richard Nixon imposed an import surcharge. And in the early 2000s, George W. Bush blocked steel trade with a safeguard.

Yet, at least since Ronald Reagan, the Republican Party has been philosophically inspired by free trade. President Reagan, in a 1988 Thanksgiving address, decried protectionism and said, "One of the key factors behind our nation's great prosperity is the open trade policy that allows the American people to freely exchange goods and services with free people around the world." Both Presidents Bush continued the embrace of free trade as an ideal, even as they oversaw policy exceptions.

One reason for this embrace was the intimate connection between free trade and three other pillars of a conservative approach: a market orientation, a commitment to limited government, and a belief in responsible internationalism. One need not argue the theoretical nature of such a linkage; one need only look at the experience of the Trump administration for a vivid empirical demonstration of how the policies interact.

In its pursuit of protection for the steel sector, as but one prominent example, the Trump administration invoked Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, which allows a president to block imports if he deems it necessary for national security. This immediately and inescapably put the Trump administration in the position of picking winners and losers in the U.S. economy. There are many more American workers in steel-using businesses than in steel-producing businesses, but the policy favored the latter over the former. Then, given the onerous nature of the policy, a system of product exclusions was set up, which required the Department of Commerce to begin judging, on a company-by-company basis, whether their requests to be spared taxes on their imports were legitimate. Further, when the steel program and other protectionist policies drew retaliation from foreign trading partners against U.S. farmers, the Trump administration responded with $12 billion of subsidies—and has announced plans for more. The protectionist approach expanded the role of the government in the economy and moved away from principles of limited, predictable governance.

The international effects have been no less severe. To rationalize the imposition of steel protection, the Trump administration had to declare publicly that numerous NATO and other defense treaty partners (e.g., Japan and Korea) posed a national security threat to the United States. Both this claim and the adversarial approach inherent in blocking a partner's exports have significantly strained relations with key allies, have undercut the idea of the United States as a responsible leader, and have thus diminished American standing in the world.

The point is that the free trade ideal was tightly linked to core tenets of a conservative approach. From 1981 through 2016, although the pursuit of free trade was more pragmatic than pure, with multiple exceptions, there was a strong sense that the exceptions needed to be justified. They were, in fact, exceptional. And they stood out against a backdrop of major initiatives to liberalize trade and bolster the institutions of an open trading regime. These initiatives ranged from the Uruguay Round of trade talks launched under President Reagan and pursued under President George H. W. Bush, to a long string of bilateral or plurilateral free trade agreements and bilateral investment treaties, to the Doha Round of global talks launched under President George W. Bush.

This Republican commitment persisted even when the party did not hold the White House. The critical 2015 House vote to grant President Barack Obama "Trade Promotion Authority" passed with 191 Republican votes and 28 Democratic votes. Republican congressional leaders knew the vote was important because it was

a prerequisite for concluding the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), an agreement that was critical for establishing U.S. leadership in the Asia-Pacific, as well as on trade more generally.

President Donald Trump has introduced a sharp departure from the party's support for free trade. His first notable act on trade was to withdraw the United States from the TPP, thereby relieving China from pressure to reform and excluding the United States from the benefits of the deal. He regularly glorifies tariffs and attacks the institutions and agreements that have supported the global open trading system. While President Trump will occasionally suggest that he is pushing for a freer, fairer trading order, the agreements he has pursued have generally sought to restrict trade. From new quotas on Korean steel exports (KORUS), to tighter rules of origin for auto trade with the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA, which includes minimum wage requirements!), to a new mandate to negotiate limits on auto trade with Europe and Japan, there has not been a more protectionist president in the modern era.

The question, then, is whether President Trump's staunch opposition to free trade defines the current stance of the Republican Party. There are at least three reasons to think that it does.

First, under current law, a president has tremendous latitude to adopt protectionist policies. Although Congress has authority over international trade under the U.S. Constitution, it has effectively delegated a great deal of protectionist power. There is an important asymmetry in this delegation. Since at least the 1930s, there was a presumption that a president would be substantially more inclined toward free trade than the Congress. Thus, Congress over the years has retained substantial hurdles against trade-liberalizing agreements (e.g., the requirements of Trade Promotion Authority) while allowing presidents enormous discretion for imposing trade barriers, particularly if a president is willing to declare an emergency or invoke national security. Thus, the branch of the Republican Party that is currently setting trade policy is the protectionist White House. Second, even if those policy moves are tempered by discreet warnings or public importunings from other parts of the Republican Party, the net result is still aggressively protectionist. It is this net result that will necessarily shape public perceptions of the Republican Party both at home and abroad.

Finally, the idea of a free trade branch of the Republican Party battling a protectionist branch is largely hypothetical. In practice, the strongest resistance that President Trump has faced on tariffs from fellow Republicans has generally consisted of public statements of discomfort. That falls far short of what a concerted Republican

opposition movement would look like.[1]

The effective abandonment of its free trade credentials sets the Republican Party on a perilous path. Perhaps as a reflection of the philosophical inconsistencies described above, the Trump administration has failed to describe an alternative vision to replace the goal of free trade. Sometimes, administration officials will argue that free trade is still the goal and that the protection simply serves as leverage to push other countries toward that goal. Other times, the president will exalt in the protection itself, reveling in tariff revenue and the benefits for protected industries.

"The effective abandonment of its free trade credentials sets the Republican Party on a perilous path."

Either excuse leads to trouble. The problem with protection as a negotiating tactic is that the administration has not been very successful in striking agreements. The two noteworthy agreements it has struck to date were with South Korea and then with our partners in the North American Free Trade Agreement. Neither resulted in much liberalization and each increased protection in some sectors. Though the Trump administration did ultimately agree to lift its steel and aluminum protection in North America in light of the completed USMCA, the experience called into question the leverage approach. Why was it necessary to inflict the pain of protection when Canada and Mexico were willing to negotiate anyway and the results were so meager?

This approach can also strain the patience of farmers and businesses when the promised results never come. This effect has been most evident in the tariffs against China under Section 301. The Trump administration had been suggesting since the summer of 2018 that the pain suffered by U.S. sectors would be a short-lived sacrifice. This led to a negative reaction by both sufferers and financial markets when, in the spring and summer of 2019, it became clear that this conflict was only going to escalate. Although there can be substantial enthusiasm as forces march off to battle with promises of quick victory, support can dissipate when losses mount and there is no useful resolution in sight.

[1] There are some notable exceptions. Senator Pat Toomey (R-PA) and Representative Mike Gallagher (R-WI) each sponsored and pushed legislation that would have restricted a president's ability to abuse national security claims for protectionist ends. Despite bipartisan sponsorship, the bills have not advanced in either chamber.

To the extent that President Trump's protectionism is based on the anticipated benefits of blocking trade, experience is likely to shine an unforgiving light on the policy. As but one recent example, recent studies have found that the steel and aluminum tariffs cost Americans $900,000 per job saved or created, while washing machine tariffs cost $815,000 per job. It is also likely that the costs will mount over time; companies that maintained U.S. production under the belief that the tariffs would be short-lived could move elsewhere as the protection endures. Perhaps as a result of these rising costs, opinion surveys are finding mounting public support for trade.

Though President Trump will ultimately leave office—no later than 2025—and even though some prominent Democrats have been supportive of his approach, it is the Republican Party that will be tarred by the policy failure and the sacrifice of key principles.

So what can Republicans do to reclaim the mantle of the party of free trade? Any effective approach will require public confrontation with President Trump. At one point, there was a theory espoused by some party leaders that the best tactic would be to pursue quiet discussions with the president behind the scenes. These leaders hoped to persuade the president to eschew a protectionist path while they avoided any sort of public dispute. That effort clearly failed.

Congress has ample powers at its disposal. There is the constitutional power to regulate trade, the power of the purse to direct executive branch actions, the leverage that comes through confirmation hearings in the Senate, and the ability to conduct oversight hearings and publicly question policy. Once again, we come to a linkage between the push for free trade and long-standing Republican principles—in this case, the idea that there should be limits to the power of the Executive Branch.

This alternative path, of course, has its own perils. It would require open disagreement with the leader of the party. To bring voters along, it would require open discourse about the importance of trade and the damage that trade barriers can do. But in this moment, more so than at any in recent memory, being the party of free trade requires actively fighting for free trade in both word and deed.

If they choose to avoid such confrontation with their own president, Republicans can still call themselves the party of free trade. But no one will believe them.

The Shifting Tides on Trade

A Response from Jonathan Burks

As Phil Levy demonstrates in his paper "Is the GOP Still the Party of Free Trade?," the Republican Party has a long (and complicated) history on trade. While the party since President Reagan has generally advanced liberalized trade, President Trump and his administration have adopted a sharply different approach. But this shift is not merely a peculiarity of the current occupant of the Oval Office. Rather, it reflects what could be a secular change in the party's approach to trade that reveals underlying changes in the coalition that elects Republicans. The ultimate answer to Levy's question depends critically, therefore, on whether free-trade Republicans can offer a convincing alternative to an increasingly trade-skeptical Republican electorate.

The New Challenge to Free Trade

In 2009, the Tea Party movement (TPM) emerged as a grassroots conservative reaction to the Great Recession. With both Congress and the presidency controlled by Democrats, the federal government responded to the Great Recession by enacting a massive deficit-financed stimulus bill and by increasing government control over one-sixth of the economy through Obamacare. The TPM rebelled against this centralization of power in Washington by calling for limited government, free markets, lower taxes, and fiscal responsibility. The movement was animated by the sense that the American Dream was in peril because the system was stacked against the average guy and that Democrats were seeking to concentrate even more power in the hands of a remote elite in Washington. Moreover, the TPM manifested a sincere distrust of big institutions, whether it was the government in Washington or the multinational corporations that

had driven the economy into the recession.

Contemporary polling showed that among those who identified with the TPM, 63 percent believed that free trade agreements are bad for the United States. This trade pessimism bled into the broader Republican electorate, with support for free trade agreements plummeting from 43 percent in November 2009 to 28 percent in October 2010. When Republicans retook the majority in the House of Representatives in 2010, the new majority consisted of dozens of newly elected officials who self-identified with the TPM. Given the movement's generally anti-free trade views, it was an open question how these newly elected officials would approach international trade. Surprisingly, a common refrain as these new congressmen assumed office was, "Tariffs are taxes, and I'm for lower taxes."

But in the first major test on trade policy for this generation of lawmakers—the 2015 Trade Promotion Authority vote—a significant number of stalwarts of the populist Right voted no. Of the 50 Republicans who opposed granting Trade Promotion Authority, almost half were members of the Freedom Caucus,[1] which carries the policy agenda of the TPM in Congress. While most of these members couched their votes as opposition to the delegation of additional discretion to President Obama, their votes demonstrated the changed environment with respect to Republican support for trade liberalization.

When Donald Trump brought his economic nationalist trade policy to the 2016 Republican primary, there were already clear signs of an erosion of the post-Reagan Republican consensus on trade. The Trump campaign further eroded support among Republicans for freer trade. Just before the 2016 election, support for free trade among Republicans and Republican-leaning independents bottomed out at 29 percent, 30 percentage points lower than among Democrats. While support for trade among Republicans has rebounded somewhat since then, the divide between generally favorable elite opinion on trade and more skeptical opinion among the Republican base remains.

Making Sense of the New Trade Policy

Given the public opinion landscape within the Republican Party, it's no surprise that President Trump continues to pursue a more protectionist policy than have other recent Republican presidents. But Trump's trade policy is not just an opportunistic appeal to an energetic segment of the Republican base. Rather, it reflects President

[1] U.S. House of Representatives, Roll Call Vote #374, June 18, 2015.

Trump's long-held view that America has been taken advantage of by our trading partners, that the proof of this is in our trade deficit, and that trade with a rising Asian power poses a particular threat to America's well-being and security. These elements point toward the underlying logic of Trump's trade policy and to how Trump is seeking to institutionalize support for his trade policy.

First, Trump has sought "better deals" from our trading partners, many of whom are also our traditional allies. And he has pursued trade policy as a form of industrial policy, trying to protect what he identifies as strategically critical industries, especially heavy manufacturing. At his core, he is motivated by the conviction that heavy manufacturing—e.g., steel, aluminum, and automobiles—is essential not just to economic prosperity but to national strength. In March 2017, Trump explained:

> [T]he model that you've been watching, the model that's created so much value, the model of bringing back jobs and bringing back industry—I called it the American model. And this is the system that our Founders wanted. Our greatest American leaders—including George Washington, Hamilton, Jackson, Lincoln—they all agreed that for America to be a strong nation, it must also be a great manufacturing nation.
>
> The Republican platform of 1896—more than a century ago—stated that: "Protection and reciprocity are twin measures of American policy and go hand in hand." I mean, we have situations where other countries who have zero respect for our country—by the way, did you notice they're starting to respect us a lot? A lot. A lot. They'll charge us a hundred-percent tax on some counts. A hundred percent. And we charge them nothing. They'll make it impossible through regulations for our product to be sold in their country, and yet they'll sell their product routinely in our country. Not going to happen anymore. The word "reciprocity"—they do it, we do it. Who can complain about that? Big difference. You're talking about big, big dollars too, by the way.
>
> The platform went on to say: "We renew and emphasize our allegiance to the policy of protection, as the bulwark of American industrial independence and the foundation of American development and prosperity."

In pursuit of this goal, President Trump has imposed unilateral tariffs to force negotiations and to create leverage for his negotiators. He is convinced tariffs are a win-win proposition. If the negotiations the tariffs provoked result in a new agreement, then the terms of

trade have improved for America. And if the negotiations fail, then America's domestic producers will have a protected market in which to grow.

It's this combination of the president's ideological commitment coupled with the base's trade suspicions that suggests the change in Republican trade policy may not be an interregnum. This is nowhere clearer than in the response to president's trade policy with China. In his maiden speech on the Senate floor, Senator Mitt Romney spoke for much of the Republican elite when he explained:

> When it was admitted to the World Trade Organization, the expectation was that China would embrace the rules of the global order, including eventually respect for human rights. It has done the opposite—imprisoning millions in reeducation camps, brutally repressing dissent, censoring the media and internet, seizing land and sea that don't belong to it, and flouting the global rules of free and fair competition.[2]

The frustration evident in Senator Romney's remarks is felt across the Republican coalition, on both sides of the aisle, and in growing segments of the business community. Rather than opening its economy to foreign investment, opening its markets to foreign goods and services, reducing subsidies to industry, cracking down on the theft of intellectual property, allowing its currency's value to be determined by the market, or any other of a long list of market liberalizations that were expected, China has pursued an industrial policy seemingly purpose-built to drive international competitors out of business and establish market power for its national champions. When President Trump imposes punitive tariffs on China's exports or bans their companies from potentially sensitive telecommunications systems, he appeals not just to the base, but to the probusiness and national-security-focused parts of the Republican coalition as well. The results from his approach to China, however, have not produced better results than the less confrontational approach of prior administrations. And these tariffs are costly. American consumers and industry face higher costs for imported goods. American exporters, especially in agriculture, have lost sales as their customers have walked away or seen their price to consumers rise under retaliatory tariffs. Moreover, his antagonistic approach to America's putative allies has encouraged those countries to seek separate accommodations with China.

[2] Senator Mitt Romney, "Maiden Speech," June 4, 2019, Congressional Record, p. S3175.

"The challenge for pro-trade Republicans is to offer an alternative on trade that is strong enough to overcome the antitrade predispositions of a significant part of the Republican electoral coalition..."

Conclusion

The challenge for pro-trade Republicans is to offer an alternative on trade that is strong enough to overcome the antitrade predispositions of a significant part of the Republican electoral coalition and to address the legitimate concerns of business-focused and national-security-focused Republicans as well. This case will have to answer the charges leveled by President Trump as to how manufacturing (and manufacturing jobs) fit into our economy and how to handle trade with an immensely populous nation that seems intent on pursuing a mercantilist trade policy to the detriment of the United States. The fact remains that open market strategies—at home and abroad—are the best means to generate broad-based domestic prosperity, but we cannot rest simply because the facts are on our side.

The Return of Strategic Competition:
How to Execute and Sustain the National Security Strategy
Elbridge Colby

The world is entering a renewed period of major power competition. This is essentially a function of the more-equal power balance in the world state system. During and after the Cold War, the United States, which was by far the world's largest economy, stood at the head of a network of states that by a tremendous distance outweighed any competitors or potential competitors. This is no longer true.

The United States itself retains a strong position in international power terms. Rising states outside that traditional network, however, have consumed a significant fraction of the power share of traditional U.S. allies, particularly Europe and Japan. Thus, the power advantage of this network has diminished. This itself would no doubt cause commotion in international politics.

The rise of the rest, however, is mostly about the rise of China. As Napoleon said, when China rises, the world will shake. And China's growing power dwarfs that of any other rising state, with the partial exception of India. Further, China is a cohesive, modernizing state that now has an economy as large as or larger than that of the United States and a large share of global power. It is also increasingly operating at the frontiers of human development, including in technology.

Moreover, China is continuing to grow. It is possible that China's growth will stall or slow to a trickle, in which case this problem may dissipate in intensity. It is prudent, however, for us to assume that China's growth will continue at a reasonable pace, not least because we have for a variety of reasons at minimum some interest in continued growth in China.

Of great importance, China is not only a very large state, but also it is located in the world's most economically important and dynamic region—the Indo-Pacific. China's rise therefore presents the realistic possibility over time of Beijing establishing something like hegemony over this key region. China has a natural and compelling interest in establishing something like suzerainty there, as this would allow it to set the rules of the road and terms of trade in its own region—the world's richest—and begin to project power into the broader global environment far more effectively. The United States itself established dominance over its own region in the 19th century before beginning to project power beyond in the 20th.

Preventing such hegemony must be and increasingly is the core goal of U.S. strategy. This is because the United States' fundamental strategic interest is—and has been for a very long time—in denying another even potentially hostile power the ability to dominate one of the key regions of the world. China's interest in regional suzerainty may be natural, then, but it is not acceptable. This is because the power that would flow from such hegemony would allow Beijing to set the terms of trade and rules of the international road in ways that would almost certainly be inimical to U.S. prosperity and freedoms. China would naturally seek to organize the world's most powerful region around its own preferences, not those of the United States. Over time, it would disfavor American prosperity, generate greater Chinese influence and leverage, and ultimately allow China to shape not only international life but also, indirectly and quite possibly directly, American life itself. It was for fear of such an outcome that the United States fought the Second World War in the Pacific and has had consistent interests in an open Asia since the early 19th century.

This dynamic would present a very serious challenge even if China were an ideologically friendly or compatible state, since such a state would still have interests in creating a regional system in its favor and prejudicial to American interests. But China is, of course, not an ideologically friendly state. Rather, mainland China is governed by a Marxist-Leninist party state, and under Xi Jinping, it is moving further in that direction rather than away from it. As this China grows stronger, it appears reasonable to assume that it will not feel more compelled than previously to change its political model, since such meteoric growth as China has undergone in the last forty years will very likely be seen as validating rather than undermining the Communist Party. It seems entirely reasonable to expect that such a China will increasingly seek to make the world safe for itself and its government style rather than adapt itself to others' preferences.

Because of this challenge from China, great power competition is the defining foreign policy matter of our time, and indeed very

much also a matter of domestic policy. Other issues are important or threatening, such as terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. But they pale in significance compared to the possibility of China imposing its preferences and will upon East Asia first and then the world at large. Only China can truly change the world in a sustained and dramatic way against our will.

The solution to China's rise is a classic one: balancing. The United States must affiliate with other states also fearful of Chinese regional hegemony to block Beijing's attainment of any such goal. Because of its importance, forming, sustaining, and ensuring the effectiveness of this coalition must be our paramount foreign policy line of effort. China's logical strategy, on the other hand, is to divide and conquer—to prevent such a coalition from forming or operating effectively.

The challenge, of course, is that China is an enormous country located within the Indo-Pacific that has enormous power of intimidation and suasion as well as titanic resources to dedicate to its strategy. China's military buildup shows one side of this advantage, the Belt and Road Initiative another.

The United States, however, has other advantages. Our very remove is an advantage; we are more credible in our claims that we ourselves have limited goals. In addition, despite often being irritating, high-handed, and overbearing, Americans have a fundamentally good track record, in Asia especially. Moreover, we are very, very strong and rich, and our future generally should look good, if we take the steps needed on the domestic front to continue to generate the wealth and power necessary to check China. Growth in recent years is an impressive example of what America is capable of. Finally, we almost certainly have a much better political, cultural, and ideological "story" than China; freedom and independence should sell better than a Sinocentric authoritarian order.

To this end, we need to focus on deepening and revivifying our alliance with Japan and greatly expanding and realizing the promise of our partnership with India. These are the two cornerstone states of any coalition designed to check Chinese hegemony. In addition, we must focus more on bucking up and working with the states of Southeast Asia. Southeast Asia is likely to become a more and more important arena of strategic competition between us and the Chinese, since these states are weaker and more susceptible to Chinese intimidation.

At the same time, we must do less everywhere else. The scale and sophistication of the China challenge is so great that we simply must economize. This does not mean ignoring things in other parts of

the world. Rather, it means husbanding our military resources and efforts, political capital, and wealth to focus on the primary objective: forming and sustaining an effective coalition to check China's bid for regional hegemony. This means a diminishment in our military activity in the Middle East and Africa, elevating the China issue to the top of the agenda in discussions around the world, and adapting our trade and economic policies to the realities of strategic competition with the People's Republic.

Success in this endeavor will bring a stable and advantageous balance of power in the Indo-Pacific in which China will effectively be compelled to behave responsibly. Unlike our past policy, which relied on the better angels of China's nature, this will look to their interests. On this firmer basis, China will have every incentive to recognize and respect the interests of the United States and other members of this coalition.

Russia presents a special case in the context of great power competition. It is true that Russia has, by global standards, a far smaller economy (indeed smaller than Italy's) and very modest international appeal as a model of ideology or political-social-economic success. Nonetheless, for a variety of historical and strategic reasons, Russia currently appears to be dead set on pursuing a kind of "spoiler" role in the international system, one with negative potential well beyond its economic ranking. More particularly, Russia has translated its more modest economic basis into a formidable military capability, especially in light of the effective disarmament of the European nations in the wake of the Cold War, and appears more risk tolerant than we are, and certainly more than our European allies.

This is important in particular because the same interest that motivates the United States to focus on the Indo-Pacific and check Chinese aspirations for regional suzerainty also, of course, applies to Europe. The United States continues to have an abiding interest in denying another state hegemony over Europe.

Of course, Russia cannot pretend to such suzerainty. NATO, even without the United States, is an order of magnitude more powerful. But Russia could create disorder and chaos within the European system in a way that would matter to the United States. Not every Russian intervention in European politics or life matters to the United States or Europe. What would be especially consequential, however, would be Russia undermining NATO. This alliance is the mechanism by which the United States and Europe manage European security; if it did not exist, we would almost certainly want to create something like it.

Russia does pose a serious, meaningful military threat to eastern NATO countries. Because of the interconnectedness entailed by the alliance's security pledge, this means NATO's viability is on the line in eastern Europe. The United States should therefore focus on shoring up the efficacy and credibility of the NATO posture in the east. This is entirely within the resources of the alliance, especially if Germany meets even a modest standard for what its contributions should be. While shoring up NATO defenses in the east, the United States should seek to align Europe toward checking growing Chinese power. The United States will need to achieve economies of scale with top-tier allies like Europe (and, naturally, Japan) to compete with China in areas such as 5G and a range of other technologically and economically demanding arenas.

Over time, the United States should seek to persuade Moscow that a highly alienated stance toward the West is both unavailing and increasingly opening Russia to subordination and exploitation by China. U.S. policy should be designed over time to realistically shape Moscow's incentives so that it eventually decides that at least some collaboration with the United States and its partners is preferable to falling into the Chinese orbit. Such an approach may or may not work, but even modest success is preferable to Russia fully aligning with China.

"...for many years, Americans could focus purely on ideals and high aspirations due to the preponderance of our power. This world is now gone."

To close, for many years, Americans could focus purely on ideals and high aspirations due to the preponderance of our power. This world is now gone. Things that were taken for granted twenty years ago no longer can be. Instead, we must adopt an approach of principled realism. We must actively strive to shape the world in order to ensure the continued flourishing of American life. Before anything else, this will mean tending to our own power and aligning with those who share our interest in denying China hegemony over Asia. Fundamentally, we will have to think and act in power politics terms in order not to have to live in a power politics world.

Becoming More Competitive with China

A Response from Dan Blumenthal

There is little doubt that the United States has slowly awakened to the fact that the People's Republic of China (PRC) has been competing with the United States since the fall of the Soviet Union and the Tiananmen Square massacre. China has been competing by undermining the U.S. strategy in Asia and increasing worldwide influence; interfering in our social, political, and cultural life; and building powerful political and ideological tools to push the United States out of Asia and to gain regional hegemony.

There is a little doubt that Asia—or, more specifically, Southeast Asia—has at least the potential to become the world's most dynamic region. This potential has yet to be reached because of the countries' rampant corruption, stalled market reforms, and inward-looking leaders.

I believe the United States' strategic tasks are as follows:

1. Prevent Chinese dominance of Asia.

2. Prevent the PRC's attempts at becoming the center of global power, which is a goal it has set for itself in the 19th Party Congress and associated authoritative speeches. For example, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) now constantly forces nations around the world to accept its preferred language about the international order with phrases that seem to mean nothing but have deep meaning to the CCP, such as, "building a community of common destiny."

3. Retain U.S. ability to maintain unfettered economic and military access to the region.

4. Help sustain and build an Asian order conducive to U.S. values and interests.

There are a number of reasons behind the paramountcy of these tasks, not least of which is that the United States never wants to face a threat to its homeland emanating from Asia again. It is always worth remembering that we were gravely harmed by the hegemony of a hostile Asian power just last century. Facing China after it is too late would be even more difficult, given its huge strategic depth and number of nuclear weapons.

I agree that the broad contour of a competitive U.S. strategy is to tighten a coalition of regional allies that are also unwilling to live in a world dictated by the CCP. I also agree that the sine qua non of such a strategy is a balance of power favorable to the United States. Since the United States is $22 trillion dollars in debt—not nearly as relatively strong as it used to be—and has a bipartisan political elite unsure of whether it wants to muster the resources to maintain such a balance, a regional coalition is all the more important.

However, this endeavor will be very difficult. One of our biggest challenges is that we still have very incapable partners in the region and/or allies that are unwilling to spend the necessary resources on defense. This includes even Japan, whose population is shrinking and whose pacifism is so deeply ingrained that it would take an extraordinary diplomatic lift to convince Japan to even help us improve our own conventional firepower—for example, by deploying a ground-launched cruise missile on the archipelago.

Moreover, while the attempt to build a friendship with India has been a bright spot for U.S. strategy in an otherwise disheartening 20-year grand strategy, India's contribution to a "grand coalition" will also be uneven. Just recently, the former chief economic advisor to President Modi has revised India's GDP numbers downward.

"From the standpoint of strategic competition, China is beset by tremendous weaknesses that are not highlighted often enough."

Now, for a note of optimism: From the standpoint of strategic competition, China is beset by tremendous weaknesses that are not highlighted often enough. Some are operational and highly classified, but others are hiding in plain sight. Some are top-level problems within the CCP itself. For one, the CCP just barely overcame a serious political crisis in 2012 and is still fighting off the backlash of

a challenge by Chongqing Party Secretary Bo Xilai. General Secretary Xi's approach to fight off this type of factionalism has been a political, economic, cultural, and intellectual crackdown the likes of which we have not seen since Tiananmen Square. This crackdown has purged the party of political opponents and targeted "flies and tigers" alike. And today, we are still discovering how China remains haunted by its response to Tiananmen.

Second, there has been a steady reversal of former PRC leader Deng's market reforms since around 2004. This reversal has significantly slowed growth by encouraging capital misallocation, heavy debt collection, and massive land mismanagement. It has also spurred a demographic burden that would be hard for even a rich country to meet. The surplus of males, the shrinking labor force, and an aging population will require leaders to put more thought into social safety nets, but the CCP seems reluctant to dedicate resources to such efforts.

Third, China is dealing with a global overreach. This comes in the form of maritime expansionism in the South China Sea and increased investment and military involvement in Central Asia, South/Southeast Asia, Africa, the Arctic, and South America. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), for instance, is yet another case of China overselling projects that they are in no position to pay for as its dollar reserves. The fact that the CCP has very big maritime ambitions, plus fourteen land borders, complicates its global aspirations even more. One of its land borders—Russia—may be too pacified for our liking, and another—India—is not pacified at all.

Furthermore, China is dealing with a U.S.-led global backlash at China's astonishing intellectual property theft and forced technology transfer, an armed forces that—despite braggadocio—has not been in combat since 1979, and a Chinese population that, as far as we can tell, has little use for its leadership. The proof of this is that those who can get their money and children out of the country do so.

Despite these challenges, China is still a formidable competitor. What it has achieved in three decades is quite extraordinary. But just imagine if there had been sustained pushback over the last 20 years. There has not been. A truly competitive strategy would have taken advantage of the above Chinese weaknesses.

First, we could exploit CCP factionalism by directly facing the CCP through informational and other activity so it would have to put more resources toward defending its weak legitimacy to its own people. This would involve sustained information campaigns inside China highlighting continued elite corruption and injustice as well

as targeting third-party countries on issues that most matter to them (e.g., a much more serious effort to highlight its crackdown on religious rights of Buddhists, Muslims, and Christians).

Second, we can compete with China's stagnating economy by revamping a U.S. science and technology policy that did quite well in the Cold War. The United States can create networks of cooperation among industry and governmental agencies, such as NASA and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, and universities. As far as I can tell, such a network helped us invent the Internet and therefore solve some command and control problems associated with Soviet nuclear forces, with obvious positive knockoff effects for the U.S. economy. But we have not done all that much in national security (except certain military research programs). One area of contemporary relevance would be a research and development effort to move global 5G to software-based rather than hardware-based networks and center the next industrial revolution in the United States.

Third, we can use the fact that China has fourteen land borders and the United States has only two to our advantage. We can identify and exploit fissures between Russia and China, such as China's strategic forces, China's moves into Central Asia, and China's demographic takeover of the Russian Far East.

Fourth, we can sustain the global pushback campaign against China by adopting a punishing economic approach that blocks Chinese intellectual property thieves and their beneficiaries from market access into advanced industrial countries. We should also push back against the global export control regime that blocks investment and sale of items and services into China's civil-military fusion program. Lastly, we can identify the three or four areas in the military—some of which are published in open sources—where China is operationally weakest and force it to close the gap in these capabilities.

All of this is to say that we can compete with China by demonstrating that the Chinese capabilities that worry us are contained and less threatening because China is more inward-facing and continental-facing. The CCP is a party focused on protecting its own legitimacy and spending its scarce resources on defensive operational capabilities and internal security. Doing so would allow the still very much developing South and Southeast Asian nations more time and space to harden and grow and demonstrate that the United States is better able to meet its regional and global goals. Finally, perhaps adopting such a competitive strategy aimed at the party would even allow the very aspirational Chinese people to forge a path ahead on their own terms—not the CCP's—if they so choose.

America's Strategic Advantage

A Response from Kurt Volker

China is big, growing, cash-rich, ambitious, powerful, strategic, and patient. Russia is decaying slowly, but it has the advantages of its willingness to take decisive action and use force and of a population that tolerates privation. It also has a strong appeal to blood and soil values of nationalism and traditionalism. ISIS and other terrorists have the element of surprise in their arsenal, but nothing else. North Korea and Iran are regional nuisances whose ambitions exceed their abilities.

What sets America apart? America fosters innovation, dynamism, openness, transparency, strong institutions, self-renewal, the largest and best military in the world, and true alliances with others. America is big, strong, and sustainable.

That is one lens—a power lens—through which one can assess America's challengers and America's place in the world.

Another lens is the prism of values. ISIS and other terrorists have no values that relate to universal human aspirations. They are at odds with the people. The same is true of Vladimir Putin's Russia—and the North Korean and Iranian regimes as well. They are interested only in extending the power and wealth of the regime itself, not about the advancement of their own people.

The Chinese government is different. Even though it abhors human rights, individualism, and democracy, the Chinese government nonetheless supports some values with which we can identify: lifting people out of poverty, wealth creation, education, technological advancement, environmental cleanup, health, regional stability, and even fighting corruption.

Yet due to its blind spot on human freedom, the Chinese Communist Party is not an inspiration to humanity, and it is seen as threatening

by its neighbors.

What sets America apart in this way of looking at the world? Among global powers, the United States is the only one where universal human values are respected, people have the opportunity to project their values onto the government, and the government works with and supports others in the world who also uphold these universal values of freedom.

"America is built on the empowerment of its people. Other global competitors retain power at the expense of their people"

America is built on the empowerment of its people. Other global competitors retain power at the expense of their people. Through this prism, too, America is stronger and more sustainable than any competitors.

So what should America's strategy be? Defeat ISIS and other terrorists, block Russia, and engage China.

The first two elements are clear. There is no bargaining with ISIS, and we can wait out Putin's challenge to us and the rest of the world. But why engage China? Of all America's challengers, only China has the potential to evolve, and only China can seriously challenge the United States without recourse to nuclear weapons.

ISIS and other terrorists will seek to destroy the United States, its allies, and any other representatives of humanity for as long as they exist.

Putinism rests on the sale of natural resource wealth and increasing repression, which is presented to the public as necessary in order to defend Russia against imagined threats, and to sustain a glorious Russian imperial hegemony over its neighbors. Such a narrative, however, has little to do with reality, is opposed by Russia's neighbors, and will crumble as a justification for Putinism as soon as the first cracks emerge.

China, on the other hand, has changed dramatically over the past 50 years in fundamental ways. It remains capable of change. The Chinese people do not approve of many aspects of the Chinese system, but they support much of it as well. China seeks continued economic evolution and sustainability, not mere extraction and regime survival.

True, a newly powerful China may seek to redraw lines on the

map, rewrite the rules of global trade, and redefine the relationship between the Internet, information, and freedom, among other things. America and its allies can and must push back against these forays, and the Chinese government has thus far shown a reluctance to pursue confrontation when it can pursue a strategy of patience instead.

But America retains one key strategic advantage: the ability to inspire. America's commitment to realizing and advancing universal human values means that America benefits from the support of people all over the world—even among the populations of our global competitors.

More important than the United States and the West confronting China—militarily or otherwise—is the ability of the United States and its allies to advance a global agenda of freedom, prosperity, and security.

Using this strategic advantage requires some fundamental rethinking of American policy today.

First, we must have confidence in our own system and values. We will always have political differences of opinion among our people, but we must not demonize our opponents or tolerate a divided America. We need to make sure we are indeed the success story we have always been.

Second, we must talk about and promote freedom at all times. Talking about our own national interests, or being treated fairly in the world, may have some validity. But what inspires others is the shared belief in core values—and at the heart of all of these is freedom. And this is an inspiration not just to governments who share our values but also to people in repressive systems who need a lifeline of support when their own governments abuse them.

Third, we must proactively support and work together with allies who share our values. No country that shares America's commitment to freedom is expendable.

Fourth, we must consistently identify and push back against our adversaries. They know who they are—and so does the rest of the world. We should know them, too, and build sustainable global pressure against them.

It is true that, when measured through the lens of military or economic power, America's global dominance is declining. But when measured through the lens of mobilizing the hearts and minds of people all around the world, America's power is as strong as ever, and it is not going down any time soon.

The Future of Conservative Foreign Policy:
Political Realities and Electoral Viability
Paul Lettow

In setting out what the future of conservative foreign policy should be, we can take some useful lessons from the past. The foundations of modern conservatism lie in leaders who, in times of confusion and discord, drew on and extended enduring principles to their trying circumstances, with the end of building toward something better—or at least avoiding the worst outcomes.

Edmund Burke is rightly seen as one of the fathers of modern conservatism. He was an exemplar of conveying a strategic vision to his compatriots during a time of turmoil. From his seat in Parliament, Burke cast a wary eye on events at home and abroad, and the connection between the two. Amidst a rancorous political atmosphere in London, Burke looked at upheavals first in America and then in France, and got them both right. In each case, Burke was working against what seemed to be the prevailing political temper of the times. (His colleagues were not wise enough to understand his sympathies for the American colonists; they soon enough realized his insights regarding the revolution in France.) He articulated fundamental principles to the public and his colleagues and then applied them to the crises at hand, clearly and compellingly.

Burke emphasized that navigating through crises had in the past, and would in future, require adherence to "the two principles of conservation and correction." Those two principles are mutually reinforcing.

The first Republican president likewise remains a guide. "With firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right." That phrase

from Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural address encapsulated his determination to preserve and extend first principles, as well as his dispassion and anti-utopianism.

And Winston Churchill, between the two world wars, remaining alert to the human capacity for destruction and tragedy, drew on the interests and principles he had inherited. He championed them when it seemed impolitic, insisting that they guide Britain—and the Free World—through strife.

The United States is now in the midst of a period of turmoil, at home and abroad. It seems evident that we are embarked on an era of transition in global politics. The Cold War and the immediate post-Cold War eras—the latter a time of enthusiasms and ultimately of disappointments and struggles—have given way to something new, something else: a revitalization of great power competition with different and unique challengers and challenges.

These changes are accompanied by uncertainty and discord about how to proceed. We could do worse than to keep in mind the two principles of conservation and correction. There is much to conserve. And there is much to correct.

We ought to strip things down to basics, to fundamentals. Geopolitics matters: before, now, and always. Preventing the destabilization or domination of East Asia, Europe, or the Middle East by a power hostile to the United States is an enduring first principle of U.S. foreign policy. A related principle is that America should maintain access to lines of communication between and among those regions and more broadly to the sea, air, space, and cyber commons.

Those principles have roots in the thought of, among others, Alfred Thayer Mahan, Theodore Roosevelt, Nicholas Spykman, and George F. Kennan, and in conceptions of the post-Cold War world by George H. W. Bush and his administration. They remain true and sound as framework principles for foreign policy today.

Elbridge Colby succinctly stated the positive case for pursuing those principles in recent congressional testimony. He said that maintaining favorable balances of power in these regions "preserve[s] our ability to trade with and access the world's wealthiest and most important regions on fair grounds." The negative case is that the destabilization or domination of one or more of those regions by forces hostile to the United States would prove disastrous.

That is a harsh lesson of history. As Robert D. Kaplan sums up, "Don't ever think that things can't get worse, because they can, and

quickly." A tragic sensibility has guided the strategies of America's finest statesmen, from John Adams and John Quincy Adams to Dwight Eisenhower and beyond. Kaplan, describing George H. W. Bush's successful national security approach, stated that "the way to avoid tragedy is to think tragically." That sensibility should remain central to U.S. national security strategy today.

That necessitates communicating to the American people both the positive case and the negative case above. A number of the essays in this series discuss the existing domestic political currents: a wariness of major conflict involving U.S. forces, especially in the Middle East, but also a sense that the world is going to pot, there and elsewhere; a sense that the United States has been taken advantage of in recent years; and foreboding about what lies ahead for the world and America's place in it.

Henry Kissinger observed that the role of a statesman is to lead a society from where it is to where it has never been, which requires both understanding the present and setting out a vision that inspires people to persist toward it. Our times necessitate a tough-minded analysis that forthrightly acknowledges the United States' circumstances and results in a plausible way to get the country to a better, or at least not worse, place in the world in coming years. In short, the United States needs a sober foreign policy vision that aims to preserve American strength, prosperity, and freedom of action for the long haul. Americans sense the need for that kind of approach, one that allows them best to weather the storms that they know are coming.

Which brings us back to geopolitics and great power competition. The fundamental U.S. interests and principles described above are being challenged by China; by Russia, which is acting as a spoiler and destabilizer when and wherever it can; and at the regional level by Iran and North Korea.

The United States is in a geopolitical competition with each of them, and China in particular poses unique and profound challenges. The current administration has emphasized that in its National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, and follow-on strategy documents, and it did so compellingly and resonantly.

The United States has succeeded at long-term, great power competition in the past. But it is out of practice. And the competition, and the competitors, while sharing similarities with the past, are different.

In 1946 and 1947, in a kind of Big Bang at the start of the Cold War,

Kennan identified the threat posed by the Soviet Union and the outlines of a strategy that would ultimately guide U.S. policy for the ensuing decades. In contrast, today the United States finds itself in the midst of a long-term competition that rivals have been engaged in for years. It is behind—in grasping the nature of the challenge and in laying out long-term objectives. And at the moment, economic ties between the United States and its principal global competitor are extensive. The administration is presently reassessing and, it seems, aiming for a readjustment of those ties.

Successful long-term competition requires an understanding of one's rivals, what they're up to, and why. That includes emphasizing intelligence and net assessment, but also conveying the facts clearly to the public. Americans are ready for that—and may think it's overdue.

The United States must prepare for, and play, the long game. That means marshaling and sustaining resources, including military, fiscal, and otherwise; exploiting comparative advantages; shoring up relative weaknesses; and establishing priorities.

Peace through strength is now mostly associated with Ronald Reagan. But it has a long lineage in conservative internationalism. Theodore Roosevelt was a master of the art of leveraging hard power, both extant and latent, to maintain favorable balances of power and serve geopolitical ends. So was Eisenhower, whose motto *Suaviter in modo, fortiter* in re ("Gently in manner, powerfully in deed") was an adaptation of Roosevelt's "Speak softly and carry a big stick." George H. W. Bush in turn consciously sought to draw on Eisenhower's approach. He referenced a line of principles from Lincoln to Theodore Roosevelt to Eisenhower and quoted Eisenhower directly: "There is in world affairs a steady course to be followed between an assertion of strength that is truculent and a confession of helplessness that is cowardly."

That is a legacy worth extending. Strong, global military power in the service of a long-term competition is sound strategy and is historically precedented. It is also politically resonant. At its best—as in the Theodore Roosevelt, Eisenhower, and Reagan administrations—it helps ensure that U.S. forces are engaged in actual combat only rarely and in limited scope and thus aids in its own political sustainability. Polling for decades has generally shown that Americans trust Republicans more than Democrats on national security issues. There have been exceptions, such as during the worst of the war in Iraq, but the basic point has endured. The tenets of conservative internationalism—seeing rivals for who and what they are; a tragic sensibility; and steady, long-term strategy underpinned by hard

power—should remain the foundations for that trust.

They are also the surest way to preserve and extend American constitutional rights and values based on human freedom. Disregarding or downplaying American values, much less demeaning them or engaging in relativism, is anathema to past U.S. foreign policy successes and to the conservative tradition and is profoundly counterproductive. But American hard power is essential to the salience and attractiveness of those values. Invocations and championing of fundamental values are most potent when America's hard-power trajectory and geopolitical standing are moving upward, a point that is innately understood at home and abroad. Hence, the contrast between Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. Americans often cite John Winthrop's words about the "city on a hill" and "the eyes of all people are upon us" in a positive, inspirational sense. That is good and right. But Winthrop also meant his message to be a warning, and his words foreshadow Lincoln. If we fail, Winthrop said, "we shall be made a story and a byword through the world" and "shame the faces of many of God's worthy servants."

"Americans want to avoid being taken advantage of by foe or friend but also undoubtedly appreciate that their country is greatest when held in esteem, even admired, abroad."

A long-term strategy focused on maintaining favorable regional power balances, enabled by sustainable U.S. and allied hard power, and guided by enduring values would be compelling and galvanizing for America's allies and partners. Indeed, it may be the only strategy that can ensure the maintenance of America's alliance and partner relationships. They are, in turn, indispensable to and a powerful comparative advantage for the United States in great power competition. Acknowledging that would help not just abroad but politically at home. Americans want to avoid being taken advantage of by foe or friend but also undoubtedly appreciate that their country is greatest when held in esteem, even admired, abroad.

A number of the papers in this series have addressed the foreign policy inclinations of millennials and related analyses of the tumultuous politics of our moment. Those are important issues. I have tried here to make the case, both strategic and political, for a long-term U.S. strategy grounded in geopolitics and in the traditions of conservative internationalism, as adapted to our times. Presented clearly and coherently, that kind of approach may be accepted and even welcomed politically by Americans; and it provides the best

opportunity for them to persevere and thrive in a difficult era and to avoid a precipitous slide in world standing or falling into conflict from a position of geopolitical disadvantage.

I want to end by addressing how such a strategy intersects with two pressing political issues.

One is the greater Middle East and the quandary of military action there. In the Middle East, the United States must play the long game to prevent destabilization or domination of the region by hostile external actors, a principle set out in the Carter Doctrine. It must also prevent destabilization or domination of the Middle East from hostile forces within the region (e.g., Iran). Plainly setting out that latter principle would give coherence to U.S. policy now and in the future, clarifying that working to shape a favorable regional balance of power peacefully, through diplomacy backed by America's and its partners' hard power, is itself an important means of avoiding further large-scale combat by U.S. troops in the region.

Yet, in the meantime, the United States must also undertake the near-term and gritty work of preventing the worst terrorist attacks, which means doing the best it reasonably can to eradicate or prevent terrorist hotbeds and otherwise neutralize the threat at the source. In order of long-term priority, America's eyes should be on East Asia, first, and Europe, second. But having relatively small numbers of U.S. forces operating on antiterrorism missions is prudent, perhaps necessary, and—as long as it does not make situations worse—consonant with what Americans see as the lessons of the last two decades.

The other issue is climate change. Here again one can find guidance in the principles of conservation and correction. It means seeing and acknowledging the facts as they are and pursuing an approach that is grounded and plausible. The innovations of horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing, and the relatively clean natural gas bonanza they have brought about, are the kinds of solutions that play to U.S. strengths. With some cooperative government involvement, driven by the private sector and deployed at scale by its markets, these solutions may even advance, rather than trammel, the U.S. economy. That kind of precedent and the sober realization that not much will work if the rapidly growing major carbon emitters do not curtail or reduce emissions seem good places for conservatives to start working on the problem.

Paul Lettow served as the senior director for Strategic Planning on the National Security Council staff from 2007 to 2009. The views expressed here are his alone.

The Future of Conservative Foreign Policy:
Political Realities and Electoral Viability
A Response from Kori Schake

My friend Paul Lettow has already taken the high road, advocating engaging young Americans with the inspiration of conservative principles. And I agree with him. In my experience, our foundational beliefs as conservatives do appeal to our successors. Our political problem is not that we cannot win over younger Americans to our principles, it is that we are failing to win over our contemporaries to those principles. That voters under age 30 voted for Democrats by a 35 point margin in 2018 is the result of that failure: they reject us because we don't stand for our principles, not that they don't.

"…they reject us because we don't stand for our principles, not that they don't."

This is not merely a short-term effect, perhaps even satisfying to conservatives who declined to vote or work for candidate and then President Trump. It's true that only 25 percent of voters 18 to 29 years old approve of President Trump. But even signatories of the anti-Trump letters should not take validation in younger Americans' rejection of our political party at this moment, because it will have longer term effects: 59 percent of millennial voters are now registered as Democrats. Party affiliation creates vestigial preference, even long after policy divergence has occurred.

Nor should we be complacent that young Americans will age into conservatism. There's actually no evidence of the phenomena. As Kim Parker of Pew concludes, "The differences we see across age

groups have more to do with the unique historical circumstances in which they come of age."

Americans under the age of 29 had as their formative experiences the age of terrorism, the mistakes of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the 2008 financial crisis—all of which they associate with the Republican Party. And they revile the depredations of President Trump's behavior and the procedural contortions by Senate Republicans to partisan purposes, like the refusal to vote on Supreme Court nominee Merrick Garland.

What we as a conservative movement look like to younger Americans is old, white, male, bigoted, and unprincipled—people who bray loudly at others breaking the rules but excuse ourselves doing so.
It is profoundly self-defeating to blame higher education or peer pressure for young Americans fleeing the Republican Party, as Paul Gottfried does. To say "millennials vote for the Left because they have been conditioned to do so by social media, educational institutions, and their peers" is to consign our political movement to failure.

To adopt Gottfried's approach is worse than accepting failure; it is a rejection of our conservative principles. To resign ourselves to externalizing the causes of our failure is to deny that policies have any effect on voters. It is to say they are incapable of reasoning their way to policies that advance their interests. Alexander Hamilton worried about this, writing in Federalist Paper No. 1 that "it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force."

So we must not take refuge in believing young Americans are an unwinnable demographic, even though 51 percent of 18 to 29 year olds believe our country is on the wrong track. Only 22 percent of Republicans share that view; and 74 percent of Democrats believe the country is on the wrong track. So younger Americans are less critical than Democrats.

But younger Americans are less interested in what have traditionally been the mainstays of Republican policies: foreign policy, protecting against terrorism, and low taxes. This is not an argument for abandoning our traditional strengths in those areas; we need to demonstrate interest and facility beyond them. We cannot rely solely on the appeal of those policies, but ought instead to meet younger voters where they are and step forward as Paul Lettow advocates to win support for principles that drive policies in those areas.

So, to paraphrase Freud, what do younger Americans want? What do

they care about? Their top concerns are climate change and health care. Only 8 percent of them think immigration is a problem. Even self-described and activist conservatives among younger Americans are more socially liberal than their elders, and they favor diversity. This generation gap, incidentally, does not parallel among Democrats. We Republicans have a generational schism that Democrats do not have.

But our generational chasm on the conservative side has advantages, because surmounting it will require agreement on foundational principles. We cannot take any Republican voters for granted, nor can we have only policies that attract younger people because the overlap of Venn diagrams for our voters across the age spectrum is not sufficient to the task of turning out election-winning majorities for our party. We are, happily, reliant on principles to take us beyond policy agreement.

At its most basic, conservatism rests on the dignity and judgment of individuals. We refer less to group identities than do liberals, and that is an advantageous starting point for connecting with younger Americans, because they, too, prize their individuality.

I absolutely agree with Paul that "a sober foreign policy vision that aims to preserve our strength, prosperity, and freedom of action for the long haul" is sellable, and that, as he writes in his excellent paper, the public is yearning for it. We Republicans have a long and proud tradition of that in foreign policy. But polling does not support his supposition that our fellow Americans view us as more trustworthy on national security issues; that is a net advantage to Democrats in our current moment. Neither are the president's erratic policies regaining ground for Republicans; public attitudes are moving in opposition to his policies. Unless we roll our sleeves up and win this argument within the Republican Party, we will lose the larger argument with the American public.

Principles are the starting point and necessary to lay the foundation for policies that address younger Americans' concerns. As Alex Murisianu has argued, we have conservative policies that speak to young Americans' principal worry, which is the affordability of a middle-class lifestyle. Reducing regulations that block affordable housing, ensuring accessible and affordable health care, cutting the cost of higher education, protecting the environment, rebalancing entitlement programs' intergenerational transfers of wealth, and promoting fiscal conservatism are all policy winners consistent with our conservative principles.

Those are not policies our Republican leaders in the Executive Branch and the Congress are practicing. And that is the inescapable rub: We cannot win younger Americans to conservative policies because we

are not advocating conservative policies, and we cannot win younger Americans to conservative principles because we are not advocating conservative principles. We have to win this argument among our cohort before we can win over the future lifeblood of our party.

How to do that is, of course, the political question of the moment. Elected Republicans will for the most part support the president's decisions as long as they consider them, or him, to have electoral resonance—or at least as long as they believe they cannot succeed with Republican voters by opposing him or advocating different policies. And we cannot fault them for believing getting elected is a precondition for the ability to enact policies. That is merely to say they are politicians.

As evidenced by no Republican of salience being willing to primary a sitting Republican president, our leading party politicians do not believe they can succeed with Republican voters by opposing President Trump or advocating different policies. Nor are our leading party politicians willing to break with the president on immigration, deficit spending, tariffs, or racially tinged travel restrictions. They have placed restrictions on the president's ability to enact policies detrimental to our alliances in Europe and Asia and cuts to diplomacy. But for the most part, even when conservative principles are involved, our party leaders are leaving challenges to the president up to Democrats.

This argument about the future of conservatism will be won or lost not in the halls of Congress, but in Rotary Clubs and parish houses, city councils and school boards. There is simply no substitute for retail politics if we are to reclaim Republicanism for principled conservatism. And if we are to save conservatism as a political force in American life, we must all partake of it, finding ways to model the behavior and advocate the policies consistent with our conservatism. I find the most effective way to get traction in those venues is not to speak of lofty principles—redolent as they are to those of us who spend our professional time working on these issues—but to give concrete examples from which the principles can be derived. Americans may be leery of defending the liberal international order, but they viscerally oppose the Chinese government rounding up a million Uighurs into concentration camps. And even as they may be outraged at our government interning immigrants at the southern border, they still see a difference between border security to prevent uncontrolled immigration and forcible internment and reeducation of citizens.

We can, and should, have these conversations over and over because that is how we draw our fellow Americans—and the winnable 18- to 29-year-old constituents who could be the future of the conservative movement—into building a Republican future that is more conservative than the Republican Party leadership of our moment.

The Future of Conservative Foreign Policy:
Political Realities and Electoral Viability
A Response from James Jay Carafano

The first point I want to cover is the issue of millennial voters. I don't pretend to be an expert. But I think there are some rules that apply, not just to millennials, but rules that are really generation-proof, rules that reflect how all Americans practice their civil responsibilities. I think there are three of them. We should keep these in mind when we think about not just the best way to appeal to voters but how to govern to protect the freedom, prosperity, and security of all Americans. That said, it is also worth acknowledging perspectives that are unique to millennials, younger voters, and future voters. The hopes, dreams, aspirations, and interests of every generation make us who we are.

My second point addresses the larger issue. We need an American public that is resilient enough to sustain support for long-term competition, because structuring the United States to win long-term competition is the core of what is needed for future U.S. strategy.

A Generation Gap?

There is a real question whether millennials in their political views over the long term will really be that different than any other generation of voters. Here are three rules that I think apply to all generations.

Rule #1. Americans have always tended to address domestic and foreign policies differently. On domestic issues, they tend to align with politicians who align with their views. If a politician is advocating Obamacare, and voters like Obamacare, then they like the politician. In foreign policy, they tend to do the opposite. They trust the politicians they like and trust them to lead on foreign policy. The

exception to this rule occurs during periods when voters sense an existential crisis, losing trust in the politicians and then voting with their gut: Who can pull us out of this mess? Good examples of this discontinuous voter behavior are the outbreak of the Korean War, the intense unrest from the civil rights movement and antiwar protests in 1968, and the backlash against the Iraq War and Hurricane Katrina response, when voters rejected the established order. These are the exceptions that make the rule.

The bottom line is that on matters of foreign policy, like every other generation, millennials are likely to vote for the leaders they trust, not necessarily the policy positions candidates take.

"Never confuse popularity with popular will."

Rule #2. Never confuse popularity with popular will. Popularity is how a voter feels about something at the moment. Popular will is the underlying willingness of the people to be governed. Popularity can change in a news cycle. Popular will is far more durable and matters much more in foreign policy issues. Because presidents have fixed four-year terms and enormous constitutional authorities in matters of foreign and defense policy, they don't have to fret about winning popularity contests all that much.

The Vietnam War is perhaps the best exemplar of this dynamic. The defeat in Vietnam is often portrayed as the American people abandoning the war after the Tet Offensive; the war had just become too unpopular. Yet, they elected a president who actually accelerated and expanded military operations. The United States didn't sign a peace treaty until 1973. We didn't abandon Vietnam until 1975. Arguably, if Nixon had not been impeached and was still president, he could and would have resisted congressional pressure to cut off aid to South Vietnam. The United States might still be in South Vietnam today. The point is that it was seven years from when Walter Cronkite said the war was lost, turning American public opinion against Vietnam, to the end of U.S. engagement. That's because many Americans might not have liked the war, but Americans were still willing to be governed by their elected officials, and their elected leaders kept fighting.

The United States is certainly capable of fighting long and unpopular wars, sustaining military presence overseas, and engaging in all kinds of other proactive foreign policy activities—even if they don't always poll well at home. Wilson and FDR knew this. They both ran for election promising to keep America out of the war. They both

made those campaign promises knowing full well they would not be able to keep them. Neither fretted about going back on campaign promises when national interests dictated otherwise. FDR, of course, did have Pearl Harbor, which immediately swung public opinion. Americans who had overwhelmingly opposed U.S. entry into the war before the Japanese attack continued to support the war effort through years of conflict, privation, and sacrifice.

The lesson here is that once elected, officials can largely count on the willingness of the people to be governed when they shape their foreign and security policies. Those policies should be focused on national interests, not on what polls well at a particular moment with millennials or anyone else.

Rule #3. Americans are not Hobbesian. Thomas Hobbes, the 17th-century British political philosopher, postulated that human behavior was driven by ceaseless cravings. Since we are incapable of curbing our appetites, the only way to avoid endless war and competition is to turn control over to an authoritarian ruler to discipline us and enforce rules to govern us. Even fans of freedom wondered if Hobbes might not have had a point. In Democracy in America (1835), Alexis de Tocqueville had lots of nice things to say about the new nation and the idea of people governing themselves, but he wondered if a representative republic really could fight wars and deal with protracted security challenges without collapsing over internal squabbling over self-interests while the barbarians stormed the gates. Well over two hundred years of history, multiple wars, and incessant domestic policy debates have answered that question. Americans aren't Hobbesian. We have governed ourselves just fine for some time now, surviving even the sternest tests, including a national Civil War over slavery.

In practice, free societies can be more resilient. This is because Hobbes was wrong. Sure, humans have cravings—no people more than Americans. Some crave material goods. Others want homes, relief from student debt, safe spaces, and participation trophies. But humans also show capacity for self-restraint. We restrict our cravings when we sense they are self-destructive and not in our self-interest—that's why democracy works.

In this respect, I don't think millennials are any different. I imagine many would prefer using plastic straws, but they would vote to forswear them because they are convinced that plastic straws are bad for the environment. In the same way, generations ago, people started wearing seat belts and smoked and drank less because they concluded the harm outweighed the compulsion to give into the desire of continuing risky behaviors.

This human impulse, I think, extends to politics. In the end, voters of all ages will vote for what they perceive is in their best interest—not just vote for all the stuff they want.

Where millennials (and also even younger voters) may be unique is in perceiving crises that are "generational." That is, they recognize something as an existential threat, but other voting age groups do not. There is an argument to be made that climate change might be one of these. This is an issue worthy of addressing. The reality is, like the oceans filling with plastic, Americans are not really the problem here. The challenge is the behavior of other nations. So this really is a foreign policy issue, and if there is an effort to break the stranglehold of how millennials perceive this issue, there has to be a credible and efficacious agenda to show we are working on that.

The greater Middle East, as a contrasting example, is a less existential issue for millennials. There has been, on the other hand, a monumental shift in how Israel is perceived. That is, however, not just a generational issue. Israel is becoming a partisan issue in the United States in large part because the Left is increasingly willing to frame the bilateral relationship as a human rights challenge—and Israelis are not the good guys. This is another problem worth working on.

What these issues have in common is that they tend to blur the distinction between domestic and foreign policy. There is no question that millennials have a more globalist view of the world. Both human rights and climate change are examples. This breaks down the traditional paradigm of domestic versus foreign policy behavior in voters that I referenced earlier in my commentary. Younger "globalist" voters are tending to see these kinds of issues as domestic—something that affects their daily lives, not just something far away for politicians to worry about.

That is another reason not to be sanguine about how millennials and younger voters think about these issues: They may well carry this perspective with them as they age. They likely won't grow out of it. What is interesting about both these issues is that they were manufactured by the Left—not the issues themselves, but the belief that that the issues are existential challenges that require social justice responses. The Left may not be done. They will likely create more of these. One possibility is viewing the national debt as an existential threat, not in a fiscally conservative manner but as a social justice problem.

That said, I think conservatives can counter these concerns in the way they pitch such issues to millennials. It is not that conservatives

need to change their foreign policy to accommodate millennials. As with any group that disagrees with you but that you want to bring over to your side, you have to start by acknowledging that their concerns are valid. Then make the case that there is a different and more efficacious way to address the problem than what the Left is offering. This may not win over many voters, but it will neutralize the issue.

Will for the Fight?

My second comment relates to Paul Lettow's larger point on strategy. I agree the focus should be on key regional competitions—Europe, the Greater Middle East, and the Indo-Pacific—and the goal is maintaining the U.S. core competitive advantages in security, prosperity, and liberty as we work to keep these regions relatively stable, well-governed, and economically free. This pairs with the second goal—protecting the freedom of the commons (space, cyber, seas, air). The United States has to have access to these regions to be able to protect our interests or to get somewhere to protect our interests. Satisfying these two vital concerns makes the third key interest—protecting the homeland—much easier.

Paul is right. The United States remains competitive by the prudent and judicious use of power—leaning forward, maintaining a forward presence—to demonstrate the resolve to protect our interests. But we must not waste power and become overly entangled, draining rather than enriching U.S. power.

Strategy has to be suitable, feasible, and acceptable. This gets to my second point. This strategy might be suitable and feasible, but it also has to be acceptable. To the point, for the strategy to work, Americans have to be willing to compete on the global stage for a long time.

For many conservatives, winning them over to this formula isn't that hard. You just have to prove that it will work over time. Nothing breeds confidence like the perception of success. If conservatives see America's power isn't waning, they will keep confidence in their leaders and trust them to manage our foreign policy. We already see this in President Trump's base. All he has to do to keep them is not start World War III or tank the economy.

The larger issue ties back to my point on millennials. Many in that generation don't see competition as a good thing. Their default preference is for cooperation. Their desire to cooperate not confront is echoed in other quarters, especially in the transatlantic community. This is very different than the situation during the Cold War, when Left and Right pushed and tugged, but not over the core strategic

concept to view the Cold War as a competition.

That said, there is growing convergence among the policy elites—the pandering of progressive presidential candidates aside—that the United States is in for a long competitive fight. This fight will not be a replay of the Cold War, but it will be like the Cold War in that success will mean sustaining our competitive strengths and identity over a long-term competition (the core of Kennan's proposal in the Long Telegram).

For example, it is noteworthy that Presidents Bush, Obama, and Trump all had the same top bad guy list: Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, and terrorism. They had different ideas about dealing with them, but they agreed on the competitors. That is the most consistent threat perception among American political elites that we have seen since the end of the Cold War. I think it reflects a strategic consensus among elites that we haven't seen since the 1950s. That's something to build on. However, the foundation under it isn't fully formed.

On the one hand, there are many Americans who aren't up for competition. Some of them are opposed to the idea, some are afraid, some are lukewarm toward the idea of competing, and some are wedded to a more structuralist view of the world order. Here is where libertarians of the world fit in. On their own, I don't see them as a rising force in foreign policy. But I do see them making common cause with others who eschew the concept of competition. This coalition of the willing might prove not insignificant—especially if foreign affairs turn south or national elections bring progressives to power.

On the other hand, there are many willing to embrace competition, especially among conservatives. The problem here is the tendency of some of our friends to frame the world in Manichaean terms. That is, they have a black-and-white view of competition that may have been appropriate for the Cold War and the Global War on Terror but that is ill-suited to contemporary challenges. The world isn't black and white; we can't dump countries like Pakistan, Turkey, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia in the "for us" or "against us" camps.

In summary, what I feel I have added to the conversation here is to suggest that (1) we should not change the strategy to gain greater acceptability—that will make our strategy less suitable and less feasible; and (2) there is no single narrative that adequately addresses how to build sustainable acceptability for a long-term strategy. I'm not sure I would try. Rather, I would pursue different narrative paths that drive toward consensus over the next six years. That is certainly a worthwhile effort.

Defense Strategy and Priorities:
Topline or Transformation?
Mackenzie Eaglen

While the 2018 National Defense Strategy charts a more honest and realistic priority set of threats and challenges for the U.S. military, it is still purely additive. Like every post-Cold War strategy before it, the document simply piles on newer and harder missions without meaningfully reducing or shedding others deemed less important.

Pentagon leaders should be applauded for fresh thinking around 21st-century challenges. But at the same time, we should accept that the strategy was a codification of the obvious, lacking in hard choices and details, and under-resourced. Rectifying the bulging strategy-resource mismatch will require fewer demands on U.S. forces, innovative thinking and planning to turn it into concepts and guidance, and more traditional and cutting-edge investments.

The Newest Straw Men: Competition vs. Conflict

The National Defense Strategy takes a narrower view of America's strategic requirements, one overly concerned with the growing operational and tactical challenges posed by Russia and China, to the detriment of almost everything else. This myopic view tends to fall apart under the pressures of politics, time, and bureaucratic friction or inertia.

With a few exceptions, the debate over the National Defense Strategy has devolved into discussions about which futuristic technologies are most exciting, with a side of decontextualized budget figures and a sprinkling of buzzwords about "great power competition," "lethality," "modernization," and "gray-zone" competition. Complex

questions of force development boil down to "capacity vs. capability," and debates over technology and equipment beg the question by defining "modernization" of the force mostly as targeted investment in development of future weapons.

Though the National Defense Strategy rightly calls for additional efforts to prepare for high-end conflict against Russia and China, it underestimates the force demands of day-to-day assurance and deterrence on America's military and skews the Pentagon's modernization program in favor of riskier transformation. These fundamental shortcomings ripple through thinking about how U.S. military forces should be sized, shaped, modernized, and ultimately resourced.

Proponents of the strategy frequently argue that the military should cease growing or even shrink to pay for making existing forces "more lethal." However, because policymakers are unlikely to decrease the demand signal for military forces, trading away capacity—especially before the promised next-generation technology arrives primed and ready—will create a hollow force.

"The tendency to fall back on seemingly simple high-tech solutions and fuzzy concepts…is partly the result of a Pentagon lacking the analytical ability to provide clear choices to lawmakers."

Feigned Hard Choices vs. Reality

The tendency to fall back on seemingly simple high-tech solutions and fuzzy concepts like "dynamic force employment" is partly the result of a Pentagon lacking the analytical ability to provide clear choices to lawmakers. This inability to characterize trade-offs between force structure, readiness, innovation, and modernization renders force development discussions fruitless. It also leads to an underemphasis on what "competition" and "conflict" mean, not only against China and Russia, but also in a global context and by service.

The National Defense Strategy's new force planning construct measures the adequacy of U.S. forces largely by their ability to defeat and deter two great powers while fully mobilized, even as the force maintains deterrence in a third theater. By not explicitly attempting to measure the stresses of everything else the military must accomplish, this planning construct cannot give decision makers the tools to evaluate the necessary size and shape of U.S. forces at varying levels of risk. Under a flat budget and without a reduction

in mission demand, capping the size of the military or shrinking it to pay for qualitative improvements will result in its inability to meet likely requirements and a perpetual readiness problem as units are overused.

One popular interpretation of National Defense Strategy priorities is a shift away from capacity and toward advanced capabilities, or to take more risk in the present day to buy the future. But defense planners cannot assume that politicians will follow their preferred priorities. Take as evidence the sustained congressional interest in maintaining a robust U.S. military presence in the Middle East.
Risk translated actually means longer wars, higher casualty rates, loss of major capital assets, and worse. As the National Defense Strategy Commission highlighted, the U.S. military might "struggle to win, or perhaps lose, a war against China or Russia. The United States is particularly at risk of being overwhelmed should its military be forced to fight on two or more fronts simultaneously."

The defense strategy does not account for the unique demands, which often differ by military service and region, of a three-theater demand on forces. To remain a global power, the United States must preserve a favorable balance of power in Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia. America cannot lead the world by pivoting or swinging among theaters nor by retreating home.

We need permanently forward-based forces that provide the front lines of deterrence in Europe and East Asia and that are sufficient for both decisively reversing the jihadist tide in the Middle East and frustrating Iran's hegemonic designs. These demands are consistent and will be long-term. The military must also retain a large, varied, capable, and joint set of forces based in the United States that would be able to deliver rapid and perhaps repeated heavy blows in case deterrence fails or if, in a crisis, the demands for direct action in the Middle East increase. Finally, the Pentagon must retain a sufficient mobilization base to ensure the ability to sustain wars in extended theaters and to hedge against strategic surprise.

The Pentagon's "Small" Change

That makes the original sin of the National Defense Strategy its failure to recognize that U.S. national security leadership is unable to make "hard choices" at the strategic level. Pentagon policymakers have not made convincing arguments, let alone succeeded in enacting change, about the trade-offs that would allow the military to prioritize great power competition under a flat budget.

Accounting for inflation, the original 2020 defense budget request

of $733 billion represents no increase from the 2019 level of $716 billion, which itself did not grow from 2018. While the 2018 spending level jumped significantly from 2017, the increase merely began to repair military readiness after the Pentagon lost $550 billion in buying power under the Budget Control Act. In the future, the administration's plans show the defense budget declining, despite its own recommendations for 3 percent to 5 percent real growth to buy the new strategy.

The purpose of a defense strategy is to outline priorities in enough detail that those charged with implementing and resourcing the strategy understand the risk of making trade-offs between threats and missions. Under a flat budgetary outlook, arguing for prioritizing conflict against China and Russia without specifying which current missions to jettison amounts to having your cake and eating it, too. What would a realistic trade-off look like? Such prioritization could take two forms: reducing the demands on U.S. forces or developing cheaper methods of achieving a given mission set, such as using light attack aircraft or Security Force Assistance Brigades. Evidence of either is not in abundance. Even when presented by the Pentagon, they often die quickly on Capitol Hill.

Strategy proponents often argue to reduce demand in the Middle East and Africa, but these are risks policymakers have been unwilling to tolerate to date. Another choice has been to focus on war-fighting readiness over symbolic assurance and presence missions. But these hopes are largely unrealistic in light of the history of American defense commitments and the current political and international security environment.

Not only does the new strategy underestimate the long-term mission demand on U.S. forces because it rests upon faulty assumptions about the behavior of American political leadership, it also misjudges the likelihood of surprise in the nature, location, and simultaneity of future conflicts.

Spending priorities that focus on readiness today for the "fight tonight" plus futuristic research and development experiments and technologies for the war of 2030 or beyond are missing the medium term. This "barbell investment strategy," which emphasizes the weights of the immediate present and—distant future, ignores the long bar of the interim wherein most strategy and military risk lies. Most of the military's modernization projects involve investing in the next 3 to 15 years, including through the building or rebuilding of fleets of ships and vehicles, inventories of fixed and rotary-wing aircraft, new nuclear and space assets, and hundreds of small upgrades.

How Much Is Enough? Beyond "Capacity vs. Capability"

Defense observers have long discussed the fundamental trade-offs between force structure, readiness, and modernization—the so-called Iron Triangle. The triangle is often boiled down even further into direct trade-offs between capacity—the size and composition of the military—and capability, or how well the force is equipped and trained.

The National Defense Strategy moves away from sizing the force based on regional threats. Instead, it advances conflict with China and Russia as the main challenges to deter and defeat if needed. Yet it is much vaguer about how to size U.S. forces to meet the full suite of missions and challenges—including these two, but also above and beyond.

A force planning construct should help measure the adequacy of U.S. forces to achieve overall mission demand, but force development arguments have never been more muddied. The superficial nature of this debate owes much to the absence of a coherent force planning, development, and budgeting process at the Pentagon.

The National Defense Strategy's force development plan does not advance a conversation with nuanced appreciation for the complex interaction of force structure, readiness, and modernization—specifically over different time periods and against different threats. Rather, the discussion over how to size, shape, and modernize U.S. forces has devolved into a vague sense that the current U.S. military should be capped in size or even shrink to pay for investments in advanced technology. In the absence of a coherent and clearly articulated force development process, observers construct straw men against which to argue.

Revolution in Military Affairs = Military Transformation = Third Offset Strategy

Even in the murky swirl of current force development, Congress should press pause on the idea that trading away capacity for capability represents a sound defense planning choice. Competing with and preparing to fight China and Russia clearly ranks as the most pressing challenge facing the Pentagon, but it is only one of many.

Proponents of the National Defense Strategy also argue for riskier transformational modernization of the U.S. military in which legacy weapons are cut to pay for bets on developmental technologies. This approach, while not without merit, suffers from four flaws: (1)

it discounts developmental risk and focuses on technology before operational concepts; (2) it ignores massive deferred modernization bills coming due now; (3) it assumes a supine Congress; and (4) it underinvests in sustainable equipment choices. Even if successful, it will result in a force with tiered modernization incapable of carrying out the full ambitions of the strategy.

Like it or not, over three-quarters of the fighting force of today will be the same forces fighting in 2030. Transformational weaponry and operational concepts will undoubtedly prove integral to the deterrent credibility and combat efficacy of future U.S. forces. But sound defense planning must incorporate caveats to such transformational efforts with a sober appreciation for the risk inherent in such efforts. The identification of selected future technologies—e.g., hypersonic weapons, artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, directed energy—precedes the development of operational concepts detailing how the military will use them. But a variety of factors conspire to inevitably delay the timeline for development, fielding at relevant numbers, and integration of these selected future technologies into the force and the way of war.

A coherent force modernization strategy must also take into account the overall health of the force. Principally, that means understanding that the need to develop new capabilities comes just as the U.S. military faces massive deferred modernization bills—often called "bow waves"—that come due in the 2020s A huge chunk of this problem stems from continual reluctance to deal with aging gear from the Cold War era, either through recapitalization or true modernization.

This reluctance creates two pressing issues for the department.

1. By not spreading modernization efforts across time, it has created a unique spending spike. The Department of Defense faces at least four partially overlapping modernization bow waves: nuclear, naval shipbuilding, Air Force aircraft, and infrastructure.

2. The continued inability to incrementally modernize the force makes future modernization choices worse, as the investment budget necessary for modernization gets strangled by the exponentially increasing costs of older equipment. The Pentagon is in an operations and maintenance spending death spiral, which grows with each fiscal year.

Conclusion

This latest attempt at military transformation should be pursued with a healthy dose of skepticism, an appreciation of history, and a balanced suite of other investments, new operational concepts, and more genuine efforts to reduce demand on the force. Even if transformation were to succeed, if it is zero-sum, it will create an unbalanced military, reduce the efficiency of the acquisition system, and leave future policymakers with worse and fewer choices.

Simply "doing more with less" will prove difficult, if not impossible, in practice. Plus, if the new strategy is simply additive in its demands, why isn't its associated budget purely additive in dollars? It is past time for the honest and uncomfortable conversation about what is needed and what is affordable. The answer is simple, but it is not easy.

Defense Strategy and Priorities:
Topline or Transformation?
A Response from Roger Zakheim

We have made a tremendous amount of progress in defense policy over the past two years. The release of the National Defense Strategy (NDS), with its emphasis on China, and robust defense budgets to support its execution serve as the two most notable metrics of this progress. Neither of these developments was inevitable. Yet, relative to the challenge of executing and resourcing the strategy, the progress to date pales in comparison to the challenges ahead. That challenge requires something that's difficult for any large organization: the Pentagon needs to walk and chew gum at the same time. It needs to figure out how to keep the peace today—that is to deter high-end and low-end adversaries—and to change (dare I say "transform") the force for a new generation of warfare.

For a variety of reasons, defense intellectuals, elected officials, and policymakers are embracing the need to transform. What's unclear and requires more attention is the pace and nature of that transformation. That's the debate before us. Can we transform iteratively, must it be done radically, or, as the pessimists predict, can it happen only once we find ourselves in a hot fight with our forces on their heels?

My own view departs from what is implicit in Chris Brose's excellent paper—that we must radically transform. This is not to say I disagree with the thrust of Chris's arguments. The opposite is true: My recent experience on the National Defense Strategy Commission reinforces many of Chris's concerns. Most notably, I saw little evidence that the Department of Defense has a conceptional framework to leverage new technologies in an armed conflict. The department lacks a

focused, tangible set of new concepts for how we might fight China; this was perhaps the most telling sign that we're at risk of entering a future fight with the force of today.

"Yet, to transform without a clear vision of what we're transforming into risks not only failing in a future fight but also forfeiting today's military strength."

Yet, to transform without a clear vision of what we're transforming into risks not only failing in a future fight but also forfeiting today's military strength. Here's an example of what I mean: Making the operational leap into a force that leverages autonomy, artificial intelligence, and machine learning may very well mean that we no longer need manned fighter aircraft.

So, when do we jettison the fighters? Can we make such a transition while simultaneously investing in fifth- and sixth-generation fighters and maintaining a military service and an industrial base that are committed to fighters? How do we "disrupt" the fighter community? While I support increasing funds for our military, do we have resources to cover both disruptive autonomy and legacy fighter programs? And should we? As Chris points out, why invest in more fighters if prevailing in a future fight won't be determined by manned fighters? Or worse, investing in fighters could play into the very cost-imposing strategy the Chinese are pursuing against us. These are alluring questions that our leaders would do well to ponder. I'm all for investing in an operational concept of swarming autonomous aircraft if it existed beyond a PowerPoint® slide. Unfortunately, my own investigation into this question revealed that even a PowerPoint® is hard to come by; thus, until the military has more to show for it, I wouldn't trade the F-35 of today, for example, for an inchoate concept of tomorrow.

This, of course, leads to the challenge of how to catalyze change in the fixed structures of the Pentagon. How long do we wait when we're dealing with a bureaucracy that is institutionally built to preserve the status quo? This is where I depart slightly from Mackenzie Eaglen's argument. Even with all of the well-reasoned justifications for today's defense program, there's little hope it will yield what's needed for tomorrow.

Yes, our plate today is full. We need a global force presence. We need to restore the readiness of today's force and modernize the nuclear triad. But even with all the needs of today, we must begin driving

decisions over the next five-year period that result in a material change in the force structure and force presence we employ today. And this leads to the how: This change should be radical in its management but not in its implementation. Let's not jettison a single carrier until we have something to replace it with. Too much is at stake today. The transformation needs persistent attention with clear benchmarks and milestones attached to its implementation. We need to maniacally press the Department of Defense to transition from experimenting and piloting into programs of record that truly displace the old way of fighting. If we are truly on the precipice of introducing monumental changes equivalent to the tank replacing the horse cavalry, then the future years defense program needs to more aggressively push for these changes, and it should be measured against this transformation. This, of course, is happening unevenly, if at all.

Part of this change requires new approaches to lesser challenges too. I mean that we need to change the way we compete today, with the way we deploy and deter in the Middle East being first on the list. We ought to deter Iran, for example, with lower-end and less conventional capabilities, so we can free up the higher-end platforms for the Chinas of the world. This, of course, was the direction of the NDS, yet we see little evidence of its implementation. Take the recent tensions in the Strait of Hormuz. The Trump administration employed the same costly playbook the military has used for the past 30 years by deploying a carrier to the region and increasing the U.S. force presence. How we deal with low-end threats today affects our ability to deal with bigger threats tomorrow.

I would like to make a final point regarding how this debate risks being exploited by the perennial critics of the Pentagon strategy and budget. This transformation, whether it be implemented iteratively or radically, will not be done by reducing our role in the world, nor can it be done by spending less on the military. Just read the latest issue of the New York Review of Books, and you encounter the specious arguments that draw in fiscal conservatives and liberals alike. So the argument goes: Eisenhower's military industrial complex invents the threats that beholden lawmakers are only too willing to believe and resource when, of course, the only real threat is the wasteful bureaucracy that—if it were more responsible (and peaceful)—could preserve the peace for pennies on the dollar. If only it were so easy.

How the Post-9/11 Generation Views American Power

Kristen Soltis Anderson

Most millennials—a generation of those whose birth years span from 1981 to 1996—were at school the day of the September 11 terrorist attacks. In the run-up to the next presidential election in 2004, the fabled "security moms" became one of the most talked-about demographics. These were women who acutely remembered the fear in their hearts the day they rushed to pick up their young children from school after seeing our nation attacked live on television. Many of those children being picked up at school were born during or shortly after the presidency of Ronald Reagan, so their memories are of an era largely characterized by peace and prosperity. That tragedy of 9/11 would mark the first time many of them were truly, fully aware of the dangers facing our nation from abroad.

One month after the attacks, the Harvard Institute of Politics asked 1,200 undergraduates across the country—a group including the oldest edge of the millennial generation—for their views on foreign policy and defense issues. The Harvard study, one of the first surveys in their now nearly two-decades-long study of American youth politics, found that 79 percent of American college students supported air strikes in Afghanistan and 68 percent would support the use of ground troops. Three in four said they trusted the military to do the right thing all or most of the time. Ninety-two percent considered themselves to be patriotic.

Those numbers would not last. In spring 2003, 59 percent of college students across the country supported a foreign policy of preemptive action against hostile nations, and support for the Iraq War outpaced opposition by a two-to-one margin. Two years later, the Iraq War faced majority opposition, and only one-third believed that the "U.S.

should work to spread freedom and democracy around the world." The generation that had entered political consciousness ready for American power projection shifted their opinions when confronted with the limits of that power.

Even setting aside the particulars of foreign policy, young people's attitudes toward the military and America itself had become less positive. By 2011, only seven in ten considered themselves "patriotic," and only a third said they believe the United States is the greatest country in the world. According to the Reagan Institute's 2018 National Defense Survey, just over half of those under age 30 have a "great confidence" in the military.

Today, those high schoolers and college students are in their mid to late 30s. (One of the students who drafted the questionnaire for the Harvard study in 2001 is currently running for president of the United States.) They have grown up. They have kids, jobs, mortgages. They pay taxes. And as they have aged, contrary to conventional wisdom, they have not grown more conservative, nor have they seemed to move toward embracing a more conventional center-Right view of America's role in the world.

Generational divides over politics and policy are not new. What is new today is that partisan differences by age cohort are significant and expanding. This matters not just because young people are taking on different points of view than their parents or grandparents, but because of the likely origins of those differences. Research suggests that political events that occur when a person is between the ages of 14 and 24 have the most powerful influence in shaping one's lifetime political attitudes. Events occurring at age 18 have three times as much of an impact on one's worldview as an event that occurs at age 40. For older generations, perhaps the Cold War or Vietnam or even World War II present context that informs their worldview. For millennials, however, the American response to September 11 and the perceived failures of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan provide the most important lens through which they see other foreign policy issues.

Their younger brothers and sisters in Generation Z have followed suit. The Pew Research Center finds that Generation Z—those born after 1996—are just as likely as millennials to say that they think other countries in the world are better than the United States. It is too soon to tell where Generation Z, which has little to no memory of September 11 or even the era when the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts dominated the news, will land on foreign policy issues. But early indications suggest they will share at least some of the sensibilities of their elder peers, including their view of America's

role in the world.

Advocates of a robust role for American leadership around the globe must contend with two forces driving millennial views. Helpfully, millennials are a very globally engaged generation and are not isolationist, prioritizing things like travel abroad and being highly exposed to the lives of those in other nations, including via social media. They view international cooperation and multilateral institutions as valuable. However, millennials are also of the mind that American action abroad tends to be ineffective at best and to exacerbate problems at worst. Millennials may not wish to retreat from a global community to which they are deeply connected, but they are skeptical of the use of American hard power as a tool to shape that world.

"Millennials may not wish to retreat from a global community to which they are deeply connected, but they are skeptical of the use of American hard power as a tool to shape that world."

Pew Research Center asks a series of questions about views on foreign affairs and finds these two forces at work across generations. When asked if "we should pay less attention to problems overseas and concentrate on problems at home," millennials are the only generation where a majority says yes. Other generations are more divided or lean toward saying "it's best for the future of our country to be active in world affairs." At the same time, millennials are the least likely to say we should "follow our own national interests even when allies strongly disagree." Far from wanting us to isolate ourselves, millennials seem to want us to engage. However, what they want from that engagement is diplomacy and cooperation, not the use of military strength. Even as all other generations have held stable over the last few decades on whether or not "good diplomacy, rather than military strength, is the best way to ensure peace," millennials have trended heavily in the direction of diplomacy.

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs has also tracked public opinion on international affairs for decades, and their rich data on generational divides about America's role in the world are illuminating. While baby boomers and Generation X became more optimistic about America taking an active role around the world as they aged, millennials have shown no such pattern, becoming even less supportive of American military engagement since the beginning of the Trump presidency. Similarly, while other generations became

slightly more focused on the importance of "maintaining superior military power worldwide" as time went by, millennials have become less focused on this as they have aged, with only 44 percent saying this is very important to them. Where generations used to be closely aligned on whether or not defense spending ought to be increased, that question is now sharply divided by generation, with millennials most resistant to greater defense spending.

However, according to the same study, millennials are just as likely as older generations to believe we should maintain or increase our commitment to NATO. They believe globalization has overwhelmingly been positive, with seven in ten saying globalization has been "mostly good." They share the baby boomer and Generation X view that international trade has been good for the U.S. economy as well as consumers, and it is millennials who hold the most positive view of NAFTA. This is not a generation that wishes to turn its face from the world, looking inward and pretending the rest of the globe does not exist; rather, this is a generation that believes firmly in the value of America's engagement with and connection to other countries, but strongly prefers that engagement to not involve the exertion of military power.

In the aforementioned Harvard Institute of Politics spring 2005 survey, 43 percent of young Americans surveyed listed either defense or foreign affairs issues as their top concern. By the spring 2019 study, that figure had plummeted. Only 1 percent cited foreign affairs as a top issue, and 2 percent chose "safety and security," a broad category left undefined. One consequence of there having been no major terrorist attacks on the American homeland since September 11 is that young people today are less exposed to the dangers we face from around the globe. But young people are also less exposed to the idea that American strength can be a force for good. In that Harvard 2019 poll, respondents were asked if they believed "American foreign policy has done more good than harm for the rest of the world in the past decade." Only 26 percent agreed. (The plurality responded that they simply weren't sure either way.)

Those who believe that America can be a force for good in the world, including by having the strongest military in the world, have much work to do in persuading millennials to come along with this view. With foreign policy issues occupying significantly less attention in the minds of these voters today, their views are shaped by the memories of when these issues did occupy a large share of their attention: during the 2000s, when unpopular American wars dominated the headlines. That this remains the major time in their lives when foreign policy and defense were the dominant issues has only underscored the idea that when America flexes its muscles

overseas, it brings great cost in blood and treasure, with nothing but trouble to show for it.

There is, however, still hope. These same younger Americans also believe that there are many issues, from climate change to humanitarian crises, that demand U.S. leadership, engagement, and economic commitment. There are still avenues through which millennials believe American soft power can play a positive role in shaping world affairs and commitments from which this generation would not like to see us retreat. Furthermore, there is extensive evidence to suggest that public attitudes on foreign policy issues are malleable and that, in fact, voters of all ages are eager to take cues about their foreign policy opinions from leaders they admire. While partisan attitudes may be fairly deeply ingrained for millennials at this point, issues that do not sit neatly along a partisan axis may still be more up for grabs, particularly when they have been relatively absent from millennial political discourse in recent years.

The children of the security moms have grown up. They are making up their minds on issues, speaking out, and voting. Their views of American foreign policy and global leadership differ substantially from those of their parents. These views did not come from out of the blue, and they are not just the product of liberal professors on college campuses. Young Americans' adult lives have seen a host of foreign policy failures, and their generation has borne much of the human cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Given the experience of their lifetimes, it is not surprising that they look skeptically at claims that American strength can be a force for good. There is significant work to be done in making the case to this generation that American leadership—including and especially in the arena of military strength and engagement—is indispensable to a peaceful and prosperous world.

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