



A Virtual Think Tank (ViTTa®) Report

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Types and Locations of Challenges to US Interests, 2019-2029

Deeper Analyses
Clarifying Insights
Better Decisions

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What is ViTTa?

NSI's Virtual Think Tank (ViTTa) provides rapid response to critical information needs by pulsing a global network of subject matter experts (SMEs) to generate a wide range of expert insight. For the Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA) Future of Global Competition and Conflict project, ViTTa was used to address 12 key questions provided by the project's Joint Staff sponsors. The ViTTa team received written response submissions from 65 subject matter experts from academia, government, military, and industry. This report consists of:

1. A summary overview of the expert contributor response to the ViTTa question of focus.
2. The full corpus of expert contributor responses received for the ViTTa question of focus.
3. Biographies of expert contributors.

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Question of Focus

[Q5] In which regions should the US expect significant challenges to its interests over the coming decade? What form will these challenges take (e.g., poor/instable governance, rising hegemons, aggrieved populations, violent non-state actors, external influence operations, etc.) and which US interests will these challenges most likely impact?

Subject Matter Expert Contributors

Dr. Gawdat Bahgat (National Defense University), Colonel Kris Bauman (US Air Force Academy), Dr. Patricia J. Blocksome (US Naval War College), Dr. Ryan Burke (US Air Force Academy), Dean Cheng (Heritage Foundation), Dr. Raphael S. Cohen (RAND Corporation), David C. Gompert (US Naval Academy), Dr. Molly M. Jahn (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Dr. Buddhika Jayamaha (US Air Force Academy), Dr. Stuart J. Kaufman (University of Delaware), Dr. Jahara Matisek (US Air Force), Dr. Sean McFate (National Defense University), Anthony Rinna (Sino-NK), Dr. Derek M. Scissors (American Enterprise Institute), Dr. Laura Silver (Pew Research Center), Dr. Yuval Weber (Daniel Morgan Graduate School of National Security), Ali Wyne (RAND Corporation), Dr. Jen Ziemke (John Carroll University)

Summary Overview

This summary overview reflects on the insightful responses of eighteen Future of Global Competition and Conflict Virtual Think Tank (ViTTa) expert contributors. While this summary presents an overview of the key expert contributor insights, the summary alone cannot fully convey the fine detail of the expert contributor responses provided, each of which is worth reading in its entirety. For this report, the expert contributors assess the types and locations of significant challenges to US interests that will emerge over the coming decade.

Types and Locations of Challenges to US Interests, 2019-2029

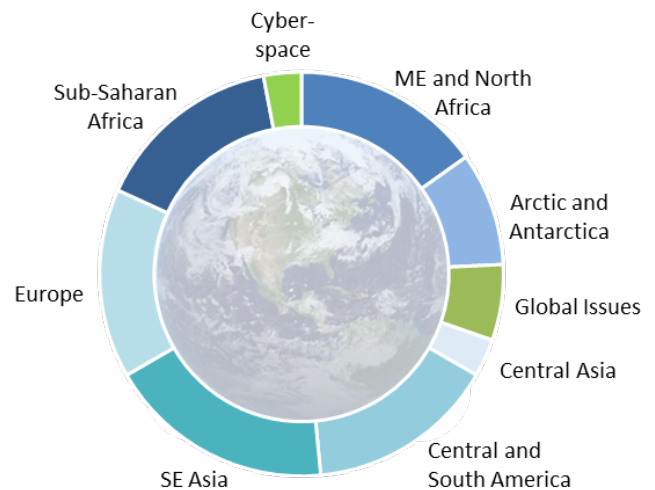
The good news is that the contributors provide insightful and comprehensive assessments of the regions in which the US should expect significant challenges over the next ten years. The bad news, however, is that these challenges span the entire physical and virtual worlds; clearly demonstrating, as Dr. Stuart Kaufman of the University of Delaware observes, that, "as has been true for decades, significant challenges to US interests will arise in every corner of the globe."

Contributors generally align in highlighting many of the same regions as areas in which the US should expect significant challenges to its interests over the coming decade. A few contributors also highlight cyberspace and the challenges to global politics and security that will arise from global issues such as climate change. Six of the contributors specifically identify China as the major source of the challenge to US interests, five specifically point to Russia, and only three mention violent extremist organizations (VEOs) or terrorism more generally.

Interestingly, however, few of the contributions specifically detail the US interests that are likely to be at stake. In fact, Dr. Sean McFate of the National Defense University begins his contribution by reflecting on this very issue: "We would benefit from developing a grand strategy that helps to define what our national interests are...One of the things that grand strategy should do clearly is outline perpetual national interests because America has no permanent allies or permanent enemies, it just has permanent national interests." Whether as a deficit in strategy or communication of that strategy, the issue of *which* US interests are threatened is sometimes overlooked, unstated in some cases and implied in most others. This appears to suggest either that, even for

Americans, US interests are difficult to articulate and/or are undefined in some regions of the world, or that they are presumed too obvious to mention; it is taken for granted that readers know what they are. Nevertheless, the forms that these challenges will take and the implied US interests that will be challenged are discussed by region below.

Challenging Regions



The Middle East and North Africa

Several contributors highlight the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) as a region in which the US should expect significant challenges to its interests over the coming decade. Dr. Raphael Cohen of the RAND Corporation asserts that one of the most likely locations for "large-scale American military intervention over the coming decade may still be the Middle East." David Gompert of the US Naval Academy agrees, calling the region the "wild card" in the deck of great power challenges and suggesting that it could become as much of a proxy location for "geo-strategic rivalry" as it was during the Cold War. Contributors generally identify three US interests that are likely to be challenged in the Middle East: maintaining state and regional stability, maintaining US regional influence, and reducing the threat of terrorism. In terms of threats to these interests, contributors highlight:

- Iranian activity in Syria
- Russian competition in Syria
- Chinese diplomatic and economic competition
- Instability in Jordan
- Instability in Saudi Arabia
- Failed states
- Poor governance, corruption, and high unemployment, fueling population grievance and instability which will in turn fuel terrorism¹

¹ See contributions from Bahgat, Cohen, and Cheng.

Colonel Kris Bauman of the US Air Force Academy and Dr. Patricia Blocksme of the US Naval War College offer additional examples of potential challenges to US interests in the region. Bauman maintains that failure to produce an “equitable, sustainable, two-state, permanent status agreement” between Palestinians and Israelis will continue to fuel Hamas and support for terrorism in the region, and miss an opportunity to remove one of the triggers of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) rift. Bauman notes the irony in that the “enhanced security” that a prospective agreement would produce is currently hindered by the very measures (e.g., occupation of Palestinian territories) meant to make Israelis more secure. Coming to a settlement, Bauman contends, is not mainly an issue of security but “political courage.” Blocksme points to the region’s oil producing states and the possibility for increased instability should their revenues decrease precipitously, for example as a result of challenges to the market from US producers and increasing global use of renewable energy.

Other contributors, however, offer a contrary perspective: that there is no significant threat to US interests in, or from, the Middle East. McFate believes that the Middle East is not “as important as people think it is.” Similarly, Kaufman rejects the notion of significant challenges to US interests from the Middle East. Kaufman argues that one of the fortuitous results of increased US energy sufficiency is that “the Middle East and Africa are no longer areas of vital American interests” and, as a result, will not warrant US stability operations in the region. These types of interventions, according to Kaufman, “make little difference anyway: terrorism of Middle Eastern origins occurs overwhelmingly in the Middle East, not on the territory of the US or its major allies. And while Israel is an ally, it does not need the US to fight its battles.”

Sub-Saharan Africa

Contributors also identify Sub-Saharan Africa as a region in which the US should expect challenges to its interests over the coming decade, though few detail the specific types and forms of challenges that should be expected. Contributors do, however, highlight this region as an area in which China will seek to compete economically and militarily with the US.²

More specifically, Dr. Buddhika Jayamaha of the US Air Force Academy, Dr. Jen Ziemke of John Carroll University, and Dr. Molly Jahn of the University of Wisconsin-Madison outline threats to US interests that are emerging across the Sahel,³ although they do allow that European allies “feel the implications on their national security most acutely.” The significant challenges center around crime, and in particular the criminalization of the security services across this region. While low-level activities include, for example, bribery at security checkpoints and extortion of local businesses, the significant threats to US national security are less observable. A criminalized security apparatus, Jayamaha, Ziemke, and Jahn detail, abets “state capture” and failure of the rule of law and legitimate governance. This is because criminalized security means that its protections can be purchased. The result is that international economic elites, industrial narcotics producers, and drug and human traffickers are able to work their illicit activities while also running licit and cover activities. These criminal activities not only destabilize already weakened states, frustrate governing reforms, and delegitimize central

² See contribution from Cheng in particular.

³ The Sahel is an extremely arid region that includes parts of Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Algeria, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea, and Ethiopia.

governments, they also add to the supply of illicit goods in the global system and produce funds that can be used to support international terror groups and transnational criminal organizations.

Europe

Contributors are divided as to whether Europe is a region in which the US should expect significant challenges to its interests over the coming decade. Cohen concludes that, like the Middle East, Europe is a region that is likely to see "hostile aggression" over the next ten years.⁴ Gompert believes that the challenges posed by "Russian threats and intrigue" are not critical in Western European states, especially so long as NATO remains strong and unified. The vulnerability, rather, is greatest among former Soviet Republics, Gompert contends. Anthony Rinna of Sino-NK, however, disagrees, arguing that US partners, especially in Western Europe, are vulnerable to Russian influence because of the Russian desire to divide the US from these states. These vulnerabilities, Rinna suggests, are intensified at present by three factors: 1) the general uncertainty about the direction US foreign policy will take, 2) US "complacency" regarding the strength of its alliances with European states, and 3) Russia's ability to exploit a range of non-military tactics in Western Europe.

Central Asia

Only two contributors identify Central Asia as a potential "hot spot" for challenges to US interests over the coming decade.⁵ Dr. Yuval Weber of the Daniel Morgan Graduate School of National Security asserts that the importance of the region is not only a function of US interests there, which are limited to "stability, support for democratization, and natural resource exports," but in large part because of the importance of Central Asia to China and Russia. Specifically, Weber expects that both China and Russia will use conflicts in the region to test various "tools and strategies" against each other "before turning them on the US and allied states." In this vein, Weber highlights an important point of leverage that the US might be able to exploit against China and Russia. While China and Russia do cooperate in mutual opposition to the international order led by the US and its allies, in Central Asia they are "very much competing through gritted teeth in the region along security and economic axes."

East Asia

Contributors generally agree that East Asia is a region in which the US should expect significant challenges to its interests over the coming decade. Cohen argues that East Asia—home to both the United States' "only true competitor" and a temperamental nuclear state—is the region in which large-scale military conflict would be the most damaging to US strategic interests. Gompert sees the region becoming even more challenging in two ways: 1) as China becomes increasingly vital to local economies, US influence in the region could erode, and 2) as China continues to increase its military strength, it could be empowered to go to greater lengths to defend contested territories. Ali Wyne of the RAND Corporation remarks on the predicament of US regional allies striving to balance security and diplomatic ties with the US on the one hand, and the economic importance of China on the other. Forcing allies to choose, Wyne argues, may not be to the United States' advantage in the longer-term. Afterall, Wyne explains, China is a "geographical fixture" whereas the US is a "distant superpower"

⁴ See also the contribution from Kaufman.

⁵ See contributions from Scissors and Weber.

whose level of commitment and presence in the region waxes and wanes, compelling regional states to hedge by taking "measures that insulate their fortunes from the vagaries of US foreign policy." Wyne quotes Jeffrey Bader, principal China advisor to President Obama from 2009-2011, on exactly this point:

"Americans need to understand that if we go down the road of disengagement from China in pursuit of unbridled competition, it will not be a repetition of the Cold War with the Soviet Union, when the United States was joined by a phalanx of Western and democratic countries determined to join us in isolating the [Soviet Union]...the rest of the world, like us, is deeply entangled with China economically and in other ways. Even those most wary of Beijing, like Japan, India, and Australia, will not risk economic ties with China nor join in a perverse struggle to re-erect the 'bamboo curtain,' this time by the West. We will be on our own."

In terms of territorial claims and disputes, Dean Cheng of the Heritage Foundation argues that the capabilities and types of power China will employ in Asia vary by location. In South Asia and the Indian Ocean, for example, Cheng contends that China will use primarily economic and diplomatic means to achieve its objectives. However, Cheng asserts that the US should expect China to employ "the full range of capabilities, including military" capabilities, against what it perceives as contests in areas that it "already considers part of China" (i.e., Taiwan, East and South China Seas) and in Southeast Asia. McFate elaborates on what he sees as China's incrementalist strategy in these areas: provoke or allow a situation to escalate "right to the brink" of serious conflict before pulling back while still in possession of what has been captured or created to that point, then wait for a time to repeat the process. This, according to McFate, is how "China is winning the South China Sea incrementally, one island at a time, and will eventually erode our alliance system" in the region. McFate disagrees with Cheng on Chinese use of military capabilities, however, arguing that its "Three Warfares" strategy focuses China on "influence, lawfare, and economic instruments," notably leaving out military capabilities. As a result, McFate argues, while China is "using information operations to write its own narrative around the world," the US is "struggling to compete because it is still focused on the old rules of war."

Polar Regions

Contributors who highlight the polar regions as areas in which the US should expect challenges over the coming decade generally align in assessing that these regions will be among the most strategically important areas for the foreseeable future, and the location of significant contests for influence and control. In the Arctic, in particular, climate changes are opening shipping lanes and the possibility of resource extraction, generating major incentives for competition. Increasing competition in the region, contributors suggest, will create several challenges, particularly regarding: 1) rules and procedures for military presence, particularly in newly opened waterways; 2) responsibilities for those waterways; 3) potential port expansion or construction; and 4) indigenous rights, territorial boundaries, and ownership of natural resources—the value of which could reach into the billions.⁶ Relatedly, Dr. Jahara Matisek of the US Air Force warns of the threat of direct challenges to international norms from Russia, which should be expected to continue to "push the boundaries of what is deemed acceptable, especially against the Arctic Circle neighbors of Canada, Greenland (Denmark), Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Finland."

⁶ See contributions from Blocksome, Burke, and Matisek.

Although less frequently discussed than Russia, Matisek also warns that Chinese intentions in the Arctic must not be forgotten. China, Matisek notes, has recently published an official white paper that highlights the importance of melting icecaps in facilitating the opening of shipping lanes that may be used as a "Polar Silk Road" for trade and access to the region's undersea resources. Matisek further comments on the challenges posed by Chinese research activities in the polar regions, both of which are crucial sites for studying and implementing scientific efforts to reduce the devastating impact of icecaps that continue to melt. Matisek reasons that "aggressive and antagonistic" Chinese operations in the South China Sea demonstrate its approach to controlling sea lanes, and he expects that China will operate in the same ways in the polar regions, thus posing a direct threat to free trade and rules-based authority in both the Arctic Circle and Antarctica.

Global Conditions

Finally, several contributors express concern with challenges that span regions and are likely to impact nearly every corner of the globe in some way. Closest to home, Dr. Laura Silver of the Pew Research Center reports that global public opinion of the US across 25 countries surveyed by the Pew Research Center has hit "historic lows," with many of the sharpest declines occurring, perhaps not surprisingly, among long-standing US allies and neighbors such as Mexico and Canada. This is not just an issue of popularity but can pose a significant threat, as poor opinion of the US among foreign populations can cause people to support more aggressive political and/or economic policies toward the US or could put US citizens and assets abroad at increased physical risk. Kaufman sees a global spread of "aggressive nationalism" emanating from China and Russia as a threat to status quo powers. Underlying stimuli of each of these, however, can be the hardships and instability resulting from global climate change. Blocksome highlights some of the challenges to regional and global stability emanating from global climate change that the US should prepare for, including failing governments strained to respond to crises and natural disasters for which they are currently ill-prepared, dislocated populations as homes disappear under rising seas, and increasing local and international conflict over rivers, glaciers, and other sources of freshwater, which are a non-substitutable requirement for human life.

Subject Matter Expert Contributions

Dr. Gawdat Bahgat

Professor, National Security Affairs, Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies
(National Defense University)

17 February 2019

The Middle East is likely to continue to pose serious threats to US national interests. Failed states, poor governance, corruption, high unemployment rates (particularly among youth and women) create the fertile ground for terrorism and extremism.

Colonel Kris Bauman

Assistant Professor, Political Science (US Air Force Academy)

15 March 2019

The Need for a Two-State Israeli-Palestinian Peace Agreement

An equitable, sustainable, two-state *permanent status agreement* between Israelis and Palestinians is in the national interest of the United States, and in the national interests of both conflicting parties. The United States should therefore actively support the attainment of such an agreement.

An equitable, sustainable, two-state permanent status agreement is in the interest of Israelis.

Finally: real security. The new State of Israel was supposed to provide a secure homeland for Jews everywhere after the unspeakable horrors of the Holocaust. It never fully achieved that goal. Even though Israeli society has made the desert bloom in many ways (technologically, economically, in some ways, politically), average Israelis still live their daily lives with dark specters lurking over them: the possibility of a third Intifada, the possibility of rockets from Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Gaza (which are again falling on Tel Aviv, even at this writing), the possibility of rockets and now *guided* missiles from Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, the possibility of conflict spilling over the borders from Syria, and the possibility that Iran could obtain nuclear weapons. Thus, even though Israel is more secure today against conventional military threats than ever before in its history, (thanks in large measure to the professionalism and sophistication of the Israel Defense Forces), Israeli citizens still live with daily fears. One Israeli security expert described it this way, “When I came to live in the United States, I heard Americans talking about where they were going to go on vacation the next year. I realized that it had never even occurred to me to think about what I might do for recreation a year in the future. As a typical Israeli living in a very insecure part of the world, my foreboding never allowed me to think that far ahead, especially not to plan for leisure.”

Of course, there are elements of Palestinian society which genuinely want to destroy Israel and Israelis, and these irreconcilables must be dealt with. Those who attempt to carry out acts of violence must be captured or killed, in accordance with the laws of Israel and the laws of a future Palestinian state. And likewise, though smaller in number, irreconcilable Jewish terrorists must be dealt with as well. If they refuse to abide by a lawful treaty signed by their leaders, then they too must face the legally grounded consequences.

The heart of the challenge in today’s environment is that the very security measures that are intended to bring Israelis greater security, i.e., the occupation of the West Bank and the blockade of Gaza, in practice induce *greater insecurity*. Palestinians chafe under the daily humiliations and oppression of Israeli security. Yet the measures in place are understandable: Palestinian terrorism has taken the lives of hundreds of Israeli citizens. That said, every time the tensions have turned into violent confrontation, ten times (or more) the number of Palestinians are killed than Israelis.⁷ The truly vicious circle continues.

⁷ Adam Taylor, “The lopsided death tolls in Israel-Palestinian conflicts,” The Washington Post, 11 July 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/07/11/the-lopsided-death-tolls-in-israel-palestinian-conflicts/?utm_term=.6deec0838b55

Israeli security professionals understand this dilemma, and they do their best with an impossible situation. The 2012 documentary, “The Gatekeepers,” by Israeli director Dror Moreh offers an insightful view into their predicament, and is well worth watching.

However, there *is* a way out of this security dilemma. Several colleagues and I sketched the outlines of an approach in *A Security System for the Two-State Solution*.⁸ The real challenge is not creative security, but political courage. The United States should support Israeli (and Palestinian) leaders who are committed to make the morally courageous decisions to pursue peace; we should reject and publicly condemn those who pedal fear in order to gain or maintain a grip on power.

Although Israeli officials today are experiencing better security cooperation with Arab leaders than ever before, this cooperation remains constrained. Resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would free Arab leaders from the fear of retribution by their respective publics for “collaborating with the oppressors of our Palestinian brothers.” Moving this security cooperation from the shadows to the sunlight would greatly improve security for all our Israeli and Arab partners. (This is not to mention the obvious potential benefits of opening economic and diplomatic partnerships.)

There is an urgency to the situation due to demographics and time pressures. Today, the Jewish and Palestinian populations between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea are roughly equal, but the Palestinian population is growing faster. A “one-state solution” is therefore highly problematic for Israel. As Aaron David Miller has said regarding Israel’s future: “Jewish, democratic, or all the land – pick two.” Or in longer form:

Even more fundamentally, demographic trends mean that Israel can’t have it all. It can’t be a Jewish state, a democratic state, and a state in control of its whole historical land. It can only have two of its objectives at a time. Think of it this way: Israel can be Jewish and territorial — but not democratic. Or it can be democratic and territorial — but not Jewish. Or finally, it can be Jewish and democratic — but not territorial. This third choice is the one that can conceivably lead to a two-state solution.⁹

And finally, dignity. Not unlike American Revolutionaries who cried such phrases as “Give me liberty or give me death,” or penned, “All men are created equal,” – yet simultaneously held fellow human beings in slavery, Israelis desire to be a beacon of democracy and enlightenment in the Middle East – yet actively occupy and blockade millions of Palestinians. A permanent status agreement would set Israelis free from this specter of hypocrisy.

An equitable, sustainable, two-state permanent status agreement is in the interest of Palestinians.

Finally: real dignity. In the West Bank, Palestinians suffer daily humiliations navigating a maze of Israeli security checkpoints just to get to work, to school, to friends or family, or to the hospital. To be clear, these checkpoints are not in Israel – they are in the West Bank, the area allegedly under varying degrees of Palestinian “control,” since the 1990s Oslo Accords divided the West Bank into Areas A, B, and C.

A permanent status agreement would finally open the door to the possibility of lives of dignity for Palestinians.

And finally, real security. We in the United States speak often of the need for Israeli security, which is legitimate, but we usually ignore the glaring lack of security in the lives of most Palestinians. Every Palestinian family knows another family whose door was kicked in in the middle of the night by Israeli security personnel, (dressed all in black with automatic weapons and faces covered), who then rolled up a father or brother or cousin and whisked them away into the darkness. All Palestinians know someone, often a close relative, who has been, or is currently in, Israeli prison. Frequently the charges against them are not named or explained, for reasons of “security.”

Life for the nearly two million Palestinians of Gaza is worse. It is blockaded by air, land, and sea. Unemployment is the highest on the

⁸ Ilan Goldenberg, Gadi Shamni, Nimrod Novik, and Kris Bauman, *Advancing the Dialogue: A Security System for the Two-State Solution*, Center for a New American Security, Washington, DC, May, 2016. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/documents/CNASReport-2StateSolution-FINAL.pdf?mtime=20161004141032>

⁹ Aaron David Miller, “Israel’s Demographic Destiny,” *Foreign Policy*, 13 March 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/03/13/israels-demographic-destiny/>

planet, over 50% generally and over 70% among the youth.¹⁰ The economy is in free fall. Clean water and electricity are often unavailable. The coastal aquifer is so salinated from over-pumping that it is nearly irreparable.

A permanent status agreement would finally offer the opportunity for secure lives to Palestinians.

An equitable, sustainable, two-state permanent status agreement is in the interest of the United States.

Resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would certainly not solve all the problems of the Middle East, but the resultant improved Arab-Israeli security cooperation would indeed improve security for the United States.

The rift in the Gulf Cooperation Council is complicated, but a key component is the accusation by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates that Qatar has been a state sponsor of terrorism, including the Palestinian group Hamas. Qatar has provided Gaza with desperately needed aid, but some of that aid has inevitably made its way into Hamas coffers. Resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would remove Hamas' *raison d'être*, thereby aiding the healing of the GCC rift. A re-united GCC, along with Israel as a full-fledged partner, would effectively contain Iranian aggression in its many forms. Better Israeli-Arab security cooperation would enable more effective counterterrorism operations throughout the Middle East, to include in the chaotic areas in Syria and Yemen.

Another benefit of overt relations between Israel and the Arab states would be the ability to redraw the boundaries of EUCOM and CENTCOM. With the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it would no longer be necessary to artificially place Israel in EUCOM's domain. Enabling Israel to be in the same major command as the rest of the Arab world would enhance the effectiveness of CENTCOM's operations (and would not diminish EUCOM's). Israeli generals have expressed the desire for this change for years.

Summa

When it comes to U.S. foreign policy, there is often a clash between American interests and American values. When it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there is no clash. Resolution of the conflict via an equitable, sustainable, two-state permanent status agreement is in the best interests, and values, of the United States, and is simultaneously in the best interests and values of Israelis and Palestinians.

Dr. Patricia J. Blocksome¹¹

Assistant Professor, National Security Affairs (US Naval War College)

12 March 2019

Regional Challenges to US Interests

I. New Arctic Sea Routes

With the decrease in polar ice caps, new sea routes through the Arctic are opening up. This has both regional and global implications. Regionally, the states of the Arctic Council will need to address pressing questions in terms of military presence, territorial boundaries, ownership of natural resources, responsibility for waterways, indigenous rights, and potential port expansion or construction. Of particular interest to the US military is the growing need for capabilities to operate in the arctic environment, to include such items icebreaker ships, increased satellite coverage, and cold weather training and equipment.

Globally, the rise in importance of Arctic sea routes may lead to a decrease in importance of other shipping routes. This may have a particular impact on the geostrategic importance of maritime chokepoints such as the Gulf of Hormuz, the Suez Canal, Bab el-Mandeb Strait, the Bosphorus Strait, the Panama Canal, and the Strait of Malacca. Major ports associated with traditional sea routes may

¹⁰ The World Bank in West Bank and Gaza, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/westbankandgaza/overview>

¹¹ The views expressed in this submission are those of Dr. Blocksome and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Navy, Department of Defense, or the US Government.

experience a decrease in demand for their services, which could harm the economic wellbeing of the littoral cities in which they reside, leading to potentially destabilizing economic conditions.

II. Rising Demand for Renewable Energy-Related Resources, Increasing Supply of Petroleum Resources

Renewable energy technologies are on the rise. While renewable energy sources such as solar and wind are, by definition, easily renewed, the technology for the capture and storage of the energy generated from renewable sources requires non-renewable materials that must be resourced. For example, solar panels require silicon, but silicon is fairly plentiful. Less plentiful are other critical materials, such as neodymium, lithium, cobalt, and copper. The increasing demand for these materials means that the states which have the largest deposits of these minerals are likely to take on increasing importance on the world stage (perhaps this may even lead to the rise of an OPEC-like cartel comprised of the states rich in these particular resources). Several of these states are not particularly friendly with the US, and may seek to limit or control supplies as a form of coercive diplomacy. In addition, some of the states listed below currently have unstable governance, which means that resources may not be able to be extracted efficiently, or that resources may be illicitly mined and sold to fund criminal organizations or rebel groups.

The countries most likely to see an upswing in the importance of their mineral deposits are:

- Neodymium: China, Brazil, Vietnam, Russia, India
- Lithium: Chile, Australia, Argentina, China, Zimbabwe, Portugal, Brazil, US
- Cobalt: Congo (Kinshasa), Australia, Cuba, Philippines, Russia, Canada, Madagascar
- Copper: Chile, Australia, Peru, Russia, Indonesia, Mexico

While renewable energy will become an increasingly large part of the world's energy supply, the worldwide demand for petroleum resources is not expected to drop in the near future. However, the US's development of 'tight oil' resources means that the US is becoming less reliant on supply from oil-exporting states. The rise of the US as a top oil producer, combined with the increasing use of renewable energy, may lead to a decrease in the geopolitical importance of oil-producing states, such as those comprising OPEC. Along with decreasing importance, a decrease in GDP due to persistent declines in the price of oil caused by lack of demand may lead to instability in these states, as they may find it harder to service their debts or pay for social services for their populations. It is likely that several oil-producing states might be negatively impacted by a decrease in demand for petroleum-related resources. At this point, the shift between non-renewable and renewable resources appears to be on a somewhat gradual path. However, should there be another shock to world oil prices, the demand for renewable energy resources could spike, and with it, instability in oil-producing countries.

III. Climate Change, Resource Wars, and Refugees

As the global climate changes, there will be several significant effects, to include: rising sea levels, increased incidence of heat waves and drought, increased severity of weather events, and changes in length and location of growing seasons. Secondary effects of global climate change that will affect humans include increased threats to human life due to severe storms and heat, as well as changes in the location and availability of animal and plant food supplies, water supplies, and habitable living areas. All of the above provide several challenges to US national security, both domestically and internationally.

An increase in the severity of storms will strain governmental responses and personnel. Along with heat waves, severe storms will also increase overall mortality within a population. Episodes of drought will cause dramatic shifts in agriculture. Changes to human food supplies means not only the dislocation and economic impacts on those whose jobs or communities based on providing food, but also leads to increased risk of malnutrition or starvation if food supplies decrease or become less accessible. For example, if the increased acidity of the ocean changes fish populations in terms of size or location, those who fish may lose their jobs, or be forced to move to follow the fish, or, if the fish population is severely decreased, may no longer be to supply fish as a food source for other humans. If food supplies become very scarce, low-level conflict to secure supplies, such as cross-border raids, becomes likely.

While foods can be somewhat substitutable, in that if one food source decreases another can be used, water supplies are not. There is no replacement for drinking water; it is critical to human survival. Viewed in this light, the lack of water is an existential threat to states; therefore it is likely that states facing water shortages will utilize all means of national power to secure access to water. Conflict over water, from the local level to the international level, is likely. Areas with access to freshwater, in the form of rivers, aquifers, or glaciers, are likely to become contested terrain.

Sea level rise, along with associated phenomenon such as flooding and erosion, will have great impacts on littoral cities. Humanitarian disasters are likely. Coastal zone megacities (approximately 67-80% of all megacities) will be uniquely exposed to these issues. As food availability and habitable living areas shift, massive population movements are likely. These will be destabilizing events not only for the state or region in which they occur, but also in the states or regions which receive those incoming populations; a previously stable state may become unstable due to inability to handle a massive population surge. The typical security concerns with refugees will also be present in those fleeing climate change; radicalization of refugee populations, conflict between refugees and host nations, and refugees used as cover for criminal activities such as drug or human trafficking.

IV. Violent Extremist Organization Networks, Large Power Involvement, and Proxy Warfare

Transnational violent extremist networks (e.g. IS & AQ affiliates) will continue to span the globe and shift to more welcoming operational areas based on the geostrategic environment. Simultaneously, more powerful states around the globe are using proxy forces to advance their interests. While states are less likely to work with VEOs that are seen as security threats, they are likely to find common ground with at least some groups. For example, Russia is unlikely to support foreign Islamist extremist groups due to their own domestic issues in Chechnya. However, Russia has shown itself happy to support other proxy groups that are more ideologically acceptable. If 'great power competition' heats up, the use of deniable actors such as proxy rebel groups will concurrently also expand. Therefore, not only do VEOs present a current threat, their potential linkage to larger state powers means that the threat could be amplified in the future.

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15 March 2019

Geography Matters: Key Interests in Future Global Competition and Conflict

If we ask defense hawks this question, some answers will no doubt emphasize the so-called Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) concept. RMA implies that evolving technology will change the nature and character of war, and that those military powers possessing the most advanced technology will prevail in future military conflicts of the 21st century. While possession of superior technology almost certainly provides advanced military capability, superior technology alone does not win wars. The American efforts in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan to date are examples of such efforts where superior military force enabled by superior technology was insufficient to combat irregular factions of "freedom fighters" intent on resisting American occupation and western influence. This is not to say that technology is irrelevant or that it won't aid in military victory. It is to say, rather, that reliance on superior technology alone – and the resulting perception of competitive military advantage stemming from such superior technology – is ill-founded and frankly ignorant. The "tech trend" that so many defense advocates stand behind is not the only trend that will drive future change in global competition and conflict. Those lacking superior technology tend to be more adaptable and creative; even the most technologically advanced militaries in the world find themselves – at times – vulnerable to relatively primitive – yet successful – attacks. To utilize modern technology, militaries require – at the very least – bases and infrastructure from which to employ it. The nature and character of future conflict will be influenced just as much by geography as it will be technology. In this way, military powers with the greatest global influence, regardless of their technology, will be most likely to shape global competition and resulting conflict far into the 21st century.

To support this claim, look no further than the Chinese effort to expand their territorial claims in the South and East China Seas. Though historically contested for centuries, the South China Sea has seen a sharp rise in tensions since 2010. Since their renewed territorial claims in 2013, the Chinese have annexed existing land masses and reefs in the SCS and ECS while simultaneously constructing approximately 3200 acres of artificial islands in the same areas.¹² Why? Depending on one's source, over 30% of global maritime trade flows through this highly-trafficked economic trade zone; and over 60% of regional Asia-Pacific trade traverses these

¹² Specia, Megan and Takkunen, Mikko, "South China Sea Photos Suggest a Military Building Spree by Beijing." February 8, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/08/world/asia/south-china-seas-photos.html>

contested waters.¹³ With control – or at least geographic influence – of such critical waters to the global economy, Chinese land and power grab efforts in this area should come as no surprise to those familiar with the international security landscape. But regional and economic influence in the SCS and ECS alone are wholly insufficient for a nation in China that – arguably – seeks to supplant the United States as the global hegemon. Given this, it should also come as no surprise that the Chinese are actively seeking to expand their prepositioned military presence beyond the Asia-Pacific.

The Chinese government has been engaged in diplomatic efforts with Nicaragua and Venezuela in recent years. Reports suggest Chinese influence and private funding of the now halted Nicaraguan Canal project, as the Chinese are reported to be militarily interested in controlling this potential maritime throughway.¹⁴ More recently, the Chinese government has refused – unlike most global leaders – to denounce Nicolas Maduro’s contested reelection as President of Venezuela and even blocked a United Nations Security Council resolution to institute new elections.¹⁵ Venezuela’s massive oil reserves and prime location at the extreme northern portion of the South American continent combined with its failing economy make it a target of opportunity and exploitation for a Chinese government seeking to expand its influence into the Americas. With a booming Chinese economy and a failing Venezuelan economy, President Xi and China can serve as Maduro’s and Venezuela’s savior – in exchange – potentially – for future basing and infrastructure rights of operation. With the Chinese Navy’s ongoing efforts to both modernize and expand their naval capabilities and compete with the United States for regional influence, the northern coast of Venezuela seems like a pr location for China’s newest strategic prepositioning effort.

But China isn’t the only big power adversary seeking to expand its geographic influence. Russia – like China – refuses to condemn, denounce, or delegitimize Nicolas Maduro’s retention of his office, despite mounting pressure from major international powers like the United States.¹⁶ Russia is also interested in south and Central American basing infrastructure. Reports suggest Russian interest and suspected military activity also in Nicaragua.¹⁷ The list of nations with expansionist interests goes on, but suffice to say that China and Russia present the greatest current threat to United States’ interest internationally.

Beyond central and South America, nations like China and Russia seem interested in establishing greater presence and influence in the Polar Regions. Climatic variations have objectively changed the polar landscape in the 21st century making these regions – arguably – some of the most strategically imperative areas on the planet for both influence and control. In particular, the Arctic Circle provides a direct avenue of approach for military powers with the capability to exploit dwindling land mass obstructions and to traverse what was once considered an impassable region of the world. The direct approach benefit is one of many such motivations for Arctic expansion. What’s more, controlling territory in the Arctic may yield tremendous economic benefits via oil and liquid natural gas extraction as the Arctic Circle is thought to be an area rich with such energy sources.¹⁸ We know that the Chinese, as of 2018, have expressed interest in the poles via a “white paper policy” document released by their State Council Information Office.¹⁹ As well, we know Russia’s interest in the Arctic Circle is multifaceted given the country’s northern border is immediately adjacent to the circle. With Russia’s apparent interest in reunifying territories of the old Soviet Union, a northern flanking approach via the Arctic Circle may enable surrounding regional influence on the Scandinavian nations first and the Baltic States by extension. Russia could even use a play from the Chinese playbook and seek to expand territorial claims in the Arctic Circle. Such claims may seem sensational to some but are well within the realm of possibility for a nation-state motivated by global power. Complicating matters is the lack of law governing international water ways. Currently, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS) is the only document governing maritime conduct in international waters. The problem is that UNCLOS doesn’t actually govern and there few real deterrents built into the system to dissuade Russia or China from complying with UNCLOS parameters. In other words, the Arctic is ripe for military expansion. With the

¹³ Team, China Power. “How much trade transits the South China Sea?” Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC (2017). <https://chinapower.csis.org/much-trade-transits-south-china-sea/>

¹⁴ Shaer, Matthew. “A new canal through Central America could have devastating consequences.” Smithsonian. com, December (2014). <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/new-canal-through-central-america-could-have-devastating-consequences-180953394/>

¹⁵ Wainer, David, “Russia, China Veto UN Resolution Seeking Venezuela Elections,” February (2019). <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-02-28/russia-china-veto-un-resolution-seeking-venezuela-elections>

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Sanchez, Alejandro, “Forget Venezuela, Russia is Looking to Nicaragua.” September (2017). <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/forget-venezuela-russia-looking-nicaragua-22464>

¹⁸ King, Hobart, “Oil and Natural Gas Resources of the Arctic,” n.d., <https://geology.com/articles/arctic-oil-and-gas/>

¹⁹ English Translation by Lu Hui from *Xinhua*: “China’s Arctic Policy: The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China,” January 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/26/c_136926498.htm

United States' lack of emphasis on the Polar Regions and the Americas relative to other areas of the world, these are growing problems requiring reorientation.²⁰

Currently, the United States' prepositioned global military presence far exceeds that of any other nation. However, despite the U.S. force postures influencing diplomatic, military, and economic efforts in myriad global hotspots, the U.S. sorely lacks geographic influence in both the Poles and the Americas. United States Southern Command headquarters is in Doral, Florida and not even in the true Southern Command area of responsibility. The United States military has a small forward expeditionary base in Honduras acting as the lead element in the U.S. military's efforts to counter transnational crime among other efforts.²¹ Soto Cano Air Base is the home of Joint Task Force-Bravo, a small forward military presence that, despite documented Central American expansion efforts by both China and Russia, sees little emphasis from DoD relative to other geographic combatant command priorities. This and small operating elements of Army and Marine Corps special operations units in Colombia and other countries make up the entirety of the U.S. SOUTHCOM defense posture. With Venezuela soon to be a failed-state ripe for Chinese and Russian exploitation, coupled with Chinese and Russian expansion in Central America, this is insufficient.

As well, U.S. force posture is nearly non-existent in the Polar Regions. Marine Forces Pacific maintains the Marine Rotational Force Darwin program that deploys about 1,500 Marines on six-month continuous rotations to Darwin, Australia.²² While firmly entrenched in the Southern Hemisphere, this rotational force presence is situated on the extreme north-central coast of Australia, still thousands of miles north of the Antarctic continent. It is difficult to influence operations from this distance. Smaller numbers of Marines have in recent years participated in European theater training exercises in Poland, Norway, and the Baltic States as part of BALTOPS and Saber Strike.²³ While Marine rotational forces actively deploy to Australia and or northern Europe as part of training and readiness efforts, Marine Expeditionary Units (MEU) deploy rotationally around the world as well and are far more expeditionary than their Darwinian counterparts. East and West Coast MEUs deploy simultaneously and at any given time can project power in numerous areas of U.S. interests. Deploying more maritime assets in and around the Polar Regions – provided sufficient capability and seasonal conditions to enter or approach arctic waters – is in order as an indication of U.S. interest and commitment to securing the Polar Regions. The U.S. should also consider – in this vein – reorienting carrier strike group and other surface ship package deployments beyond amphibious ready groups (ARG) and MEUs to the Polar Regions in an effort to maximize U.S. presence and military power projection in these regions.²⁴ Such commitments of visible military force postures to strategically vital regions of the world would speak volumes to Russian and Chinese expansion. There is some discussion on this front as of late 2018 under then-Secretary Mattis' 'dynamic force employment' concept. Such discussions about avoiding unpredictability while integrating newly determined strategic locations is vital to continued global competition.

The U.S. needs a strategic rebalancing effort that extends beyond the INDO-PACOM area of responsibility. As large and sustained combat operations wind down in the CENTCOM AOR, the U.S. must consider its geographic presence in other soon-to-be contested regions, namely the Polar Regions and the Americas. The U.S. no longer enjoys geographic isolation and protection from its 21st century adversaries as it once did. The threats from the Arctic and Central and South America now present legitimate concerns for homeland defense. The U.S. needs to meet these challenges before they arrive at our doorstep. Re-orienting rotational force efforts to expand operations in the Poles and the Americas is a necessary first step that may deter continued Russian and Chinese military expansion in these geographically critical regions of the world that, until now, few people have truly emphasized as areas of global interest in the future of great power competition and conflict.

²⁰ For a more detailed discussion of the proposed military reorientation to the Polar Regions, see Burke and Matisek's (forthcoming 2019) article "The American Polar Pivot: Gaining a Comparative Advantage in Great Power Competition," *Marine Corps University Journal*. 10(1).

²¹ United States Southern Command: Joint Task Force-Bravo. <https://www.jtfb.southcom.mil/>

²² Marine Forces Pacific: Marine Rotational Force-Darwin. <https://www.marforpac.marines.mil/MRFDarwin/>

²³ "Exercise BALTOPS 2018 Enhancing Interoperability Among NATO Allies and Partners in Baltic Region." <https://navylive.dodlive.mil/2018/06/11/exercise-baltops-2018-enhancing-interoperability-among-nato-allies-and-partners-in-baltic-region/>; <https://www.eur.army.mil/SaberStrike/>

²⁴ Eckstein, Megan, "Navy May Deploy Surface Ships to Arctic This Summer as Shipping Lanes Open Up," January (2019). <https://news.usni.org/2019/01/08/navy-may-deploy-surface-ships-arctic-summer-shipping-lanes-open>

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The highest level of Chinese challenges will be in those areas that it considers already part of China: Taiwan, South China Sea, East China Sea (e.g., Senkakus). Next will be the areas that it considers vital interests—Southeast Asia (especially Malaysia/Singapore/Indonesia), the Sino-Indian border (insofar as the US is seen as taking a stance). These will be areas where the Chinese will employ the full range of capabilities, including military.

In South Asia/Indian Ocean regions, China will have a mixed military and economic/diplomatic range of activities. The same will be true in the Central Pacific. These will include military sales, military visits (aircraft, ships, high ranking officers), and infrastructure development/investments.

Finally, China will compete with the US for influence in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and South America. These will be more diplomatic, economic, although there will likely also be arms sales and PMC roles in such areas.

Meanwhile, in both outer space and cyber-space, China will challenge technologically, in terms of governance (emphasizing ITU over ICANN in Internet management, for example), in setting industrial standards, as well as diplomatically (e.g., forging ties with the European Space Agency, and exploiting both the Asia Pacific Space Cooperation Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to expand its perceived international footprint).

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19 February 2019

Avoiding the Gates' Trap: The National Defense Strategy and the Challenges Predicting the Future of Conflict

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates famously quipped, “When it comes to predicting the nature and location of our next military engagements, since Vietnam, our record has been perfect. We have never once gotten it right, from the Mayaguez to Grenada, Panama, Somalia, the Balkans, Haiti, Kuwait, Iraq, and more – we had no idea a year before any of these missions that we would be so engaged.”²⁵ Gates understood that while in hindsight the roots conflicts may be traced to actions years in advance, predicting future events proves a far more difficult task. Ironically, Gates’ own tenure at the helm of the Department of the Defense underscores this truism. As secretary, he emphasized “capabilities needed to win the wars we are in,” the counterinsurgency efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, often at the expense of preparing for high-end conflicts.²⁶ Only a few years after stepping down from his post, however, Russia would invade Ukraine and that the United States would once again be locked in high-end great power competition with China and Russia.

Gates’ warning has not deterred American defense strategists from trying to predict where the United States might fight its next war.²⁷ For example, the unclassified summary of the 2018 *National Defense Strategy* argues, “the Joint Force will sustainably compete to: deter aggression in three key regions—the Indo-Pacific, Europe, and Middle East.”²⁸ Embedded in this statement are three predictions

²⁵ Robert Gates, “Speech to the United States Military Academy,” *U.S. Department of Defense*, West Point, N.Y., February 25, 2011. As of June 5, 2017: <http://archive.defense.gov/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=1539>

²⁶ Robert Gates, “Speech to the National Defense University,” *U.S. Department of Defense*, Washington, DC, September 29, 2008. As of February 13, 2019: <http://archive.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1279>

²⁷ See Raphael S. Cohen, *The History and Politics of Defense Reviews*, RR2278, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018.

²⁸ United States Department of Defense, Summary of the National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American

about where the next conflict will occur. First and most explicitly, American adversaries—defined as China, Russia, Iran, North Korea and terrorist groups—will likely challenge the United States in Asia, Europe and the Middle East. Second, reading between the lines, the *National Defense Strategy* seemingly prioritizes these three theaters—Asia first, Europe second, and the Middle East third—although the criteria used for these rankings is less clear. Finally, there is an implicit claim that aggression is not likely in the regions mentioned left off of the aforementioned list, namely North and South America and Africa. So are the predictions, but are they true?

The first claim—that Asia, Europe and the Middle East are all likely regions for future hostile aggression—is almost certainly valid. The United States already has been locked in wars in the Middle East for the better part of two decades now and is engaged in conflict—albeit below the threshold of conventional combat—in both Asia and Europe against China and Russia respectively.²⁹ And as the recent Office of the Director of National Intelligence’s annual *Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community* argues, none of these conflicts show any sign of ending anytime soon.³⁰ Moreover, one can tell a plausible story about how the United States winds up in a more intensive conflict with China in the South China Sea or Taiwan, with Russia in the Baltics, or with Iran and North Korea over their nuclear programs at some point in the future.

The second assertion—prioritizing Asia, Europe and then the Middle East in that order—hinges largely on what criteria are used for the ranking. If we list regions based on greatest danger of large-scale war and greatest threat to American grand strategic interests, then the ordering largely fits. Asia, after all, is home to China, arguably the United States’ only true peer competitor and volatile nascent nuclear powers like North Korea.³¹ At least four of the five of the United States named competitors are active in Asia. The region is rife with territorial disputes—in the East and South China Sea, along the Indian-Chinese border and elsewhere. And Asia is in the midst of an arms race. Military spending up by 59 percent in real terms from 2008—one of the largest relative increases anywhere on the globe.³²

While a war in Asia may be the most dangerous scenario the United States faces over the next decade, however, it may not be the most likely scenario for the United States’ next overt, large scale military conflict. For all of Asia’s challenges, most of these conflicts are between nuclear-armed states raising the possibility at least of successful deterrence. Moreover, many hypothetical American military interventions—over the Senkaku’s (the disputed islands claimed by Japan and China), Taiwan or the South China Sea—revolve around maritime disputes, potentially allowing the combatants to keep a conflict contained, if not below the threshold of war.³³

Arguably, the most likely scenario for large-scale American military intervention over the coming decade may still be the Middle East, as much as policymakers may wish to extricate themselves from the region. While the physical caliphate of the Islamic State may be largely destroyed, the region is still in tatters and Islamic jihadist terrorism remains. Jordan is struggling under the weight of 1.5 to 2 million refugees, potentially fueling future terrorism and instability.³⁴ Similarly, Iran’s presence in Syria thanks to its role in the civil war comes dangerously close to an Israeli redline and Russia’s more assertive in Syria may make it another front in broader American-Russian competition.³⁵ Finally, Saudi Arabia’s long term future under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman remains uncertain and instability in kingdom could have second order effects on the entire region.³⁶

Military’s Competitive Edge, 2018, p. 6. As of June 29, 2018: <https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>

²⁹ See Linda Robinson, Todd C. Helmus, Raphael S. Cohen, Alireza Nader, Andrew Radin, Madeline Magnuson, and Katya Migacheva. *Modern Political Warfare: Current Practices and Possible Responses*, RR-1772-A. Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2017; Raphael S. Cohen and Andrew Radin, *Russia’s Hostile Measures in Europe: Understanding the Threat*, RR-1793-A. Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2019.

³⁰ Daniel R. Coats, *Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community*, January 29, 2019. As of February 13, 2019: <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/2019-ATA-SFR---SSCI.pdf>

³¹ See James Dobbins, Howard J. Shatz, and Ali Wyne, *Russia Is a Rogue, Not a Peer; China Is a Peer, Not a Rogue: Different Challenges, Different Responses*, PE310, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2019.

³² Nan Tian, Aude Fleurant, Alexandra Kuimova, Pieter D. Wezeman and Siemon T. Wezeman, “Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2017,” *SIPRI Fact Sheet*, May 2018, p. 5

³³ Political scientist John Mearsheimer refers to this phenomenon as “the stopping power of water.” See John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2001, pp. 83-84

³⁴ Interviews with Jordanian academics, policy analysts and military officers, May 12-13, 2018. Refugee figures come from a senior Jordanian army officer, May 12, 2018.

³⁵ See for example, the remarks of the Israeli Minister of Defense at the Herzliya Conference, May 10, 2018 after an Israeli strike on Iranian positions in Syria on May 9, 2018

³⁶ Roundtable with Israel experts, May 9, 2018; Interview with American experts in Abu Dhabi, UAE, May 15, 2018. Similarly, see: David A. Graham,

Finally, the last prediction—the implicit argument in the *National Defense Strategy* that the United States is unlikely to face major challenges in other parts of the globe, most notably the Western Hemisphere or Africa—is perhaps the most debatable claim of the three. The United States has longstanding security interests in Western Hemisphere dating back to the Monroe Doctrine that continues until this day and historically has intervened repeatedly throughout Latin America with mixed success. To a much lesser extent, the United States has also had a history of intervention in Africa from the Barbary wars of the 19th century to the counterterrorism, counterpiracy and counter-Ebola interventions of the 21st.

And even if the United States has sworn off such humanitarian interventions in favor of a renewed focus on great power competition, it does not mean the United States can write off the chances of conflict in either region. After all, Chinese economic interests increasingly extend to both regions and China's first overseas military base was notably on the horn of Africa.³⁷ Likewise, Russian mercenaries in Africa, while Russia strategic bombers visited Venezuela in December 2018.³⁸ Indeed, if there is a lesson of conflict during the Cold War—the last period of great power competition, it is that the conflicts are global in scope and are often waged in regions outside of the home of the two competitors.

Consequently, those charged with developing America defense strategy face a conundrum: the United States cannot simply write off a region as being entirely free from future aggression and worse yet, the most likely location may not match the most dangerous location for future conflict. For strategies to carry any meaning, they need to prioritize especially as resources remain finite.³⁹ What is then hapless staff officer charged with developing such strategies to do?

Ultimately, this is not an argument against the rank ordering of the *National Defense Strategy* per say (indeed, its prioritization of regions is at least justifiable, if not necessarily valid), but it is an argument against strategic myopia. Planners often think through future conflict through the lens of a handful discrete scenarios in a couple key regions, like hypothetical China in Taiwan or South China or Russia in the Baltics. Through these scenarios, planners can game actions and reactions, envision needed capabilities and allocate forces to regions. And especially in a world where budget topline are relatively fixed, this approach can be a useful, if necessary, heuristic. But while dollars and physical capital may be inelastic goods, strategic thought is not. Strategists must keep one eye on the broader picture, even while they plan on specific scenarios and certain regions of interest. Only that way can they hope to avoid Gates' trap—focusing on the here and now at the expense of appropriately preparing for future conflicts. After all, the future is nothing if not surprising.

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East Asia will be the region of the most formidable and lasting great-power challenge to be faced by the U.S. As U.S. forces come under growing threat, as China becomes bolder in staking out its sovereignty claims, and as economic cooperation with China becomes more important to U.S. allies in the region, the U.S. position could erode. Certain allies – with the important exception of Japan – could hedge their bets. At the same time, to the extent China becomes what Bob Zoellick coined a “responsible stakeholder,” Chinese preeminence in East Asia might be less harmful. However, this hope has faded under Xi. Of course, the U.S. has the option of

³⁶ “The Fragile Future of Reform in Saudi Arabia,” *The Atlantic*, June 27, 2018.

³⁷ Nyshka Chandran, “China Says it will Increase its Military Presence in Africa,” *CNBC*, June 27, 2018. As of February 14, 2019: <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/06/27/china-increases-defence-ties-with-africa.html>

³⁸ Jeff Seldin, “US General Warns of Russian, Chinese Inroads in Africa,” *Voice of America*, February 7, 2019. As of February 14, 2019: <https://www.voanews.com/a/us-general-warns-of-russia-china-in-africa/4777497.html>; Andrew Osborn, “Russian Nuclear-Capable Bomber Aircraft Fly to Venezuela, Angering U.S.” *Reuters*, December 11, 2018. As of February 14, 2019: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-russia-airforce/russian-nuclear-capable-bomber-aircraft-fly-to-venezuela-angering-u-s-idUSKBN1OA23L>

³⁹ See Raphael S. Cohen, *The History and Politics of Defense Reviews*, RR2278, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2018.

accepting a de facto Chinese sphere of influence in East Asia (as Britain ultimately accepted the U.S. hemi-sphere of influence). But East Asia is too crucial to the global and U.S. economies to allow it to fall under China's sway.

Europe, which dwarfs Russia by most measures that matter (GDP, population, health, technology, non-extractive industry, military spending, and sobriety), can withstand Russian threats and intrigue, especially if NATO is cohesive and credible. If there is vulnerability to Russia in Europe, it is among former SSRs, especially in not members of NATO.

The wild card in this deck of great-power regional challenges for the U.S. is, of course, the greater Middle East. Although there are no great-power candidates in the region, it is possible that it could become even more of an arena for geo-strategic rivalry than it has been (since Cold War days). Moreover, there are ample conflicts in the Middle East to create great dangers for and demands on the U.S. (anti-West extremism, Iran-Saudi confrontation, civil wars and internal instabilities, constricted energy supplies). It appears that Russia is far more likely than China to exploit and aggravate these conflicts and threaten U.S. interests in this region. Chinese Middle East interests -- mainly in stable energy supplies and preventing nuclear proliferation -- are not incompatible with those of the U.S.

Russia does not have the means to exert great-power influence in Africa and Latin America. China's efforts to carve out preferential commodity access through aid and investment are a mixed blessing-curse: these regions can always use resources and revenues; but China's efforts to promote undemocratic development through unconditional aid are unwelcome. Again, the difficulties from China's emergence will remain predominantly where it is at loggerheads with the U.S.: East Asia

In sum, Russia presents greater dangers to U.S. interests in the short term but, with a fundamentally poor economy, will find it difficult to support a belligerent external strategy, especially if and as the U.S. compels it to pay a high price for that strategy. China has a sustainable external strategy, which is focused mainly on recovering its losses and its preeminence in East Asia. Though its global aspirations are not necessarily problematic, the importance of the region make China the biggest great-power challenge over the next decade.

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5 March 2019

Criminalized Security and State Capture: Life on the Edge in the Sahel

In every region of the globe, the U.S. will face varied threats and strategic challenges. However, we wish to highlight **the Sahel** as one of particular concern to the security community.

All across the Sahel, state institutions are rapidly decaying, most especially in those countries with chronic and long lasting governance issues (for e.g., in Niger, Central African Republic, Mali, Burkina Faso, and increasingly, Cameroon, and northern Nigeria). Some states were never able to project state power over far flung regions: in these places, informal power structures maintained authority. Even states that once were able to project power over their territories and maintain the semblance of basic institutions have severely weakened over the past decade.

To make matters worse, areas where **informal authorities emerged to help maintain some semblance of order are themselves crumbling**, due to a combination of pressures from forces of globalization, violent-non-state actors, and chronic structural instability.

Territorial Oceans & Cascading Effects

Compounding this rapidly emerging threat is the fact that many of these most-failed or failing states are neighbors. That means there is a **contiguous territorial ocean void of authority** where neither *de jure* nor *de facto* sovereignty carries much meaning in terms of security for populations on the ground. Though the border regions along the Sahara have always resembled a borderless territorial ocean, today, our closest European allies feel the implications on their national security most acutely. It is not a joke that the most sought-after entrepot to the European Union runs through Bamako, Niamey, and Bangui. These are cities in which critical network nodes overlap - and transnational VNSA's of all kinds like to exploit the linkages between these human trafficking and illicit smuggling networks to their advantage.

The hollowing out of state authority is hard to detect until experienced in its cumulative manifestation as state collapse. We contend that a similar dynamic is at work in the Sahel. In addition to the chronic stressors that have long plagued Sahelian countries, **the criminalization of security and state capture by local and international economic elites** are generating unforeseen threats.

Criminalized Security & State Capture

It is difficult to criminalize a formalized organizational structure. To do so, one has to alter the very rules of the game - the institutions - that the state is based upon, and convert criminality into routine functions. In weak states, both organizations and institutional branches of government are personalized, which means that the entire structure is built around a few *key principals*. In these states, the distinction between public and private spheres disappears. Private interests, public interests and the interests of the state all become fused as one. On one level, we are already familiar with some of the localized manifestations of a criminalized security apparatus: the bribery at checkpoints, the plundering local beer stores, and the extortion of local businesses. But there are even worse implications from a U.S. national security point of view.

Once the state is captured by criminal elements, licit and illicit activities blend into one seamless day-to-day operation on issues both grand (e.g. restructuring armed forces and gendarmeries; adjudicating between the enemy and the innocent) and small (e.g. recruiting gendarmeries). **As a result, the principals become accustomed to their access to the sovereign appurtenances of the state and come to deploy the coercive apparatus towards agendas that they define.** While this has lasting negative ramifications on governance (in contexts where governance is already abysmal), **the criminalization of security also abets "state capture" by buccaneering international economic elites that walk a fine line between licit and illicit activities.** Because **to criminalize security is to be able to monetize its provision.**

Only buccaneering economic agents can survive, let alone succeed, in high-risk business environments. Even the most buccaneering economic agent requires security, since security is inherent to the rational calculations of economic agents, who must adjust their strategy to account for both relative risk and expected time horizon.

Local elites with the control of or access to local security organizations are uniquely situated to guarantee security to international economic buccaneers. This, however, is not a normal economic arrangement. Global economic elites use their access to the sovereign appurtenances of the state in order to strike sovereign agreements with international economic elites in order to benefit the principals, not the broader public. That is state capture.

However, when the global economic elites leave the scene, the state is left with fulfilling its sovereign obligations, which is a cost passed down to local citizens, international donors, or both. (This is in contrast to the debt crisis and currency crisis of the 1980's and 1990's, where the issues revolved around sovereigns and major public and private lending institutions.) By contrast, at present, individuals use the sovereign moral-hazard inherent to the global financial architecture toward their own ends: state capture and private gain. What little revenue remains in the coffers of weak states is used to service debt and interest payments, which further erodes the state's capacity to address the chronic stressors that makes them teeter on the edge of state failure in the first place.

Life on the Edge

We must remember that a few million dollars goes a long way in a country where the nominal GDP is a few billion dollars. Finally, we turn to the most extreme manifestation of all of these dynamics.

The most daring of economic agents are industrial narcotics producers and drug and human traffickers. Criminalized security architectures and state institutions up for grabs have titillating appeal in the narcotics business because it can help them overcome two of their perennial problems in one fell swoop. On the one hand, narcotics businesses have a control and accountability issue that primarily relates to contract enforcement. On the other hand, they have a need to launder or recycle money into formal channels, so as to disguise the origin of the funds.

Narcotics producers pay a high rent for security and assume a great degree of risk at every step of the value chain, but especially at the end of the chain. Without proper enforcement and disincentives, they suffer the risk that one of their own traffickers might renege on the contract (i.e. face an enforcement cost), or suffer the risk of getting products confiscated. Even if everything goes according to plan and the illicit economic agents make their millions, utilizing this hard earned currency requires erasing the origin of the funds. To add to their troubles, laundering money is becoming increasingly difficult in an increasingly digitized world with some countries getting rid of hard-currency altogether (for e.g., in Sweden).

States with institutions up for grabs and criminalized security architectures help mitigate many of these problems for drug traffickers. **These states constitute one-stop-shops for extreme - and extremely organized - criminals. In these contexts, states offer high-value concierge services for their criminal clients by offering up state institutions to the enterprise.** If drug cartels can completely outsource their trafficking enterprises to a handful of individual elites with access to state-sanctioned security forces, they can greatly mitigate risks associated with their profitable enterprise. Importantly, rather than viewing these activities as threats - such 'activities' are just part of the natural, day-to-day dealings of the state. Perhaps that makes them all the more salient.

When global economic buccaneers leverage millions and use state institutions to minimize risk to their global profit ventures, we know that societies are at or near their breaking point. The trick will be in identifying early, softer signals that warn of a slower descent toward a self-reinforcing equilibrium from which it is difficult to return.

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25 February 2019

Regional Challenges to the United States in the 2020s

As has been true for decades, significant challenges to U.S. interests will arise in every corner of the globe and affect the entire gamut of American concerns. Potential great power rivals will continue to improve their military strength; terrorist groups will seek recruits and attack innocents; rogue regimes will work to develop weapons of mass destruction; infectious disease outbreaks will threaten worldwide pandemics; anarchy will threaten failing states; commercial rivals will threaten American economic interests; hostile intelligence organizations will exploit cyberspace to target American vulnerabilities; and all of these problems will be magnified by climate change.

Because American capabilities, though great, are limited, the pivotal question is which of these challenges should attract the bulk of the attention of the Department of Defense. The answer to this question is in the 2017 *National Security Strategy*: "China and Russia aspire to project power worldwide . . ." Because only China, and to a lesser extent Russia, have worldwide reach, they are by far the most important challengers to American interests. Because they have combined their strength into a tacit alliance as they revive their power, they have been able to launch a new Cold War against the United States and its allies—a contest as serious as the Cold War of the late twentieth century, but one that will be fought on fundamentally different terrain.

As in the first Cold War, the primary purpose of American military power will be to deter great-power war. China and Russia will continue to expand their capability to attack the U.S. with nuclear weapons, and American missile defenses will remain inadequate to protect the homeland from large-scale nuclear attack. Indeed, cyber threats have added a new dimension of uncertainty to the problem of missile defense. However, neither Russia nor China has any desire for large-scale war in the coming decade. Russia lacks the strength; China is constantly gaining more of it; and both are thoroughly deterred by American military power. This must continue:

U.S. military force structure should shift away from counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency and back to a posture of deterrence of these two great-power rivals.

As in the first Cold War, the primary struggle in this one—assuming deterrence holds—will be political, ideological, and economic. The ideological challenge is from aggressive nationalism of the Putin variety, and it is very much on the march. Xi Jinping has prepared the way to becoming President for life while fostering an aggressive new Chinese nationalism, replacing the previous Chinese policy of peaceful rise. Different versions of this aggressive nationalism have taken control in middle powers all over the world, led by Erdogan in Turkey, Duterte in the Philippines, and Bolsonaro in Brazil. Smaller powers such as Orban's Hungary are also affected. Putin's policy is to sow dissension in Europe to pave the way for the spread of Russia-friendly authoritarianism like Orban's. China's policy is to apply a combination of economic carrots and military threats to woo potential partners like Duterte. The U.S. strategy must focus on countering these moves, maintaining and bolstering the alliances that form the basis of our global influence. As always, strong economic ties with U.S. allies will play a critical role in maintaining these alliances.

What makes countries vulnerable to aggressive nationalism is the combination inequality and corruption. China is the exception here, motivated by pride in their growing wealth and power. Elsewhere, however, what nationalist leaders exploit is the combination of popular frustration at the stagnation of most people's living standards even as the rich get richer, and the craving for a strong hand to offer protection from physical threats—especially terrorism—and identity threats stemming from exaggerated fears of immigration. In some cases, as in Erdogan's Turkey, incumbent leaders turn to aggressive nationalism to justify power grabs that are really aimed at avoiding the exposure of their own corruption. In other cases, as in Bolsonaro's Brazil, the corruption of the previous regime is used to justify a return to the past: "I'm in favor of dictatorship," Bolsonaro has said.

Honest leaders care about the living standards of their people. Corrupt leaders don't, opening the way for aggressive nationalists who change the subject—offering pride and parades while enriching themselves as the corruption continues. The implication is that **the worldwide fight against corruption and the siren song of nationalism is pivotal to winning the new Cold War.** U.S. aid, especially military aid, must be strictly conditioned on honesty in government in the recipient country. For leaders like Erdogan and Duterte, who undermine America's alliances, their corrupt practices are their Achilles' heel; every U.S. law enforcement tool available should be used to sanction their attempts at theft and to weaken their grip on power.

The other key dimension of the Chinese challenge is economic, and it will continue by fair means and foul. China's relatively cheap and productive labor force will continue to give it advantages in some manufacturing sectors. Its economic model combines relentless Soviet-style industrial espionage with a much greater degree of domestic dynamism, making its technological challenge potentially greater than the Soviet one. However, China's increasing authoritarianism is working against it: it is increasing restrictions on Chinese intellectuals' access to information, undermining its prospects for long-term innovation. Cybersecurity initiatives must play an important role in responding to this challenge, but the key to victory will be in a rebalancing of the American economic model to ensure continued innovation while also assuring that the gains are more widely shared. Without the last component, the Chinese will win the ideological competition: their growth model *has* generated widely-shared economic gains.

After the rise of the Chinese and Russian challenges, the next great challenge to U.S. security remains nuclear proliferation. Chemical weapons are not much more destructive than conventional ones, so countering their spread need not be a high priority. The good news about the nonproliferation struggle is that a number of past countries of proliferation concern no longer have active programs. The bad news is limited primarily to North Korea; efforts to contain that problem will remain a high-priority need.

In contrast to these challenges, weak states and nonstate actors are of secondary importance. They are less challenges to American interests than they are sinkholes for American resources. Instability in one country does pose a risk to neighboring ones: Iraq's civil war spilled over into Syria, for example, as has Libya's into its neighbors. However, no tools of American power are efficient or effective at stabilizing weak states. Providing aid to weak governments is like pouring water into a sieve, while going around the government to aid civil society simply reinforces state weakness. Military intervention is Sisyphean: American troops can roll the rock up the hill, but it will roll right back down as soon as they leave, as we have discovered in Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc. Capable local partners will succeed and incapable ones will fail, usually regardless of the presence of U.S. boots on the ground.

Fortunately, the Middle East and Africa are no longer areas of vital American interests, so the need for such interventions is diminishing. Our need for Middle Eastern oil is declining: in the short run, domestic and other sources are adequate; in the long run,

we will need to turn to green energy sources, as Europe is already doing. Stability operations are cannot achieve the degree of lasting impact that makes them worth the resources required to improve the situation in places like Libya. They make little difference anyway: terrorism of Middle Eastern origins occurs overwhelmingly in the Middle East, not on the territory of the US or its major allies. And while Israel is an ally, it does not need the U.S. to fight its battles.

The only region in the developing world that requires more U.S. attention is Central America, especially the northern triangle region of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. Immigrants and refugees tend not to leave their hemispheres, so the U.S. is relatively insulated from instability in Africa and the Middle East. Central American instability, however, results in “caravans” of refugees seeking asylum in the U.S., a trend that President Trump has identified as a national security threat. The primary immediate problem is gang warfare, which requires primarily aid to police. Lessons can be learned from the U.S. success in Colombia regarding how to retrain Latin American authorities to stabilize their countries.

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8 March 2019

***Increasing Importance of the Polar Regions: Potential for Conflict?*⁴⁰**

As climatic changes transform the polar environments of the Arctic and Antarctica, the United States (U.S.) must be prepared to defend these protected regions from any nation that may exploit them in violation of international law (e.g. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), etc.). Crucial shipping lanes and an abundance of natural resources make the Polar Regions increasingly valuable, especially as oceanic temperatures melt sea ice and glaciers. The rising geopolitical importance of the Polar Regions must be considered in the U.S. National Military Strategy (NMS). Russia continues to push the boundaries of what is deemed acceptable, especially against the Arctic Circle neighbors of Canada, Greenland (Denmark), Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Finland. On the Antarctic Circle, China poses the greatest threat to South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Chile, and Argentina. The U.S. and her allies with invested stakes in each Polar Region, must demonstrates a resolve to control maritime trade routes, respect the rule of law, and commit ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ power in the protection of them, against revisionist states like Russia and China.

Since 1980, Arctic Sea ice coverage has steadily declined at a rate of 12.8% per decade.⁴¹ As environmental factors make the Polar Regions more accessible, Russia will continue actions that undermine the rules of the ocean, and other laws regarding EEZs and international waters. Similarly, while China is far from either Polar Region, 2018 was the first time China had introduced a ‘White Paper’ policy on this issue. This official government document highlighted the importance of melting icecaps facilitating a “Polar Silk Road” for trade and various ways in which China might economically benefit from resources in each region.⁴² While “fully ice-free summers probably remain a decade or more away,” this gives the U.S. and her allies time to prepare.⁴³ This means developing ‘hard’ power capabilities, such as ice breaker ships and military weapon systems to operate in such harsh climates, while similarly improving ‘soft’ power capabilities, such as strengthening alliances and information/media discourses against China and Russia and creating legal frameworks so as to avoid a ‘tragedy of the commons’ dilemma. Both courses of action, will likely deter illegal and antagonistic actions in the region, while ensuring economic prosperity for all that abide by all laws and norms in the Polar Regions.

⁴⁰ This article was made possible by contributions from Cadet William M. Stover, my Research Assistant in the Department of Military and Strategic Studies, U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado. For an expanded version on this topic of America making a “Polar Pivot,” see: Ryan Burke and Jahara Matissek, “The American Polar Pivot: Gaining a Comparative Advantage in Great Power Competition,” *MCU Journal* (2019): forthcoming.

⁴¹ Arctic Research Consortium, “2018: Sea Ice Outlook Interim Post-Season Report,” *ARCUS*, October 11, 2018, <https://www.arcus.org/sign/sea-ice-outlook/2018/interim>

⁴² English Translation by Lu Hui from *Xinhua*: “China’s Arctic Policy: The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China,” January 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/26/c_136926498.htm

⁴³ Marvin Gonzalez, “The Arctic and Antarctica,” *DNI*, 2018, <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/the-next-five-years/the-artic-and-antarctica>

The potential for a ‘hot war’ over the Arctic remains nonetheless. A U.S. government estimates states that the region could have about 90 billion barrels of oil, 1,700 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, and 44 billion barrels of liquid natural gas (LNG).⁴⁴ The abundant (and untapped) natural resources of the Polar Regions may incentivize states to begin making territorial claims, to include creating new military bases and military exercises as a way of demonstrating control of contested areas, much as Russia has already been doing.⁴⁵ The decrease in ice coverage also opens up new and more efficient maritime routes. Aggressive and antagonistic actions by China in the South China Sea demonstrate their resolve to control and exploit maritime routes; China will likely act in a similar in each Polar Region, especially now that China is building a nuclear-powered ice breaker ship.⁴⁶ Because of these threats to free trade, which is a vital U.S. national interest, this requires use of the wide array of national instruments of power to assert the need for a rules-based authority in each Polar Region.

While Antarctica hosts an American ‘base’ (McMurdo Station), it is a National Science Foundation (NSF) research center with an array of scientists from all over the world, and there is no form of militarization anywhere on this continent. The Antarctic Treaty System’s (ATS) first article outlines that military assets are to only be used in Antarctica to assist with scientific research.⁴⁷ While this treaty does not extend to the Arctic, members of the Arctic Council are attempting to define their territorial boundaries according to the United Nation (UN) Convention on the Law of the Sea.⁴⁸ Just as territorial boundaries and treaties can be set, they can also be infringed upon. Already, Chinese involvement in Antarctica is a blurred ‘gray’ line between research and military operations.⁴⁹ Military involvement in the Polar Regions would significantly impair critical research, seafaring trade, and lead to the degradation and exploitation of both environments, which would eventually lead to rising sea levels that submerge and destroy American coastline cities. Without a doubt, each Polar Region is a vital national interest of the U.S., requiring an active and direct intervention by American political and military leaders, and the Department of Defense (DoD) 2014 Climate Change Adaptation Roadmap reaffirms the rationale of involvement – and dire risks associated with not addressed the challenges emerging in each Polar Region.⁵⁰

A failure to defend U.S. (and ally) interests in the Arctic and Antarctica will have lasting impacts on the environment, free trade, and global security. If the Western status quo remains, the question is not if disagreements over resources and territorial claims will spark conflict in the Arctic and Antarctica, but it will be a problem of when and how. The Polar Regions are critical to scientific efforts to reduce the effects of climate change, which could change the face of the American coastline, causing irreparable economic damage – and even submerging several military bases and ports. It is imperative that the U.S. and her allies prepare to defend (and deter) the exploitation of the Poles from revisionist states attempting to expand their influence and power. Finally, the extreme climate at each Pole, means that the American military must ensure that they have the right equipment (e.g. ice breaker ships, etc.), training (e.g. cold weather military exercises), and strategy (i.e. American political willpower to diplomatically and military fight for the region) to combat aggression. Without such resolve, China and Russia might garner such an advantage in each Pole that the West may lose its foothold, and leverage in negotiating a settlement that is a win-win for all countries with a stake in each Polar region.

⁴⁴ “Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal: Estimates of Undiscovered Oil and Gas North of the Arctic Circle,” USGS, 2008, <https://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2008/3049/fs2008-3049.pdf>

⁴⁵ Perry Carter, Anne-Marie Brady, and Evgeny Pavlov, “Russia’s “smart power” foreign policy and Antarctica,” *The Polar Journal* 6, no. 2 (2016): 259-272.

⁴⁶ Rebecca Pincus, “China’s Polar Strategy: An Emerging Gray Zone?,” *The Diplomat*, July 7, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/07/chinas-polar-strategy-an-emerging-gray-zone/>

⁴⁷ *The Antarctic Treaty*, AR-AU-BE-CL-FR-JP-NZ-NO-ZA-USSR-UK-US, October 15, 1959, <https://www.ats.aq/e/ats.htm>

⁴⁸ Gonzalez, “The Arctic and Antarctica.”

⁴⁹ Anne-Marie Brady, “China’s Expanding Antarctic Interests: Implications for Australia,” *Australian Strategic Policy Institute* (2017): 13-16, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep04257.9>

⁵⁰ Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Energy, Installations & Environment), *DoD 2014 Climate Change Adaptation Roadmap*, June 2014, https://www.acq.osd.mil/eie/downloads/CCARprint_wForward_e.pdf

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7 March 2019

In which regions should the US expect significant challenges to its interests over the coming decade? And what form will these challenges take in those regions?

Dr. McFate: We would benefit from developing a grand strategy that helps to define what our national interests are. I am not optimistic in this political environment that this is going to happen any time soon. One of the things that grand strategy should do clearly is outline perpetual national interests because America has no permanent allies or permanent enemies, it just has permanent national interests. Where those things are is a matter of discussion. I do not think the Middle East is as important as people think it is, and whether the threat of Iran is really an existential threat to the US is up for debate. US policy toward Africa has always been focused on African solutions for African problems, which is really code for containment.

If we think about China and how it is fighting, China has its Three Warfares strategy. The Three Warfares strategy focuses on influence, lawfare, and economic instruments. Notably, military is absent. The US needs to figure out how to fight this Three Warfare strategy. When it comes to influence, China has made significant strides. When was the last time you saw a Hollywood movie that had a Chinese villain? China has bought Hollywood and green-lights every movie, so we do not really see things like Chinese villains. China is also building its own version of Hollywood domestically. Ultimately, China is using information operations to write its own narrative around the world. China is using lawfare the same way. This is evident by its actions in the South China Sea, which is an area in which the US is struggling to compete because it is still focused on the old rules of war (i.e., kinetic force and deterrence). Deterrence does not work like it used to. The US can put carrier groups in the South China Sea, but it will not stop China. The way that China is winning in the South China Sea is by doing strategic aikido (i.e., using the enemy as a way to get to the enemy). China is playing up the US' paradigm of warfare where the US thinks of war and peace as being separate dichotomies. This is a false dichotomy—there is not war *or* peace, there is war *and* peace. What China does, therefore, is it goes right to the brink of war in the South China Sea, right to the point where the US might respond, and then stops but gets to keep what it has already captured or created. And this is how China is winning the South China Sea incrementally, one island at a time, and will eventually erode our alliance system there. So, China is basically operating in the space between war and peace in our paradigm of warfare and exploiting that paradigm against us. There are ways to combat China there, to push it out of the South China Sea, but they are not at all traditional.

That seems to get at the Chinese approach to non-kinetic activity in gray zone competition environments, below that level of armed conflict.

Dr. McFate: Yes, but I take issue with the whole idea of “gray zone.” We use “gray zone” as a placeholder. The problem, in my opinion, is that we have this idea of war or peace, and then we just say that the things that are in between those two things are “gray zone.” But a better model for this is the Cold War, which was really a competition. In my book (*The New Rules of War: Victory in the Age of Durable Disorder*), I discuss things that we have already done before and then update them for the 21st century. If we want to get China out of the South China Sea, the things that we should consider doing, which may not be acceptable, would not be deploying F-35s and carriers into the South China Sea, but rather things like supporting weaker insurgency in the western regions, passively supporting rivals to Xi Jinping to get him nervous as an autocrat, and trying to use information operations to depict Beijing as corrupt in its domestic political market and as an empire in international affairs. We should get allies on board early, particularly those who see what is happening and/or fear what may happen. We need to start doing these things now, but this is not a front of warfare that we have fought in decades, so we need to reinvigorate this type of strategic thinking.

⁵¹ Dr. McFate's contribution consists of excerpts from a longer interview session. For access to the full interview session, please contact George Popp (gpopp@nsiteam.com).

Anthony Rinna

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4 March 2019

As for the regions that pose significant challenges for US defense interests, two of the most problematic areas are (counterintuitive as it may seem) Western Europe and Oceania. The reason for highlighting these two areas is this: US defense interests in more obviously volatile areas (specific parts of CENTCOM and PACOM) can be managed by means within spectrum of operations. In Western Europe and the South Pacific, however Russia and China can employ exclusively non-military means to undermine US defense interests.

In Western Europe, the US must not assume that American partners are immune to Russian influence. Particularly as Western European governments feel an increasing sense of uncertainty over the current direction of US foreign policy, policymakers and the local media landscape in those countries are increasingly ripe for potential Russian influence operations. The Russian government has recently engaged in notable operations against Sweden and Germany. With the Kremlin keen to divide the US and its European partners, the increasing ambivalence in Europe toward the United States as a security partner, combined with potential American complacency toward the strength of its trans-Atlantic alliance(s) and an over-focus on more blatantly volatile areas of the world can contribute to the success of Russian influence operations that will damage US interests.

American partners in Oceania and the South Pacific are vulnerable to non-military influence and coercion from China. Beijing's first target is Australia. The Australian government has recently complained of Chinese influence operations within its borders. Furthermore, the PRC has, through its economic prowess, begun to exert pressure on Australia to distance itself from the United States, with Australian policymakers making gradual shifts away from its traditional alignment with Washington in this regard. China has also been taking greater interest in the small island nations elsewhere in the South Pacific. Given the use of economic statecraft in advancing China's geopolitical interests, Beijing may attempt to leverage whatever clout it can among the US-associated states in the southern Pacific to undermine US capabilities. This has already begun happening with one US defense partner, Palau, which has come under economic pressure from China for its continued diplomatic recognition of Taiwan. Another US partner possibly at risk is the Marshall Islands. Given the defense cooperation between the Marshall Islands and the United States, it is imperative that the US keep the Marshall Islands from excessive Chinese influence.

One potential response to these challenges for DoD includes interagency cooperation with the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the US Agency for Global Media to specifically focus on public diplomacy and image-shaping targeted toward those non-military aspects of the US's relations with its defense partners most vulnerable to exploitation by China or Russia.

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18 February 2019

The CCP's primary goal is preservation of its rule. Even the cult of personality created by Xi does not change this. There are a number of related, secondary priorities. They feature protection of vital and potentially unstable global economic relationships and achievement of political primacy in East Asia. At this time, China sees a comprehensive global challenge to the US as infeasible to the point of being harmful with respect to its other objectives. Global competition is a tool to protect the Party and advance toward secondary objectives, not a bid for leadership.

By far the most important example of China's approach to global "competition" is its continued reliance on the dollar. While Beijing sought inclusion in the IMF's reserve currency group, the yuan has remained wedged between 6 and 7 to the dollar for a decade. The PRC chases the stability of a (loose) dollar peg as if it were a much smaller economy. Challenging the US for reserve currency status, a possibility harped on by some, would require permitting money to flow freely out of the country. This terrifies the leadership. And it is impossible to be a genuine global economic challenger, at least, to the US while remaining tethered monetarily.

One step down, the Indo-Pacific is still much too large to be assessed as a whole, still less with other regions such as sub-Saharan Africa. On the fringe, central Asia and South America are important to the PRC as replacement commodities supply lines if access is lost to major producers. South Asia and the Indian Ocean are a notch higher in the hierarchy. For this reason, Pakistan is the largest recipient of Chinese construction services and Bangladesh is in the top 10.

East Asia south of Taiwan is another step higher. It is worth noting that the Asian economic center of gravity will continue to shift south as Northeast Asia, including China, continues to age. An economic breakthrough in India or the high-population ASEAN countries – Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines – would make those regions progressively more important. However, none is in sight at the moment. This leaves Japan, the Korean peninsula, the Russian Federation, Taiwan, and the East China Sea as by far the most important area of the world for the PRC politically and economically (including the core role played by ports in coastal provinces).

The US should prepare for Northeast Asian economic decline. If South Asia or Southeast Asia rises as a replacement economic engine, Sino-American competition for market access will be sharpened, for example in the area of standards. More likely, the large economies will merely do well. In this case, South and Southeast Asia will remain neither sources of critical imports nor China's top markets. The emphasis in Beijing will be on energy shipping and the associated political influence needed in the Philippines, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and possibly Indonesia.

The PRC's view of central Asia and South America extends in most ways to sub-Saharan Africa. The chief interest is commodities extraction, featuring energy but also metals (and food in South America). Political-security actions are largely in support of this. The US has no such interest and little reason to respond to China on these grounds. Long-term successful local development could also bring growing demand for goods and services and the capacity to support low-cost production and export. These might eventually become valuable to the US and a symbolic free trade agreement, endorsed in principle by the administration, would be worthwhile.

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11 March 2019

Political science research suggests that public opinion of foreign countries can be related to foreign policy attitudes about that country (Hartley and Russett, 1992; Sobel, 2001; Wlezien, 1996). For example, negative opinions toward a country can often result in people supporting more aggressive policies toward that country (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1990; Sides & Gross, 2013). Public opinion of a foreign country can also affect purchasing behavior; for instance, people are more likely to purchase goods from countries they look on favorably (Amine et al., 2005; Klein et al., 1998), which may have implications for global trade flows. History also suggests that unfavorable opinion of a country can place individuals from a country in physical jeopardy. While there are extreme instances, such as the Japanese internment during World War II, there are also more recent occurrences, including violence against Japanese citizens during the 1980s in the United States (F.H. Wu, 2012) and mistreatment of Arabs and Arab-Americans in an era of unfavorable opinions and fears emanating from Middle Eastern countries (Cainkar, 2004).

This body of research suggests the United States may face challenges in myriad regions in the coming years. Global public opinion of America is currently hovering around historic lows not seen in Pew Research Center's public opinion surveys since the end of George W. Bush's presidency. Since 2002, when the Center first asked about America's image abroad, favorable opinion of the United States has frequently tracked with confidence in the country's president — and in most nations we poll, ratings for U.S. President Donald Trump are much more negative than what President Barack Obama received during his presidency. A 25-country median of 70% say they have no confidence in President Trump to do what is right in world affairs — a larger proportion than say the same of any other world leader polled about, including Russia's Vladimir Putin and China's Xi Jinping. In countries where confidence in the U.S. president fell most, America's overall image also tended to suffer more. Many of the steepest declines in U.S. image have occurred among long-standing allies or neighbors such as Canada and Mexico. Opinion of the United States also fell substantially in one country where relations are frostier: Just 26% of Russians had a favorable view of the United States in 2018, down from 41% in 2017 — and accompanied by a 34-percentage-point difference in confidence in Trump over the same period.

Coupled with declining confidence in the U.S. president is a rise in the percentage of people who see the United States' power and

influence as a major threat to their country. A 22-country median of 45% see U.S. power and influence as a major threat now, up from 38% in the same countries during Trump's first year as president in 2017 and 25% in 2013, during the Obama administration. The Trump presidency has also brought an increase in the number of people in many nations who say that the United States doesn't listen to countries like theirs when making foreign policy. This pattern is especially pronounced among some of America's top allies and partners. For instance, while the share of the French public that believes the United States considers France's national interests has not been very high at any point over the past decade and a half, it reached a low point near the end of Bush's second term (11% in 2007), rose somewhat during Obama's presidency (35% in 2013) and has declined once more under Trump. In 2018, just 18% in France said the United States considers the interests of countries like theirs when making policy.

But, while favorable views of the United States have dropped in most regions of the world since 2017, America's global brand has become more tarnished in some regions than others.

Middle East and North Africa

The Middle East and North Africa region stands out as one in which not only views of the United States are broadly negative, but the American people, too, are seen in a relatively negative light. Only 43% in Lebanon, 37% in both Jordan and Tunisia and 24% in Turkey expressed favorable views of Americans in 2017. American soft power also has little reach in this region. These same countries stand out for their relatively negative evaluations of America's cultural influence; a median of just 45% in the region said they found American pop culture appealing — significantly lower than the share who said the same in most other regions.

Latin America

Latin Americans, too, tend to be less enthusiastic about the United States. Only about half of Colombians, Peruvians and Brazilians expressed a positive attitude toward the United States in 2017. Mexicans are particularly unfavorable toward the country: In spring 2018, only 32% said they had a favorable view of the United States. Another 40% had a *very* unfavorable view, more than six times the share who said this in 2015. Mexico is also where Trump got his lowest ratings on the 2018 survey: Just 6% in the United States' southern neighbor expressed confidence in him. And, when asked about the U.S. plan to build a border wall in 2017, fully 94% of Mexicans opposed the proposal.

In the 2017 survey, too, many Latin Americans did not see the United States as a protector of personal freedoms. A median of just 45% said the United States respects its own people's rights, including just 35% in Argentina and 32% in Mexico. There was also limited appreciation for American ideas and customs in the region; a median of just 39% thought their spread is a good thing. Mexicans (26%) and Argentines (25%) were particularly unenthusiastic, with Mexican sentiment down 15 points since 2013. U.S.-style democracy also failed to earn majority support in any of the seven countries surveyed. Only 25% of Mexicans and 28% of Argentines liked American democratic ideas in 2017. And since 2013 the share of the public that expressed approval for such American concepts fell 18 points in Mexico and Brazil, 13 points in Chile and 10 points in Argentina. In addition to their relatively low estimations of America and its ideals, publics in Latin America are also less committed than other nations to democratic norms of governance, which may leave countries in the region ripe for the emergence of populist or authoritarian leaders.

Europe

European views of President Trump and America are relatively low. The region also stands apart for its critical evaluations of America's civil liberties record — which is more negative under Trump than under prior administrations. Majorities in Spain, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands and France all say the United States fails to respect the rights of its people. Notably, these criticisms started during the Obama administration, though they have continued into the Trump era.

Beyond these criticisms, the region also stands apart as one with high levels of economic nostalgia — and this type of discontent can be associated with the rise of populism and authoritarian leaders who seek to capitalize on public economic concerns. Across much of Europe — but especially in southern Europe — roughly half or more believe that when children today in their country grow up they will be worse off financially than their parents. Moreover, many say the financial situation of average people today is worse, compared with the pre-financial crisis era 20 years ago. This view is especially pronounced in Greece (87%), Italy (72%), Spain (62%), France (56%) and the United Kingdom (53%). High levels of economic malaise are consequential, as Pew Research Center studies indicate that

people sympathetic to populist parties are often more negative about current economic conditions. Southern Europeans, too, stand out from northern Europeans for their relatively low trust in institutions such as the news media and parliament, as well as the fragmentation of their media environment along left-right ideological lines.

Conclusion

These are not the only issue areas where the United States may face challenges. For example, publics are worried about global climate change and the issue is one where the United States' policy is unpopular. More critical evaluations of the United States, its model of governance, and assessments of American citizens may open the door for challenges from other superpowers, including China. While only three countries surveyed in 2018 said they would prefer Chinese global leadership to that of the United States — Argentina, Tunisia and Russia — publics nonetheless are much more likely to see China playing a more important role today than say the same of the United States. But, at least for the moment, when asked about whether it would be better for the world to have China or the United States as the leading superpower, there is little contest: A 25-country median of 63% name the United States, compared with 19% who say China.

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The return of great power competition will see challenges all over the globe and a hot spot will be Central Asia. Although U.S. interests in the region are limited to stability, support for democratization, and natural resource exports, the importance of Central Asia to China and Russia are much higher. For the Chinese, the region is the first external zone on the Belt & Road Initiative on the way to Western Europe and a source of ethnic support to their own Uighur minority. Russia has been in the region for two hundred years and local elites are still tied to Moscow. While Russia and China cooperate at the international level to challenge the U.S.-led international order, they are still very much competing through gritted teeth in the region along security and economic axes.

U.S. political and military decision-makers should pay more attention to this region for two reasons. First, this will be the venue where Russia and China will test out tools and strategies against each before turning them on U.S. and allied states. Second, the value of engaging local governments as an economic or political alternative to Russia and China is to demonstrate continued American commitment to its core values and to various regions of the world as a concerned and capable superpower.

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U.S.-China Competition in the Asia-Pacific

There is little evidence to suggest that America's partners and allies in the Asia-Pacific wish to "choose" between Washington or Beijing, even those that have the greatest reservations about China's regional ambitions. Instead, they seem determined to pursue for as long as possible a balancing act that they have been undertaking for the past decade or so: strengthening their diplomatic and military ties with the United States while expanding their trading and investment ties with China. If Washington exhorts them to make a choice, it may end up undercutting its long-term position in the Asia-Pacific: to China's neighbors, after all, China is a geographical fixture and, despite its cooling growth rate, an economic fulcrum; the United States is a distant superpower and, despite its extant margin of preeminence, an inconsistent presence. One of the chief figures behind the Obama administration's much-discussed rebalance, Kurt Campbell, laments that Washington "often pursues its Asia strategy in fits and starts, exhibiting an accordion-like tendency to surge into the region and then retreat as concerns elsewhere drain away American attention."⁵³

The credibility of America's professed commitment to the Asia-Pacific diminishes with each such cycle of surging and retreating; the region's evolution, however, does not stop. The founding father of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, observed that "Americans seem to think that Asia is like a movie and that [they] can freeze developments out here whenever the [United States] becomes intensely involved elsewhere in the world."⁵⁴ Beyond affording China more room to translate its economic growth into strategic heft, U.S. vacillation compels China's neighbors to take measures that insulate their fortunes from the vagaries of U.S. foreign policy; the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace's Evan Feigenbaum, a prominent architect of the George W. Bush administration's policy towards the Asia-Pacific, warns that "when Washington absents itself (or merely shows disinterest in the region's concerns), Asians will grope for their *own* solutions" (emphasis his).⁵⁵ The aftermath of America's withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership offers a recent illustration: the 11 remaining parties to the agreement proceeded with negotiations, ultimately signing the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. Feigenbaum observes that "for all their tensions with one another, forging agreement on pan-Asian rules beats both 'Chinese' rules and no rules."

Though the United States has long maintained an inconsistent disposition towards the Asia-Pacific, its policy towards China has changed significantly in recent years: unlike its predecessor, the Trump administration regards Beijing not as a challenging partner, but as a security threat. While the Obama administration grew increasingly frustrated by China's theft of intellectual property and espionage for commercial gain, it largely embraced the proposition that economic interdependence between the two countries was a source of stability in their relations. The Trump administration, by contrast, has forcefully challenged that judgment, arguing that the United States was mistaken to support China's accession to the World Trade Organization and facilitate the economic revival of what has become its principal competitor. Its national security strategy warns that "China is using economic inducements and penalties," among other instruments, "to persuade other states to heed its political and security agenda. China's infrastructure investments and trade strategies reinforce its geopolitical aspirations."⁵⁶ Citing Beijing's technological aspirations as a threat to U.S. national security, the administration has imposed tariffs of 25 percent on \$250 billion worth of Chinese exports, announced that it will impose tariffs of ten percent on an additional \$300 billion of Chinese goods starting in December, and attempted to restrict high-tech exports to major companies such as Fujian Jinhua and Huawei.

It is true, of course, that China had been growing its economic self-sufficiency well before the Trump administration took office. In the aftermath of the 1997-98 Asian-Pacific currency crisis and especially the global financial crisis a decade later, it judged the United

⁵² The views expressed in this submission are solely those of Mr. Wyne; they do not reflect those of the RAND Corporation or any of its other employees.

⁵³ Kurt M. Campbell, *The Pivot: The Future of American Statecraft in Asia* (New York: Twelve, 2016): p. 138

⁵⁴ Graham Allison, Robert D. Blackwill, and Ali Wyne, *Lee Kuan Yew: The Grand Master's Insights on China, the United States, and the World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013): p. 28

⁵⁵ <https://macropolo.org/analysis/reluctant-stakeholder-why-chinas-highly-strategic-brand-of-revisionism-is-more-challenging-than-washington-thinks/>

⁵⁶ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>

States to be an unreliable steward of the world economy, and it adjusted accordingly; where China's exports to the United States were equivalent to nine percent of its GDP in 2007, that figure stood at just four percent in 2017.⁵⁷

Up until recently, though, there was little evidence that China sought to develop greater autonomy as an alternative to greater interdependence; rather, it appeared set on increasing both. Now, however, in light of the Trump administration's commitment to readjusting economic ties between the two countries, it appears to have concluded that Washington regards trade entanglement less as an instrument for maintaining stable bilateral ties than for constricting China's resurgence. As such, what had, until recently, been a gradual Chinese effort to reduce its reliance on the U.S. economy may well accelerate significantly. China is tasked with absorbing the short-term pain of decoupling en route to becoming more competitive over the long run. That charge entails not only rerouting to other countries the exports it has thus far been sending to the United States; it also involves finding alternative providers of advanced technology and concurrently growing an indigenous capacity for advanced manufacturing.

Because the United States is the top destination for Chinese exports and, as the near-death of telecommunications giant ZTE affirms, the principal supplier of high-tech inputs to China, finding a substitute for Washington will not be easy. The Trump administration's policy could accrue strategic dividends if it induces partners and allies to follow suit and nurtures the formation of a broad-based coalition to counter China's economic practices; a recent analysis observes that the country's leadership fears "a potential coordinated assault by the Trump administration, [the European Union], and Japan on their unique model of Chinese 'state capitalism' that has been integral to the country's economic success over the past 40 years."⁵⁸

The evidence thus far, however, suggests that such a coalition is unlikely to form. Japan, China, and South Korea are accelerating talks on a free-trade agreement (FTA), and negotiations over the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership—a 16-country arrangement that excludes the United States and accounts for some 30 percent of gross world product—are gaining momentum. All told, China has "17 FTAs with 25 countries and regions, and is in talks over 12 new or upgraded FTA deals."⁵⁹ Beijing is also gaining economic leverage abroad through BRI, though that undertaking has started to experience growing pushback.

In addition, while the Trump administration's strategy may well cause short-term economic headaches for China, it is unlikely to deal a long-term setback; China presently occupies a commanding position in global supply chains, accounting for nearly 35 percent of clothing exports and over 32 percent of office and telecommunications equipment exports last year.⁶⁰ Its GDP, meanwhile, was over three-fifths as large as America's in 2017, roughly twice as high a proportion as in 2008.⁶¹ China is also expected to account for roughly 35 percent of global growth between 2017 and 2019.⁶² In brief, Beijing is unlikely to wither in the face of tariffs. Indeed, concludes Beijing-based economics correspondent Michael Schuman, the Trump administration's course of unilateral protectionism has only "reinforced the critical importance of [its] quest for greater independence....China is content to go its own way on its own terms."⁶³

The worst-case scenario from Washington's perspective would be one in which it confronts, without its European and Asian partners and allies, a China whose economy is not only significantly larger but also more resilient; Jeffrey Bader, President Obama's principal China advisor between 2009 and 2011, made this point powerfully in a recent policy brief:

- Americans need to understand that if we go down the road of disengagement from China in pursuit of unbridled competition, it will not be a repetition of the Cold War with the Soviet Union, when the United States was joined by a phalanx of Western and democratic countries determined to join us in isolating the [Soviet Union]. [...] ...the rest of the world, like us, is deeply entangled with China economically and in other ways. Even those most wary of Beijing, like Japan, India, and Australia, will

⁵⁷ <https://www.ft.com/content/c4df31cc-4d26-11e8-97e4-13afc22d86d4>

⁵⁸ <https://www.ft.com/content/ee361e2e-b283-11e8-8d14-6f049d06439c>. The Chinese international relations scholar Yan Xuetong contends that "the core of competition between China and the United States will be to see who has more high-quality friends." See "How China Can Defeat America," *New York Times* (November 21, 2011).

⁵⁹ <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/2165260/china-japan-and-south-korea-aim-speed-talks-free-trade>

⁶⁰ <https://www.ft.com/content/03e4f016-aa9a-11e8-94bd-cba20d67390c>

⁶¹ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=US-CN>

⁶² <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/04/the-worlds-biggest-economies-in-2018/>

⁶³ <https://www.bloomberquint.com/opinion/china-s-far-from-desperate-to-make-a-trade-deal-with-trump>

not risk economic ties with China nor join in a perverse struggle to re-erect the “bamboo curtain,” this time by the West. We will be on our own.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ <https://www.brookings.edu/research/u-s-china-relations-is-it-time-to-end-the-engagement/>

Subject Matter Expert Biographies

Dr. Gawdat Bahgat

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Dr. Gawdat Bahgat is professor of National Security Affairs at the National Defense University's Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Study. He is an Egyptian-born specialist in Middle Eastern policy, particularly Egypt, Iran, and the Gulf region. His areas of expertise include energy security, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, counter-terrorism, Arab-Israeli conflict, North Africa, and American foreign policy in the Middle East. Bahgat's career blends scholarship with national security practicing. Before joining NESAC in December 2009, he taught at different universities. Bahgat published ten books including *Alternative Energy in the Middle East* (2013), *Energy Security* (2011), *International Political Economy* (2010), *Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in the Middle East* (2007), *Israel and the Persian Gulf* (2006), and *American Oil Diplomacy* (2003). Bahgat's articles have appeared in *International Affairs*, *Middle East Journal*, *Middle East Policy*, *Oil and Gas Journal*, and *OPEC Review*, among others. His work has been translated to several foreign languages. Bahgat served as an advisor to several governments and oil companies. He has more than 25 years of academic, policy and government experience working on Middle Eastern issues. Bahgat has contributed to CNN, BBC, Washington Post and Al-Jazeera. He has spoken at Tufts University, Columbia University, London School of Economics, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, Swiss Foreign Ministry, Yildiz Technical University in Istanbul, Qatar University, Kuwait University, Oman Diplomatic Institute, Griffith University (Australia), and India School of Business.

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Patricia J. Blocksome is assistant professor in the National Security Affairs department at the Naval War College – Monterey. Her research focuses on special operations, unconventional warfare, rebel group operations and strategy, and hybrid warfare. Concurrently, Dr. Blocksome serves as an adjunct professor at Joint Special Operations University, where she teaches courses on countering violent extremism. She is the vice president for research at the Special Operations Research Association, managing editor of the *Special Operations Journal*, and associate editor of the *Journal of Interdisciplinary Conflict Science*. Prior to joining the Naval War College faculty, she served as assistant professor at the School of Advanced Military Studies in Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas. She is the editor, along with Christopher Marsh and James Kiras, of the forthcoming book *Special Operations: Out of the Shadows*. She has also been published in the *Journal of Human Rights*,

International Political Science Review, Special Operations Journal, Small Wars Journal, CTX Journal, Air Commando Journal, and Interagency Study. She received her PhD in Security Studies from Kansas State University.

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Dr. Ryan Burke is an Associate Professor and Curriculum Director in the Department of Military & Strategic Studies at the U.S. Air Force Academy. As Curriculum Director, Dr. Burke designs and implements the academic curriculum of instruction for 22 Military & Strategic Studies courses taught to over 1,500 students per year. Ryan received his USAFA appointment after completing a Department of Defense-funded post-doctoral research fellowship in the University of Delaware's Joseph R. Biden School of Public Policy and Administration. He also earned his Ph.D. from the Biden School where – in addition to teaching undergraduate public policy courses – he was awarded the prestigious University Dissertation Fellowship during his final year of study. Ryan's research emphasizes military and defense policy across the spectrum of conflict. He has authored multiple monographs focused on defense policy; peer-reviewed journal articles; book chapters; conference papers, and winning essays in national competitions. He is also the chief editor of *Military Strategy, Joint Operations, and Airpower: An Introduction* (Georgetown University Press, 2018) and is an opinion contributor to *The Hill* on defense and military policy matters. Ryan's research has been featured on TV and in print with Fox News, NBC, ABC, Business Insider, USA Today, *The Hill*, the Modern War Institute, and more. He has been an invited consultant in educational steering groups nationwide, serves as a peer-reviewer for multiple journals, and regularly presents at national conferences. Prior to his academic pursuits, Ryan was a U.S. Marine Corps officer where he served as a platoon commander, operations officer, and company commander during his fleet tour. He then served as the Deputy Marine Officer Instructor at the University of Pennsylvania's Naval ROTC unit. After leaving the Marines, he worked as a Senior Consultant and Logistics Analyst for Booz Allen Hamilton supporting Department of Defense projects in the Pentagon and with the Marine Corps Combat Development Command. He earned his bachelor's from Penn State University – where he attended on a Marine-Option Naval ROTC scholarship – and his master's from Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia prior to earning his doctorate at the University of Delaware.

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Dean Cheng brings detailed knowledge of China's military and space capabilities to bear as The Heritage Foundation's research fellow on Chinese political and security affairs. He specializes in China's military and foreign policy, in particular its relationship with the rest of Asia and with the United States. Cheng has written extensively on China's military doctrine, technological implications of its space program and "dual use" issues associated with the communist nation's industrial and scientific infrastructure. He previously worked for 13 years as a senior analyst, first with Science Applications International Corp. (SAIC), the Fortune 500 specialist in defense and homeland security, and then with the China Studies division of the Center for Naval Analyses, the federally funded research institute. Before entering the private sector, Cheng studied China's defense-industrial complex for a congressional agency, the Office of Technology Assessment, as an analyst in the International Security and Space Program. Cheng has appeared on public affairs shows such as *John McLaughlin's One on One* and programs on National Public Radio, CNN International, BBC World Service and International Television News (ITN). He has been interviewed by or provided commentary for publications such as *Time* magazine, *The Washington Post*, *Financial Times*, *Bloomberg News*, *Jane's Defense Weekly*, South Korea's *Chosun Ilbo* and Hong Kong's *South China Morning Post*. Cheng has spoken at the National Space Symposium, National Defense University, the Air Force Academy, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Eisenhower Center for Space and Defense Studies. Cheng earned a bachelor's degree in politics from Princeton University in 1986 and studied for a doctorate at MIT.

Dr. Raphael S. Cohen

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The Honorable David C. Gompert is currently Distinguished Visiting Professor at the U.S. Naval Academy, Adjunct Professor at Virginia Union University, and Senior Fellow at RAND. Mr. Gompert was Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence from 2009 to 2010. During 2010, he served as Acting Director of National Intelligence, in which capacity he oversaw the U.S. Intelligence Community and acted as the President's chief intelligence advisor. Prior to his most recent government service, Mr. Gompert was a Senior Fellow at the RAND Corporation, from 2004 to 2009. Before that he was Distinguished Research Professor at the Center for Technology and National Security Policy, National Defense University. From 2003 to 2004, Mr. Gompert served as the Senior Advisor for National Security and Defense, Coalition Provisional Authority, Iraq. He has taught at RAND Graduate School, U.S. Naval Academy, the National Defense University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Virginia Union University. Mr. Gompert served as President of RAND Europe from 2000 to 2003, during which period he was on the RAND Europe Executive Board and Chairman of RAND Europe-UK. He was Vice President of RAND and Director of the National Defense Research Institute from 1993 to 2000. From 1990 to 1993, Mr. Gompert was Special Assistant to President George H. W. Bush and Senior Director for Europe on the National Security Council staff. He has held numerous positions at the State Department, including Deputy to the Under Secretary for Political Affairs (1982-83), Deputy Assistant Secretary for Europe (1981-82), Deputy Director of the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (1977-81), and Special Assistant to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (1973-75). Mr. Gompert worked in the private sector from 1983-1990. At Unisys (1989-90), he was President of the Systems Management Group. At AT&T (1983-89), he was Vice President, Civil Sales and Programs, and Director of International Market Planning. Mr. Gompert has published on international affairs, national security and information technology. His books (authored or co-authored) include *War with China: Thinking through the Unthinkable*, *Blinders, Blunders, and Wars: What America and China Can Learn*; *Sea Power and American Interests in the Western Pacific*; *The Paradox of Power: Sino-American Strategic Restraint in an Age of Vulnerability*; *Underkill: Capabilities for Military Operations amid Populations*; *War by Other Means: Building Capabilities for Counterinsurgency*; *BattleWise: Achieving Time-Information Superiority in Networked Warfare*; *Nuclear Weapons and World Politics* (ed.); *America and Europe: A Partnership for a new Era* (ed.); *Right Makes Might: Freedom and Power in the Information Age*; *Mind the Gap: A Transatlantic Revolution in Military Affairs*. Mr. Gompert is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Advisory Board of the Naval Academy Center for Cyber Security Studies and chairman of the

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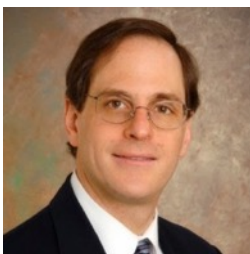
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Dr. Sean McFate

Professor (National Defense University)



Dr. Sean McFate is an author, novelist and foreign policy expert. He is a professor of strategy at the National Defense University and Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service in Washington, DC. Additionally, he is an Advisor to Oxford University’s Centre for Technology and Global Affairs. A specialist in national security strategy, McFate was a think tank scholar at the RAND Corporation, Atlantic Council, Bipartisan Policy Center, and New America Foundation. Recently, he was a visiting Scholar at Oxford University’s Changing Character of War Program, where he conducted research on future war. McFate’s career began as a paratrooper and officer in the U.S. Army’s storied 82nd Airborne Division. He served under Stan McChrystal and David Petraeus, and graduated from elite training programs, such as Jungle Warfare School in Panama. He was also a Jump Master. McFate then became a private military contractor. Among his many experiences, he dealt with warlords, raised armies for U.S. interest, rode with armed groups in the Sahara, conducted strategic reconnaissance for oil companies, transacted arms deals in Eastern Europe, and helped prevent an impending genocide in the Rwanda region. In the world of international business, McFate was a Vice President at TD International, a boutique political risk consulting firm with offices in Washington, Houston, Singapore and Zurich. Additionally, he was a manager at DynCorp International, a consultant at BearingPoint (now Deloitte Consulting) and an associate at Booz Allen Hamilton. McFate’s newest book is *The New Rules of War: Victory in the Age of Durable Disorder* (William Morrow). Admiral Jim Stavridis (retired), the former NATO Supreme Allied Commander, said: “Stunning. Sean McFate is a new Sun Tzu.” McFate also authored *The Modern Mercenary: Private Armies and What They Mean for World Order* (Oxford University Press) which explains how the privatization of war is changing warfare. The Economist called it a “fascinating and disturbing book.” McFate also write fiction based on his military experiences. He co-authored the novels *Shadow War* and *Deep Black* (William Morrow), part of the Tom Locke series. *New York Times* #1 bestselling author Mark Greaney said: “I was blown away.... simply one of the most entertaining and intriguing books I’ve read in quite some time.” A coveted speaker, McFate has appeared before the British House of Commons, top universities and popular audience venues. He has written for the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *The Atlantic*, *The New Republic*, *Foreign Policy*, *Politico*, *Daily Beast*, *CNBC*, *Vice Magazine*, *Aeon*, *War on the Rocks*, *Military Review* and *African Affairs*. He has appeared on CNN’s *Amanpour*, MSNBC’s *Morning Joe*, *Fox and Friends*, NPR, BBC, *Economist*, Vice/HBO, The Discovery Channel, and American Heroes Channel. As a scholar, he has authored eight book chapters in edited academic volumes and published a monograph for the U.S. Army War College on how to raise foreign armies. McFate holds a BA from Brown University, MPP from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, and a Ph.D. in international relations from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

Anthony Rinna

Senior Editor (Sino-NK)



Anthony V. Rinna is a Senior Editor at Sino-NK, a research organization dedicated to the study of the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia. Rinna specializes in Russian foreign policy and Northeast Asian geopolitics. His expertise has been sought for research conducted by the Australian and Indian foreign ministries, as well as DoD. His views have been cited in the BBC, CNBC, Reuters and the Washington Post. Rinna, a US citizen, has a working knowledge of Korean, Russian and Spanish, and has lived in South Korea since 2014.

Dr. Derek M. Scissors

Resident Scholar (American Enterprise Institute)



Derek M. Scissors is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), where he focuses on the Chinese and Indian economies and on US economic relations with Asia. He is concurrently chief economist of the China Beige Book. Dr. Scissors is the author of the China Global Investment Tracker. In late 2008, he authored a series of papers that chronicled the end of pro-market Chinese reform and predicted economic stagnation in China as a result. He has also written multiple papers on the best course for Indian economic development. Before joining AEI, Dr. Scissors was a senior research fellow in the Asian Studies Center at the Heritage Foundation and an adjunct professor of economics at George Washington University. He has worked for London-based Intelligence Research Ltd., taught economics at Lingnan University in Hong Kong, and served as an action officer in international economics and energy for the US Department of Defense. Dr. Scissors has a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan, a master's degree from the University of Chicago, and a doctorate from Stanford University.

Dr. Laura Silver

Senior Researcher (Pew Research Center)



Laura Silver is a senior researcher at Pew Research Center. She is an expert in international survey research and writes about international public opinion on a variety of topics, including media usage and partisanship in Europe, Chinese public opinion, and global attitudes toward China. She is involved in all aspects of the research process, including designing survey questionnaires and sample designs, managing fieldwork, processing and analyzing data, and writing reports. Prior to joining Pew Research Center, she was a foreign affairs research analyst at the U.S. Department of State in the Office of Opinion Research where she designed and implemented surveys in multiple countries in East Asia. She received a dual Ph.D. from the Annenberg School for Communication and the political science department at the University of Pennsylvania where her work focused on American public opinion of China, particularly in the context of presidential elections. Her work has been published in journals such as the International Journal of Public Opinion Research and International Studies Quarterly.

Dr. Yuval Weber

Kennan Institute Associate Professor of Russian and Eurasian Studies
(Daniel Morgan Graduate School of National Security)



Yuval Weber, Ph.D., is the Kennan Institute Associate Professor of Russian and Eurasian Studies and was the inaugural DMGS-Kennan Institute fellow. Prior to joining the faculty at DMGS, Dr. Weber taught at Harvard University, where he was a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department on Government and a Kathryn W. and Shelby Cullom Davis Research Fellow at the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies. His first position was at the National Research University–Higher School of Economics, where he was an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs. He has additionally served as a researcher at the Carnegie Moscow Center and the New Economic School in Moscow and completed his post-graduate education at University of Chicago and University of Texas. Dr. Weber is working on a project on the sources of liberal and anti-liberal dissatisfaction for powers in the international system and the strategies they employ to stake their claims for revising the international order. The first manuscript from that project is about the tension between demands of economic modernization and the security state in Russian political economy (Agenda/Columbia UP). His work has appeared in *Problems of Post-Communism*, *International Studies Review*, *Survival*, *Cold War Studies*, *Orbis*, and the *Washington Post*.

Ali Wyne

Policy Analyst (RAND Corporation)



Ali Wyne is a Washington, DC-based policy analyst at the RAND Corporation, a nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, and a nonresident fellow at the Modern War Institute. He serves as rapporteur for a U.S. National Intelligence Council working group that analyzes trends in world order. Wyne served as a junior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace from 2008 to 2009 and as a research assistant at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs from 2009 to 2012. From January to July 2013 he worked on a team that prepared Samantha Power for her confirmation hearing to be U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. From 2014 to 2015 he served on RAND's adjunct staff, working with the late Richard Solomon on RAND's *Strategic Rethink* series. Wyne received dual degrees in management science and political science from MIT (2008) and earned his Masters in Public Policy from the Harvard Kennedy School (2017). While at the Kennedy School he served on a Hillary for America working group on U.S. policy toward Asia. Wyne is a coauthor of *Lee Kuan Yew: The Grand Master's Insights on China, the United States, and the World* (2013) and a contributing author to *Power Relations in the Twenty-First Century: Mapping a Multipolar World?* (2017) and the *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy* (2008). Wyne is a term member of the Council on Foreign Relations, a David Rockefeller fellow with the Trilateral Commission, and a security fellow with the Truman National Security Project.

Dr. Jen Ziemke

Associate Professor (John Carroll University)



Jen Ziemke holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She co-founded the Crisis Mappers Network, co-curated its conference series, and serves as a director for the Open Geospatial Consortium. She is currently Associate Professor at John Carroll University focusing her teaching and research at the intersection of data perceptualization, conflict, and security studies.

Author Biography

Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois

Chief Analytics Officer and Executive Vice President (NSI, Inc.)



Dr. Astorino-Courtois is NSI's Chief Analytics Officer (CAO) and Executive Vice President. She has served as co-chair of a National Academy of Science's study on Strategic Deterrence and served as the deterrence lead on the National Research Council's recent Space Deterrence and Protection study for the Director of National Intelligence and Secretary of Defense. For the past 10 years Dr. Astorino-Courtois also has served as technical lead and provided the conceptual models and analytic frameworks for rapid turn-around projects sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense. These efforts include design of a "Rich Contextual Understanding" analytic approach for the Intelligence Chief and Commander of Allied forces in Afghanistan (Com ISAF); development of NSI's Stability Model (StaM) as a methodology for conducting provincial assessments for the ISAF Joint Command; assessments of national and sub-national drivers of political, economic, and social instability for USCENTCOM, USPACOM, USAFRICOM, and the intelligence community; and projects on deterrence and decision assessment models for USSTRATCOM. Previously, Dr. Astorino-Courtois was a tenured Associate Professor of International Relations at Texas A&M University where her research focus was cognitive aspects of foreign policy decision making. She has also taught at Creighton University and as a visiting instructor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Dr. Astorino-Courtois earned her Ph.D. in International Relations/Research Methodologies from NYU. Her BA is in political science from Boston College.