

# STRATEGIKA

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Conflicts Of The Past As Lessons For The Present

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## ALLIANCES HOSTILE TO AMERICAN INTERESTS

IN THIS ISSUE

EDWARD N. LUTTWAK • ROBERT G. KAUFMAN • MILES YU

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# The United States: A Nation in Need of a Leader

By Edward N. Luttwak

At a time when the overall power of the Russian Federation has been very greatly diminished by its failure to swiftly conquer Ukraine as all had expected and the overall power of the People's Republic of China has been eroded by the cruel exposure of its broad technological limitations following some rather narrow U.S. export denials, while Iran's immiseration, aggravated by adventurism, has deprived its regime of public support, even as Brazil and Turkey, once rising powers of great potential are stagnating, while North Korea's boasts succeed one another without effect, and South Africa continues to decline into a failed state—why do many Americans believe that the relative power of the United States has greatly declined?

One reason is that they see countries once firmly in America's camp, such as Turkey and far more significantly Saudi Arabia, closely cooperating with Putin's Russia in ways that enhance its war-making capacity, the former by supplying it with embargoed equipment starting with microprocessors, and the latter engaging in joint output manipulations that increase Russian as well as Saudi oil revenues.

The Saudis, moreover, also cooperated with Xi Jinping's pronouncedly expansionist China, enabling it to stride into the Persian Gulf in the prestigious role of the peacemaker between Riyadh and Tehran. This move automatically enhances Beijing's influence from Kuwait to Oman, a swath of territory where only American influence had mattered before, ever since the British withdrawal in the last century.

That was the Saudi response after a new administration chose to breach the multigenerational U.S.–Saudi oil-for-security pact by failing to provide prompt military support when the country came under attack from Iran's minions. That the administration was plainly influenced by an American newspaper's anti-Saudi campaign motivated by the killing of a reactionary polygamist and sometime columnist, only aggravated the slide in U.S. influence.

There are some who especially rejoice in the spectacle of a weaker United States, not only because they are inflamed by the envious and resentful anti-Americanism that once characterized much of the intelligentsia from London to New Delhi, but because they see it as vindicating their very prolonged wait for the advent of multipolarity, to them a blessed condition under which countries such as Brazil, India, and South Africa would finally join China and Russia in deciding the overall direction of world politics, along with a greatly diminished United States and its increasingly bedraggled ex-imperial British and French partners, whose global power of yesteryear—now shrunk to chairs in the decreasingly relevant UN Security Council, and nuclear weapons that cannot be more consequential than those of Russia in its Ukrainian predicament—that is, not really consequential at all.

Finally, there is the new fragility of the U.S. dollar's role as the world's reserve currency, itself a very major component of overall U.S. power. Its cause is not the rising percentage of world trade that starts or ends

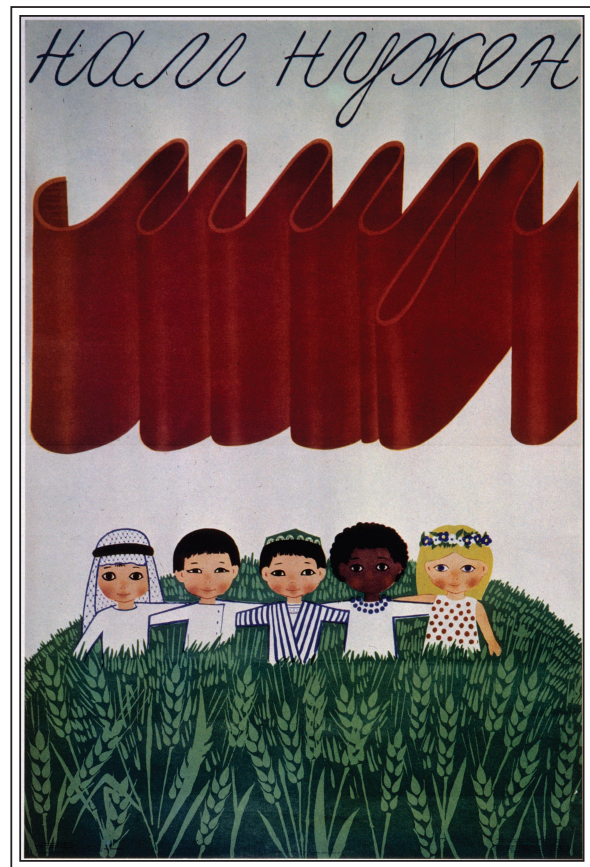


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in China—Sterling’s role as the world’s currency was undiminished by the relentless rise of German global commerce till 1914.

It is instead the daily spectacle of U.S. politics in Washington that weakens the dollar’s perceived value, for in Congress it is only the exceptional few who show any awareness of the material benefits conferred by the dollar’s role as the world’s reserve currency, and the consequent imperative of preserving that exorbitant privilege by fiscal prudence at all times, and strict public-spending restraints whenever necessary.

Rather than the needed fiscal discipline, the world sees U.S. politicians competing with one another by proffering new expenditures, including increased military spending with no added efforts to improve the ways the money is spent; countless localist, sectoral, or national initiatives at public expense; and the ever-increasing, so-called non-discretionary expenditures, mostly transfers to individuals under various headings that could in fact be decreased, but are instead only increased, with all those vast expenditures financed by increasing the public debt whenever collected tax revenues fall short, as they usually do.

With the public debt having long since passed the 100% of GDP mark, that most minimal standard of fiscal prudence, instead of the emergence of a determined strong-dollar party—as was the case with Sterling, whose demise was successfully delayed for three generations till the end of the Second World War—in the United States the very opposite has happened.

When the newly installed administration hurriedly decreed in 2021 almost two trillion dollars of distributions to agile claimants to meet supposed pandemic needs—with no suggestion of how two trillion dollars of additional tax revenues might be collected to prevent an inflationary tide—instead of vehement opposition, there was widespread acceptance. Milton Friedman’s irrefutable observation that inflation is always and everywhere caused by government money-creation was duly evoked, only to be ridiculed by the likes of the *New York Times*’s in-house Nobel laureate who dismissed the notion that the effect of the nearly two-trillion-dollar handout might be inflationary, given the deflationary effects of the pandemic. It was then that MMT, “Modern Monetary Theory,” briefly emerged and provided a theoretical justification for any and all government expenditures to satisfy all needs old and new, including the abolition of poverty altogether, because the U.S. dollar was the world’s reserve currency, so that if overall U.S. demand exceeded overall U.S. supply, imports would arrive in corresponding measure to prevent inflation.

That the overall thrust of these arguments—if not their indefensible illogic—was accepted by the powers that be is irrevocably proven by the reaction of the Chairman of the Federal Reserve when inflation did emerge with a 5% spurt, even before the near two trillion dollars of additional spending added its fuel to the flames (and when that colossal act of imprudence could still have been stopped): on June 22, 2021, in response to Republican calls for spending cuts, Chairman Jerome Powell declared that inflation was “temporary” and would soon “wane,” adding the technical observation that there was no danger of inflation because there were no “inflationary expectations.” Those reckless words immediately prompted de-dollarization moves by the prudent around the world, including some central banks. But in the United States, Powell’s declaration was not challenged in elite circles—none recalled the famous Chico Marx precedent: “Who you gonna believe, me or your own eyes?” memorably spoken when Chico, impersonating Groucho, outrages staid Margaret Dumont in the ingenue Gloria Teasdale role. But the joke is on us, because Chairman Powell is still in office as this is written, even as inflation exacts its especially cruel tax on the poor while eroding global confidence in the U.S. dollar. That is a great pity because only a convinced advocate of fiscal discipline can have the credibility needed to douse the inflation expectations that now further propel inflation.

What is most damaging in this predicament is the obliviousness of all but a very few of the protagonists of U.S. politics. As the world waits to hear what Americans will do to restore the credibility of their governance, starting with fiscal discipline, of course, what they hear instead are calls for vast new expenditures.

Some are prompted by the quixotic attempt to control the planet’s temperature unilaterally, so that in the U.S. costly energy-use subsidies and even more costly energy-use restrictions proliferate, while in China and elsewhere new thousand-megawatt coal-fired power stations are inaugurated every other week.

Other newly proposed expenditures are meant to pay for more transfers to politically favored categories, of which the largest in scope is the proposed payment of reparations for slavery, an idea that has already been quantified at a million dollars per capita, or some 41 trillion dollars without counting administrative expenses, an amount that exceeds the total value of all quoted U.S. companies.

Fiscal improvidence could not by itself prejudice the upkeep of a satisfactory military imbalance between the U.S. and its prospective antagonists so long as the U.S. economy was much greater than theirs combined, as was true throughout the Cold War.

But now the economy of the People's Republic of China is greater than the U.S. economy by the more relevant purchasing power criterion, and there is little prospect of narrowing the gap in the respective growth rates given all the impediments and distortions imposed by environmental and diversity mandates. Much fiscal discipline will therefore be required to adequately fund the armed forces and U.S. diplomatic action, including targeted aid, while there is as yet no sign of the intelligence reform and reorganization that could reduce expenditures while enhancing performance (nobody needs 18 different intelligence agencies and organizations).

Given this catalogue of deficiencies, only one thing makes it perilous to forecast the future balance of power between the U.S. and its antagonists: the peculiar character of the U.S. political system.

No doubt because the establishment of the United States was preceded by only two functioning republics, which moreover were universally viewed as idiosyncratic whereas monarchy, by contrast was the global norm, its federal government was designed as, and remains, a limited-term constitutional monarchy, whose particular effectiveness in specific endeavors is necessarily affected by the particular qualities and deficiencies of the temporary monarch and of his chosen entourage.

For that reason alone, the sum total of the actual power of the United States in world affairs has varied greatly and abruptly in the wake of presidential elections, definitely much too quickly to be explained by any set of discernable "objective trends." In recent times, the Carter–Reagan non sequitur disappointed the malevolent and invigorated America's friends around the world with enduring effect, definitely changing the global balance of power quite radically, not because power was created ex-nihilo by Reagan, but because of Carter's success in drastically reducing American power by very Christian acts of renunciation.

Today also there is a potential for an abrupt change in the balance of power in any direction, given the radical currents in American politics on one side, and China's autistic foreign policies on the other, which have assembled for the United States a winning coalition that only awaits a leader.



**EDWARD N. LUTTWAK** works as a contractor for the U.S. Department of Defense and for some treaty allies, and has served as consultant to the White House chief of staff, the U.S. Department of State, and the U.S. Army, Air Force, and Navy. Luttwak also cofounded and heads a conservation cattle ranch in the Amazon. His books, including *The Rise of China vs. the Logic of Strategy*, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire*, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire*, and *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace*, have been published in multiple English-language editions, and also in 25 other languages, including Arabic, Bahasa, Chinese, Japanese, Hebrew, Mongolian, Korean, and Russian. He has also published other books in Italian and in Japanese only, and has a number of honorary as well as academic degrees.



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## Overcoming the Axis of Tyranny

By Robert G. Kaufman

The emergence of an anti-American Chinese-Russian-Iranian-North Korean axis of tyranny magnifies and multiplies the serious threats the United States and our allies face. Overcoming this Axis requires sound grand strategy, perseverance, and resolve. What follows are some principles and policies that should guide us.

First, this axis of tyranny is not just tactical, but strategic, especially the partnership between Russia and China. Sino-Russian collaboration has burgeoned since Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping signed a comprehensive Security and Economic Pact on February 4, 2022, pledging mutual support for their revisionist ambitions. China has not only blunted the effect of sanctions Western nations imposed on Russia for its invasion of Ukraine but has supported Putin diplomatically, offering a meretricious peace plan that would have frozen Russian territorial gains in

place. Although China has yet refrained from providing Russia with lethal aid to wage war, that may change: Xi Jinping will not tolerate his most important partner losing.

China, Russia, and Iran also have coordinated their policies in the Middle East, exploiting the vacuum that the American strategic withdrawal from the region has created. Xi Jinping, Putin, and the Mullahs are collaborating to redeem the Assad regime in Syria. In March 2023, China brokered a deal between Saudi Arabia and Iran, aimed, among other things, at drawing the Saudis away from their traditional alignment with the United States. Russia and Iran have become full-fledged defense partners amidst the Ukraine War. China and Russia now “encourage Iran to go nuclear,” according to Reuel Marc Gerech and Ray Takeyh, to quote from one of the finest analyses of the current Iranian regime.<sup>1</sup> Cooperation has deepened likewise between Russia and North Korea, with former Russian president Medvedev warning that North Korea may send advanced weapons if South Korea provides lethal aid to Ukraine.

The United States and its allies—to paraphrase the Supremes—have no place to run nor any place to hide from the ramifications of the axis’s strategic collaboration. We are in the early stage of a second Cold War just as dangerous and as global as the first. For the foreseeable future, the axis of tyranny will resemble the Sino-Soviet communist monolith circa the late 1940s through the 1950s, impervious to a divide and conquer strategy that unrealistic realists continue to proffer—be it the futility of yet another attempted reset with Putin, or even more feckless, Daniel Drezner’s advocacy of pursuing a new equilibrium with an exponentially more dangerous and implacable China. What unites the axis of tyranny—enmity towards U.S. preponderance—overshadows for the time being the fallout among these regimes that will invariably occur later.<sup>2</sup>

Second, there is no plausible alternative to the United States leading a coalition of the willing to prevent the members of this axis, singularly or collectively, from dominating the world’s major power centers. American allies can considerably supplement but not substitute for American power. As Stephen G. Brooks and William Wohlforth observe, “the world is neither bipolar nor multipolar and it is not about to become that either.”

Although the margin of U.S. dominance has narrowed over the past two decades, the United States remains “on top,” still measurably above China, our closest peer competitor, and toweringly above any other rivals.<sup>3</sup>

Even the most motivated conceivable combination minus the United States could not prevent China from achieving hegemony in the Indo-Pacific, the world’s most important power center for the 21st century. Nor does more than a century of experience offer much optimism that Europe minus the United States has the political coherence and will to stop Putin’s Russia. For all of Ukraine’s heroism and NATO’s unexpectedly vigorous response, especially from Poland and other Eastern European members of NATO, the Russian army would be on the Polish border at this moment minus the United States taking the lead.

Nor are any variants of offshore balancing—often appeasement in thinly veiled disguise—popular on the progressive American Left and isolationist Right to offer a prudent alternative. Writing in 1967, Harold Rood encapsulates the inexorable logic of U.S. forward positions in Eurasia serving the national interest at the lowest possible cost and risk: Military threats to the United States originate from the Eurasian landmass because that enormous area—the largest in the world—is the home of all the world’s other great powers. It remains more prudent “to defend the United States” by deterring or if need be “fighting the enemy as close to the enemy’s homeland as possible, or at least as far away from the continent as possible.”<sup>4</sup>

Third, overcoming the axis of tyrannies will depend on getting our geopolitical priorities straight. By every metric, China is our most formidable adversary, above Russia and far above Iran and North Korea. Our most pressing immediate imperative is therefore to accelerate at warp speed the arming of Taiwan with sufficient numbers and types of weapons so that any Chinese direct or indirect attack on the Island becomes prohibitively costly. The loss of Taiwan to Chinese tyranny bent on taking it sooner rather than later, according to Xi Jinping himself would strike a devastating blow to the credibility of our American power, not just in the Indo-Pacific.

Fourth, although the Indo-Pacific has eclipsed Europe as the world’s most important power center, the United States still has a vital economic, strategic, moral, and ideological interest in preventing Putin’s tyranny from imposing a 21st-century version of an autocratic expansionist Russian Empire across Central Europe, neutering the NATO alliance in the process. A muscular NATO that Putin’s invasion of Ukraine has reinvigorated not only serves to keep Russia at bay, but also establishes a strong gravitational pull to keep Germany anchored to the West.

So another pressing imperative—second only to arming Taiwan—is to accelerate at warp speed the dilatory pace of the Biden administration’s military aid to Ukraine. This is necessary to maximize the chance for Ukraine to inflict a major defeat on Russia in its impending spring offensive. Contrary to the complaints of isolationists and the progressive Left, we ought to consider Ukraine one of the most low-cost/high-yield bargains in our security portfolio. Should the war end in a stalemate, leaving Ukraine more vulnerable than before to Russian aggression at a later time of Putin’s choosing, NATO will pay a steeper price for drawing the line in less felicitous circumstances. A Putin victory also would boost China’s leverage in Europe as well as the Indo-Pacific. As Rebecca Heinrichs observes, conversely, a Ukrainian victory and a stronger NATO with an augmented Eastern front would not only raise the barriers to future Russian aggression, but bolster deterrence and containment of China in the Indo-Pacific, undercutting Xi Jinping’s narrative of China’s inexorable rise and America’s decline.<sup>5</sup>

Fifth, the conflict between the United States and its allies and the axis of tyranny is ideological as well as geopolitical. China is not a traditional great power, but organically communist, determined to displace the United States as the world’s preeminent power, starting in the Indo-Pacific. The Iranian Mullahs believe what they say when they chant “Death to Israel” and assail the United States as the Great Satan. Putin means it when he laments the demise of the Evil Empire of the Soviet Union as the greatest tragedy of the 20th century. The dynamics of the war in Ukraine highlight in bold relief the ideological dimensions of the conflict with the axis of tyranny. The Zelensky government has received its most unstinting support from a coalition of stable liberal democracies: The United States, Eastern European members of NATO, the UK, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, and the EU.

President Biden is indeed right generally and in this case specifically to emphasize that stable liberal democracies make better and more reliable allies—despite congenital French and German wavering—in building a coalition of the willing not only to thwart Putin, but also Xi Jinping, with three caveats:

1. The United States should welcome non-democracies to the coalition such as Vietnam in the Indo-Pacific and, as President Trump did, enlisting Saudi Arabia to cooperate with democratic Israel to deter Iran in a Middle East—a region bereft of viable democratic alternatives but for Israel.
2. President Biden should desist from demonizing his Republican opponents as threats to freedom equivalent to the axis of tyranny, if his or any administration hopes to forge a durable domestic consensus for a policy of vigilantly containing Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea.
3. The United States must take cognizance of an emerging non-aligned movement—including many of the larger nations of the Global South—reluctant to take sides in the conflict between the United States and its democratic allies on one side, and the axis of tyranny on the other. As during the Cold War, the United States should make reasonable distinctions in our dealings with the unaligned: 1) Respect genuine rather than counterfeit neutrality of many Latin American nations and Indonesia; 2) Expose the counterfeit neutrality of an increasingly authoritarian, pro-Russian, anti-American Turkey, which does not belong in NATO; and 3) Recognize that securing democratic India's participation in the Quad, and other strategic endeavors to contain China and resist radical Islam, trumps India's frustrating neutrality on Ukraine and waning but vexing cooperation with Russia in other areas.<sup>6</sup>

Sixth, although the United States remains potentially more powerful than China and although open societies generally prevail in existential contests with tyrannies thanks to their greater capacity to generate wealth, innovate, and recover from their mistakes, the United States' defense spending is woefully inadequate to meet the simultaneous threats we face, especially in the Indo-Pacific. China's has steadily continued its massive two-decade military buildup while the Obama and Biden administrations in particular have combined to erode the margin of American superiority essential for credible deterrence and for winning wars should deterrence fail. As a result, a dangerous window of vulnerability for Taiwan has materialized, which Xi Jinping appears eager to exploit before long-term trends adverse to China close it.<sup>7</sup>

Increasing American military spending from 3 to at least 5 percent of the GDP is a necessary if not sufficient condition for overcoming the axis of tyranny and other unanticipated threats we may face. It is not just what we spend but how we spend it. Time is of the essence for rebuilding our once immense but now excessively downsized military industrial complex and reforming our sclerotic procurement process. Weak, declining, and irresolute nations do not attract strong allies or defeat dangerous foes. On the contrary, the perception of American decline that the Biden administration has put on steroids with its ignominious Afghan pullout has not only emboldened the axis of tyranny, but prompted some of our traditional partners such as Saudi Arabia to hedge their bets.

Seventh, overcoming the axis of tyranny will depend on a strong, dynamic, innovative, economic base, with a robust private sector at its core. Unfortunately, the Biden administration's determination to carry forward the progressive wing of his party's ambition to increase the size, scope, and cost of the regulatory state risks squandering the huge advantage we enjoy over the command economies of the axis. So does the administration's untenable green agenda imperiling the energy independence that the Trump administration had achieved, freeing the United States from depending on unstable tyrannies for our supply while offering our European allies an alternative to relying on Russian oil and natural gas.

Eighth, we must counter China not just militarily and politically but economically. That means stopping China's grand theft of America intellectual property, costing American businesses and consumers hundreds of billions while subsidizing our enemy's capabilities. That means, above all, accelerating the pace and scope of decoupling our economy from China's in all realms but for palpably non-strategic goods.



Ninth, any state unwilling to defend its borders undercuts the reliability of its commitments to friends and the credibility of its threats to foes. We cannot generate the vital domestic consensus for bearing the burden and reaping the even greater benefits of overcoming the axis of tyranny—with China the leader of the pack—without a sane immigration policy that (a) continues to attract the best and the brightest from all corners of the world, (b) remains a haven for genuine refugees, and (c) welcomes legal immigration while shutting down the deluge of economically costly and culturally divisive illegal immigration inimical to well-ordered liberty.

Whether we overcome the Axis of Evil will depend above all on remembering how and why the United States attained its post–World War II preeminence in the first place: Only a strong United States will survive and thrive as the last best hope on earth.<sup>8</sup>

- 1 Reuel Marc Gerecht and Ray Takeyh, “China and Russia Encourage Iran to Go Nuclear,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 8, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-and-russia-encourage-iran-to-go-nuclear-eu-uranium-centrifuge-61ea86e9>.
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- 3 Stephen G. Brooks and William Wohlforth, “The Myth of Multipolarity: American Power’s Staying Power,” *Foreign Affairs*, April 18, 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/china-multipolarity-myth>.
- 4 Harold W. Rood, “Distant Ramparts,” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, Vol.93/3/769, March 1967, <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/1967/march/distant-rampart>.
- 5 Rebecca L. Heinrichs, “Empowering Ukraine Prepares Us for China,” *Hudson Institute*, April 20, 2023, <https://www.hudson.org/defense-strategy/empowering-ukraine-prepares-us-china>.
- 6 Teresa Mattela, “What’s behind India’s strategic neutrality on Russia’s invasion of Ukraine,” *ABC News*, March 29, 2023, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/india-remaining-neutral-russias-invasion-ukraine/story?id=97891228>.
- 7 Hal Brands and Michael Beckley, *Danger Zone: The Coming Conflict with China* (New York: Norton, 2022).
- 8 Tom Cotton, *Only the Strong: Reversing the Left’s Plot to Sabotage American Power* (New York and Boston: Twelve, 2022).



**ROBERT G. KAUFMAN** is the Robert and Katheryn Dockson Professor at the Pepperdine School of Public Policy. He received his BA and PhD from Columbia University, his JD from Georgetown, and an LLM in alternative dispute resolution from Pepperdine University.

He has written for many publications, including the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Times*, *The Weekly Standard*, and *The Daily Caller*. He is the author of four books, including his most recent, *Dangerous Doctrine: How Obama’s Grand Strategy Weakened America*, published by the University Press of Kentucky in May 2016. During the 2017–18 academic year, Kaufman spent his sabbatical at the University of Colorado, Boulder’s Center for Western Civilization, Thought & Policy as a visiting scholar in Conservative Thought. Kaufman is currently in the research phase of his next book, which University Press of Kentucky will publish: *Better than It Sounds: President Trump’s National Security Strategy*.



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## The Quadruple Axis and Its Nemesis

By Miles Yu

The world's Flat Earthers and History Enders such as Thomas Friedman and Francis Fukuyama must be devastated these days as their dream of a global kumbaya free of value confrontation and ideological struggles has unmistakably slipped into a violent nightmare replete with bloody killings in Ukraine, solemn vows of nuclear provocations on a weekly basis, and threatened obliterations of the democratic Taiwan, South Korea, and Israel.

What we are witnessing is a slow but steady formation of an alliance system that pits one group of powerful nations against the other, eerily reminiscent of the situation leading up to the eruption of guns in August 1914 that would bloody humanity in a prolonged war at the cost of tens of millions of lives.

This emerging alliance system is composed of a cluster of four rogue states, namely China, Russia, Iran,

and North Korea, and another cluster of widely spread democracies in North America, Europe, Asia, and elsewhere.

The existence of the four rogue states as the world's primary source of trouble and instability is not a recent phenomenon. Both the U.S. National Security Strategy and the National Defense Strategy in the early months of the Trump administration correctly identified exactly these four as the primary sovereign threats to global security. However, it is Russia's war on Ukraine since last year that has served to solidify them as a coordinated Quadruple Axis of aggression and revanchism.

Equally important is that the Ukraine war has also solidified the rapid formation of a global coalition against this newly formed Quadruple Axis of evil. At no time since the end of the Cold War has the line been drawn so clearly and decisively between two opposing clusters of powerful countries, between tyranny and aggression on one side, freedom and independence on the other.

Despite the clearly drawn line, however, there are still quite a few major countries refusing to join the Washington-led coalition of democracies against the Quadruple Axis. The most notable cases in this category are India, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. It is the inability of the Biden administration to bring them along on the right side of history as America's unambiguous allies against the Quadruple Axis that has formed another link in the chain of diplomatic embarrassments and humiliations of the Biden administration.

Frustrations with America's weakened leadership aside, the winning bet should not be placed on the Quadruple Axis as they face monumental obstacles to reach their collective goal of upending world peace and rules-based global order.

First of all, the Quadruple Axis of China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea has mistakenly placed the United States as the sole source of opposition to their grand ambitions of aggression and provocations. While it is certainly true that the U.S. is without any doubt the world's de facto superpower with a decisive weight in

global security and world affairs, as well as the most significant leader against the Quadruple Axis, other geopolitical forces, sovereign and democratic countries, are increasingly willing to join the U.S. in fighting against aggression and provocations, both in Europe and in Indo-Pacific. In other words, the world is not as simplistically imagined as a matter of the U.S. vs the rest of the world, but rather the Quadruple Axis vs the preponderant part of the rest of the world led by the U.S. In a recent UN resolution, 141 countries voted for condemning Russia's aggression, while only a handful were against or abstaining.

The truth is that the war on Ukraine, and the threatened wars on Taiwan, Israel, South Korea, and Japan, have sharpened the world's focus on the Quadruple Axis. The result is a rapid formation of a global security agenda that places Ukraine's independence, Europe's security, and peace and freedom in the Indo-Pacific, as a common cause engendered by a common threat.

European countries are increasingly less resistant to America's argument that what causes Russia's war in Ukraine and China's threat to invade Taiwan are essentially the same revanchist force. EU's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell has openly called for European naval patrols in the Taiwan Strait "in order to deter Beijing's military aggression"; the EU has recently convened an EU-Indo-Pacific summit specifically excluding China's participation; NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has repeatedly proclaimed NATO's responsibility for keeping peace and security in the Indo-Pacific in general, the Taiwan Strait in particular; and NATO's 2022 Summit in Madrid invited the leaders of Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand to participate, and issued a statement on confronting China.

Similarly, Japan and South Korea have reached a new rapprochement with each other in light of the common threat from Beijing and Pyongyang; both Tokyo and Seoul have reached historic military and security arrangements with NATO and NATO countries; leaders of Australia, Japan, and South Korea have unambiguously stated that what troubles Taiwan would trouble their country too; and with the change in national leadership, the Philippines has cast away perhaps the last illusion about China's revanchist intent, signed agreements with the U.S. for military basing rights on islands closest to Taiwan, which will be vital for the coalitions' military response to China's planned invasion of the Chinese-speaking island democracy.

Moreover, other than sharing common hatred of the U.S., the Quadruple Axis itself has its inherent clash of ambitions. The leaders of the four rogue states are all imperious tyrants and fancy themselves infallible and invincible, with supreme greatness. However, they differ fundamentally on security priorities, and

## POLL: In the midst of the Ukrainian War, what are the strategic implications for the United States of a new Russian–Chinese–Iranian–North Korean alliance and its apparent effort to draw in ostensible American allies like India, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia?

- This axis of enemies is a sign that we are witnessing the end of American and Western global supremacy.
- Such an axis poses an existential danger to the United States, given its population, GDP, resources, and nuclear capability.
- There is no way India, Turkey, or Saudi Arabia will fall into the Russian–Chinese camp.
- China and Russia are not natural allies and will have a falling out.
- We need not worry given the NATO alliance and U.S. economic and strategic capabilities.

they are all opportunistic, with China topping them all as the most self-seeking and calculating, ready at any moment to sell out either Russia, Ukraine, Iran, or even North Korea, depending on the direction and strength of the wind blowing at a given moment.

Meanwhile, the countries in the middle that the U.S. has “lost” as partners and allies are hedging not because their national interests necessarily contradict those of the U.S., but because of the anemic American leadership and the current administration’s inability to prioritize global security agendas. With improved leadership in Washington in the next election cycles, those countries will inevitably return to the right orbit, not just for America’s sake, but most importantly for their own.



**MILES YU** is the Robert Alexander Mercer Visiting Fellow at the Hoover Institution. He served in the Trump administration as the principal China policy and planning adviser to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Concurrently he is a professor of East Asia and military history at the United States Naval Academy (USNA). His books include *OSS in China: Prelude to Cold War* (Yale University Press, 1997) and *The Dragon’s War: Allied Operations and the Fate of China, 1937–1947* (Naval Institute Press, 2006). He is the author of many scholarly articles on China, military and intelligence history, and newspaper columns. His numerous awards include the USNA’s top researcher award, U.S. Navy Special Action Award, and U.S. Navy Meritorious Service Award. He received a doctorate in history from the University of California, Berkeley, a master’s degree from Swarthmore College, and a bachelor’s degree from Nankai University.

## Discussion Questions

1. What were the conditions that drew natural enemies like China and Russia together?
2. Will members of this new alliance all develop nuclear capabilities?
3. Are there mechanisms of American triangulation to prevent this realignment?
4. Is the axis more an indication of American weakness or the strength of China?



IN THE NEXT ISSUE  
NATO Enlargement



## Military History in Contemporary Conflict

As the very name of Hoover Institution attests, military history lies at the very core of our dedication to the study of “War, Revolution, and Peace.” Indeed, the precise mission statement of the Hoover Institution includes the following promise: “The overall mission of this Institution is, from its records, to recall the voice of experience against the making of war, and by the study of these records and their publication, to recall man’s endeavors to make and preserve peace, and to sustain for America the safeguards of the American way of life.” From its origins as a library and archive, the Hoover Institution has evolved into one of the foremost research centers in the world for policy formation and pragmatic analysis. It is with this tradition in mind, that the “Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict” has set its agenda—reaffirming the Hoover Institution’s dedication to historical research in light of contemporary challenges, and in particular, reinvigorating the national study of military history as an asset to foster and enhance our national security. By bringing together a diverse group of distinguished military historians, security analysts, and military veterans and practitioners, the working group seeks to examine the conflicts of the past as critical lessons for the present.

## Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict

The Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict examines how knowledge of past military operations can influence contemporary public policy decisions concerning current conflicts. The careful study of military history offers a way of analyzing modern war and peace that is often underappreciated in this age of technological determinism. Yet the result leads to a more in-depth and dispassionate understanding of contemporary wars, one that explains how particular military successes and failures of the past can be often germane, sometimes misunderstood, or occasionally irrelevant in the context of the present.

## Strategika

*Strategika* is a journal that analyzes ongoing issues of national security in light of conflicts of the past—the efforts of the Military History Working Group of historians, analysts, and military personnel focusing on military history and contemporary conflict. Our board of scholars shares no ideological consensus other than a general acknowledgment that human nature is largely unchanging. Consequently, the study of past wars can offer us tragic guidance about present conflicts—a preferable approach to the more popular therapeutic assumption that contemporary efforts to ensure the perfectibility of mankind eventually will lead to eternal peace. New technologies, methodologies, and protocols come and go; the larger tactical and strategic assumptions that guide them remain mostly the same—a fact discernable only through the study of history.



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Hoover Institution, Stanford University  
434 Galvez Mall  
Stanford, CA 94305-6003  
650-723-1754

Hoover Institution in Washington  
1399 New York Avenue NW, Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20005  
202-760-3200

