Negative Brief: Taiwan Relations Act - good

By Jonathan T. Helton

**Resolved: The United States Federal Government should considerably decrease its military commitments.**

The AFF plan withdraws the U.S. commitment to protect Taiwan implied in the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979. The Negative position is that there are 2 possible impacts to the TRA in the Status Quo. One is that the TRA is harmless or irrelevant. China doesn’t care, nothing will happen either way, so it has no impact and isn’t worth worrying about. The other is that TRA is what keeps China from going over the brink and invading Taiwan to reunify it with the mainland. TRA is thus either irrelevant or extremely vital. In no case is it harmful and thus in no case would it be beneficial to repeal it.

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Negative: Taiwan Relations Act

NEGATIVE PHILOSOPHY

Status Quo “Dual Deterrence” strategy (deter China from invading Taiwan + deter Taiwan from declaring independence) is the best policy

Jansen Tham 2018 (Masters of Public Policy candidate specialising in Politics and International Affairs at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore.) 15 June 2018 “Can the United States abandon Taiwan?” <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/06/15/can-the-united-states-abandon-taiwan/>

This analysis of US interests makes the case for renewed backing of Taipei. For a start, Washington should reiterate the principled positions established by previous administrations. This includes abiding by the US one-China policy articulated in the three joint communiques, where the United States recognises Beijing’s position that Taiwan is part of China and that the United States does not support Taiwanese independence. At the same time, Washington should continue its commitment to the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), TTA and the Six Assurances toward Taipei. This upholds the ‘dual deterrence’ strategy that both reassures and warns Beijing and Taipei to preserve peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. Specifically, the United States should view the coercion of Taiwan and its people with ‘grave concern‘ as prescribed in the TRA, and warn that further Chinese diplomatic, economic or military manoeuvres antithetical to Taiwan’s interests will invoke a robust US response.

Leaving Taiwan will not improve U.S.-China relations and will jeopardize our commitments to other allies

Richard C. Bush 2013 (senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and director of its Center on Northeast Asian Policy Studies ) Jan 2013 “Uncharted Strait” [http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2013/1/14-taiwan-bush/14-taiwan-bush.pdf](about:blank)

The second group misunderstands the benefits and costs of a significant American accommodation to China regarding Taiwan (e.g. by sharply cutting back arms sales). In fact, Washington has frictions with China on a growing list of issues. Conceding to Beijing on Taiwan will not help us elsewhere. Moreover, our friends and allies (e.g. Japan and Korea) will worry that the United States might sacrifice their interests next for the sake of good relations with China.

COUNTERPLAN

Offer to drop the Taiwan commitment in exchange for Chinese concessions

[Analysis: This is a non-topical counterplan because it doesn’t comply with one word in the resolution: the word “Resolved.” We’re not resolved that we should reduce our commitment to Taiwan, we’re only open to the idea and only conditionally if China reciprocates. Since we don’t know in advance whether China will do so, we can’t be “Resolved” yet that we should reduce the commitment. No one could run this as an Affirmative plan because it may or may not change the US military commitment conditionally and only based on the actions of another actor, which would not uphold the resolution.]

We could use the exit from Taiwan as a bargaining chip, not simply drop it unilaterally

Eric Gomez 2016 (director of defense policy studies at the Cato Institute. His research focuses on U.S. military strategy in East Asia, missile defense systems and their impact on strategic stability, and nuclear deterrence issues in East Asia. He has presented research on these topics at annual meetings of the International Studies Association and the American Political Science Association) 28 September 2016 “A Costly Commitment: Options for the Future of the U.S.-Taiwan Defense Relationship” [ellipses in original] <https://www.cato.org/publications/policy-analysis/costly-commitment-options-future-us-taiwan-defense-relationship>

A policy that wins concessions from China would be the more desirable of the two options. Concessions could include resolution of other territorial disputes involving China and American allies or dropping the Chinese threat to use force against Taiwan. This would be characteristic of what Charles Glaser calls a grand bargain, “an agreement in which two actors make concessions across multiple issues to create a fair deal … that would have been impossible in an agreement that dealt with a single issue.” Making the end of the U.S. commitment to Taiwan contingent upon Chinese concessions to resolve its other territorial disputes peacefully would benefit both the United States and China. The United States would free itself of an increasingly costly and risky commitment to Taiwan’s defense, but only if China compromises in ways that align with U.S. allies’ interests in the South and East China Seas. China would have to limit its objectives in the South and East China Seas, but in return would earn a major policy concession from the United States on a core national interest that has much more importance than the other territorial disputes.

Reasons to prefer Counterplan: We need to try to get concessions first before considering unilateral exit

Eric Gomez 2016 (He is director of defense policy studies at the Cato Institute. His research focuses on U.S. military strategy in East Asia, missile defense systems and their impact on strategic stability, and nuclear deterrence issues in East Asia. He has presented research on these topics at annual meetings of the International Studies Association and the American Political Science Association.) 28 Sept 2016 “A Costly Commitment: Options for the Future of the U.S.-Taiwan Defense Relationship” [brackets in original] <https://www.cato.org/publications/policy-analysis/costly-commitment-options-future-us-taiwan-defense-relationship>

If China proved unwilling to make any concessions, either in other territorial disputes or in cross‐​strait relations, the United States could still unilaterally withdraw from its military commitment to Taiwan. No demands or conditions would be placed on Chinese behavior. American policymakers are unlikely to accept such a course of action given recent shows of Chinese assertiveness. Charles Glaser explains, “China appears too likely to misinterpret [unilaterally ending the U.S. commitment to defend Taiwan], which could fuel Chinese overconfidence and intensify challenges to U.S. interests.” Unilateral withdrawal would reduce the likelihood of U.S.-Chinese armed conflict, but the dearth of other benefits would make the policy difficult for policymakers to implement. Extracting some kind of concession from China, either in cross‐​strait relations or in other territorial disputes, should be a priority.

HARMS / SIGNIFICANCE

1. China/Taiwan war won’t happen

China knows reunification with Taiwan will never happen, so they’re not going to escalate it

Prof. Salvatore Babones 2017 (Associate Professor of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Sydney) Have Taiwan’s Identity Politics Outgrown the One China Myth? <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/22197/have-taiwan-s-identity-politics-outgrown-the-one-china-myth>

If China generally doesn’t bother to actively promote reunification, it’s probably because leaders in Beijing [have come to realize](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/taiwan/2016-01-12/one-china-one-taiwan) that it is never going to happen, even if they feel politically constrained to [reiterate timeworn slogans](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/ziliao_665539/3602_665543/3604_665547/t18048.shtml) about the territorial integrity of China. More than three-quarters of Taiwan’s population was born after 1949, and more than 90 percent came of age on the island, making pre-1949 China the distant memory of a dying generation. Beijing may have a reasonable legal case to sovereignty over the physical island of Taiwan, but it has little moral claim over its current inhabitants.

Don’t believe the hype from outside observers: China / Taiwan war would be so disastrous that they won’t do it.

Prof. Salvatore Babones 2017 (Associate Professor of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Sydney) Have Taiwan’s Identity Politics Outgrown the One China Myth? <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/22197/have-taiwan-s-identity-politics-outgrown-the-one-china-myth>

From a constitutional standpoint, Taiwan maintains the myth that it is the Republic of China. No one really believes this anymore, not even the KMT. The DPP [talks about self-determination](http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2015/09/26/446842/Tsai-reaffirms.htm) for Taiwan, but in office it [has done little](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/taiwan/2016-12-11/taipeis-name-game) to make that a reality. Though international observers relentlessly stoke fears of a cross-Strait war, there are no signs of any preparations for conflict on either side. An actual shooting battle between China and Taiwan would be economically disastrous and militarily inconclusive, and both sides know it. Even such an unlikely scenario as a Chinese occupation of Kinmen, a Taiwanese territory within swimming distance of the mainland city of Xiamen, would hardly cause World War III. And there are no signs of any such scenario, anyway.

2. TRA doesn’t increase risk of war

Turn: US support for Taiwan ensures China will find the potential invasion “unthinkable” (too hard to win)

**Tanner Greer 2018 (**writer and strategist based in Taiwan) FOREIGN POLICY 25 Sept 2018 Taiwan Can Win a War With China <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/09/25/taiwan-can-win-a-war-with-china/> (PLA is the mainland Chinese Army) (brackets added)

Both Westerners and Taiwanese should be more optimistic about the defense of Taiwan than is now normal. Yes, the Taiwanese Army [projects](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/04/world/asia/china-taiwan-military.html) that it can only hold off its enemy for two weeks after the landing—but the PLA [People’s Liberation Army] also believes that if it cannot defeat the Taiwanese forces in under two weeks, it will lose the war! Yes, the disparity between the military budgets on both sides of the strait is [large](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-03-16/taiwan-plans-military-spending-increase-to-counter-rising-china), and growing—but the Taiwanese do not need parity to deter Chinese aggression. All they need is the freedom to purchase the sort of arms that make invasion unthinkable. If that political battle can be resolved in the halls of Washington, the party will not have the power to threaten battle on the shores of Taiwan.

Doesn’t matter what we do with supporting or abandoning Taiwan. Nothing will change

Prof. Salvatore Babones 2016 (Associate Professor of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Sydney) One China, One Taiwan 12 Jan 2016 FOREIGN AFFAIRS <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/taiwan/2016-01-12/one-china-one-taiwan>

American pundits often discuss whether the United States should accommodate China through the [Finlandization](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2010-01-01/not-so-dire-straits) of Taiwan or even [abandon Taiwan](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2011-03-01/will-chinas-rise-lead-war) to China. Such analyses are at least 30 years too late. Taiwan will never again be part of China. That train has left the station. Taiwan is a [highly successful](https://www.aei.org/publication/why-giving-up-taiwan-will-not-help-us-with-china/) country of more than 23 million people with its own politics and its own place in the world. Admittedly, that place may fall short of what many Taiwanese people want for their country, but it is nonetheless secure. January’s election won’t change that.

Arms sales and support for Taiwan won’t go so far as to start World War III

Prof. Salvatore Babones 2016 (Associate Professor of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Sydney) One China, One Taiwan 12 Jan 2016 FOREIGN AFFAIRS <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/taiwan/2016-01-12/one-china-one-taiwan>

Although a Taiwanese declaration of independence would arouse much sympathy in the United States, it would not likely result in American diplomatic recognition. Taiwan may be a fellow democracy with free and vibrant political institutions, but the United States is a [global hegemon](http://nationalinterest.org/feature/american-hegemony-here-stay-13089) with global responsibilities and a massive stake in the stability of the Asia-Pacific region. The United States may [sell weapons](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-taiwan-arms-idUSKBN0TZ2C520151217) to Taiwan in a tit-for-tat response to [Chinese expansionism](http://www.cnbc.com/2015/11/22/china-spratlys-island-building-is-to-protect-reefs-make-civilian-facilities.html) in the South China Sea, but it is not about to start World War III over Taiwanese sovereignty.

3. US and China not on the brink / war is unlikely

Even with tensions trending up, the prospect of war is unlikely

Timothy R. Heath and Prof. William R. Thompson 2017 (Heath - S*enior International Defense Research Analyst at the RAND Corporation. Thompson – professor of political science, Indiana Univ.*) 30 Apr 2017 NATIONAL INTEREST “U.S.-China Tensions Are Unlikely to Lead to War” <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/us-china-tensions-are-unlikely-lead-war-20411?page=2>

Graham Allison's April 12 article, “[How America and China Could Stumble to War](http://nationalinterest.org/feature/how-america-china-could-stumble-war-20150),” explores how misperceptions and bureaucratic dysfunction could accelerate a militarized crisis involving the United States and China into an unwanted war. However, the article fails to persuade because it neglects the key political and geostrategic conditions that make war plausible in the first place. Without those conditions in place, the risk that a crisis could accidentally escalate into war becomes far lower. The U.S.-China relationship today may be trending towards greater tension, but the relative stability and overall low level of hostility make the prospect of an accidental escalation to war extremely unlikely.

U.S. military support for Taiwan won’t escalate to war with China. In fact, we could do more and not go over the brink

Shay Khatiri 2020 (graduate student of Strategic Studies at Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies. He grew up in Iran and left the country in 2011. He is currently seeking political asylum in the United States.) 9 April 2020 “Treat Taiwan Like the Independent Ally It Is” <https://thebulwark.com/treat-taiwan-like-the-independent-ally-it-is/>

Militarily, the United States can decisively end the strategic ambiguity—remember that President Bush’s 2001-2003 suspension of it did not lead to an escalation—and station a considerable number of troops on Taiwan. The U.S. should also explicitly extend its nuclear security umbrella to cover Taiwan. (There is precedent: In the 1950s, when China came close to invading Taiwan twice during the Taiwan Strait Crises, President Dwight Eisenhower ended the crises by issuing nuclear threats to China in case of an invasion.)

Multiple reasons why US/China tensions are not like US/Soviet Cold War rivalry and are not on the brink of war

Timothy R. Heath and Prof. William R. Thompson 2017 (Heath - S*enior International Defense Research Analyst at the RAND Corporation. Thompson – professor of political science, Indiana Univ.*) 30 Apr 2017 NATIONAL INTEREST “U.S.-China Tensions Are Unlikely to Lead to War” <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/us-china-tensions-are-unlikely-lead-war-20411?page=2>

However, Allison ultimately fails to persuade because he fails to specify the political and strategic conditions that make war plausible in the first place. Allison’s analysis implies that the United States and China are in a situation analogous to that of the Soviet Union and the United States in the early 1960s. In the Cold War example, the two countries faced each other on a near-war footing and engaged in a bitter geostrategic and ideological struggle for supremacy. The two countries experienced a series of militarized crises and fought each other repeatedly through proxy wars. It was this broader context that made issues of misjudgment so dangerous in a crisis. By contrast, the U.S.-China relationship today operates at a much lower level of hostility and threat. China and the United States may be experiencing an increase in tensions, but the two countries remain far from the bitter, acrimonious rivalry that defined the U.S.-Soviet relationship in the early 1960s. Neither Washington nor Beijing regards the other as its principal enemy. Today’s rivals may view each other warily as competitors and threats on some issues, but they also view each other as important trade partners and partners on some shared concerns, such as North Korea, as [the recent summit](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-39517569) between President Donald Trump and Chinese president Xi Jinping illustrated.

US & China militaries rivalry is restrained, low-intensity. Neither is prepared to fight a war against the other

Timothy R. Heath and Prof. William R. Thompson 2017 (Heath - S*enior International Defense Research Analyst at the RAND Corporation. Thompson – professor of political science, Indiana Univ.*) 30 Apr 2017 NATIONAL INTEREST “U.S.-China Tensions Are Unlikely to Lead to War” <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/us-china-tensions-are-unlikely-lead-war-20411?page=2>

The behavior of their respective militaries underscores the relatively restrained rivalry. The military competition between China and the United States may be growing, but it operates at a far lower level of intensity than the relentless arms racing that typified the U.S.-Soviet standoff. And unlike their Cold War counterparts, U.S. and Chinese militaries are not postured to fight each other in major wars. Moreover, polls show that the people of the two countries regard each other with [mixed views](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/03/30/6-facts-about-how-americans-and-chinese-see-each-other/)—a considerable contrast from the hostile sentiment expressed by the U.S. and Soviet publics for each other. Lacking both preparations for major war and a constituency for conflict, leaders and bureaucracies in both countries have less incentive to misjudge crisis situations in favor of unwarranted escalation.

4. US/Taiwan arms sales are not a problem

“Tension” with China is outweighed by the benefits: Damage is small and benefit of deterring invasion of Taiwan is great

Eric Gomez 2016 (director of defense policy studies at the Cato Institute. His research focuses on U.S. military strategy in East Asia, missile defense systems and their impact on strategic stability, and nuclear deterrence issues in East Asia) 28 Sept 2016 “A Costly Commitment: Options for the Future of the U.S.-Taiwan Defense Relationship” <https://www.cato.org/publications/policy-analysis/costly-commitment-options-future-us-taiwan-defense-relationship>

Arms sales create tension in the U.S.-China relationship, but three benefits of arms sales mitigate the costs they create. First, arms sales complicate PLA planning and raise the costs of conflict for China. Second, damage done to U.S.-China relations as a result of the arms sales is relatively small. A joint report from the Project 2049 Institute and the U.S.-Taiwan Business Council on China’s reactions to arms sales concludes, “Past behavior indicates that the PRC is unlikely to challenge any fundamental U.S. interests in response to future releases of significant military articles and services to Taiwan.” Finally, arms sales demonstrate the commitment to Taiwan’s defense, especially in times of political transition.

A/T “Arms sales annoy China” – Not the root cause of the conflict

David J. Firestein 2014 (EastWest Institute, Vice President and Perot Fellow; 18 years worked as a US diplomat) Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission 5 June 2014 “China’s Relations with Taiwan and North Korea” <https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Firestein-USCC%20Testimony.pdf>

I understand why China objects to these sales as a matter of principle, but I believe that China does not fully appreciate or “own” the impact of its own actions on Taiwan threat perceptions and Taiwan and U.S. decision-making. Most fundamentally, unless and until the underlying issues in the China/Taiwan dispute are resolved, U.S. arms sales to Taiwan will continue. Arms sales, while a significant factor in the cross-Strait military and security picture, are a symptom of the enduring tensions, not the root cause. It is within China’s and Taiwan’s power to generate a cross-Strait context in which lower levels of arms sales are viewed by Taiwan as necessary, but we are not there yet, and until we get there, continued U.S. arms sales to Taiwan make sense for the United States.

A/T “Arms sales annoy China” – China agrees that arms sales are permitted and required under U.S. law

David J. Firestein 2014 (EastWest Institute, Vice President and Perot Fellow; 18 years worked as a US diplomat) Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission 5 June 2014 “China’s Relations with Taiwan and North Korea” <https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Firestein-USCC%20Testimony.pdf>

I regard U.S. arms sales to Taiwan as stabilizing and as a force for good for Taiwan and for cross-Strait relations, at least when viewed from a U.S. (and Taiwan) perspective. I believe they should continue indefinitely at a robust level in the general range of recent years’ sales; any dramatic decrease in arms sales to Taiwan under current circumstances would, I think, be destabilizing and harmful to the interests of the United States. While it is often pointed out that U.S. arms sales to Taiwan are mandated by law, it is also worth flagging that they are also explicitly permitted under the 1982 Joint Communique, to which China is a signatory.

DISADVANTAGES

1. Taiwan absorbed into China by force

Link & Brink: US restraint about defending Taiwan emboldens China to go over the brink and invade Taiwan

Prof. Peter Navarro 2016 (professor at the University of California-Irvine) 18 January 2016 “Is It Time For America to ‘Surrender’ Taiwan?” <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/it-time-america-%E2%80%98surrender%E2%80%99-taiwan-14955>

Fast forward to the 2000s and George W. Bush. After pledging to do “whatever it takes” to protect Taiwan, he went on to publicly rebuke Taiwan’s president in 2003. President Barack Obama has followed in Bush’s footsteps with a similarly weak endorsement of Taiwan—backed up by a refusal to sell advanced weapons systems to the island. Washington’s vacillations and “restraint” are no mystery: The U.S. economy is heavily dependent on trade with China—and many of Washington’s elected officials are just as heavily dependent on massive campaign contributions from American multinational corporations that have a strong vested interest in the growing China trade. To experts like Professor Yoshihara, however, such American restraint spells increasing danger. He fears these signals of American indecision may one day embolden a rapidly militarizing China to make its final invasion push—a possibility that dramatically increased in probability with last week’s election.

Link & Brink: China is investing heavily in weapons systems to invade Taiwan but right now they aren’t strong enough to pull it off

Ian Easton 2019 (research fellow at the Project 2049 Institute, where he conducts research on defense and security issues in Asia; former visiting fellow at the Japan Institute for International Affairs in Tokyo. Previously worked as a China analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses) 6 Sept 2019 “Imagine This: China Starts a War in Asia (And Invades Taiwan)” <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/imagine-china-starts-war-asia-and-invades-taiwan-78411>

The good news is that the Chinese military almost certainly could not prosecute a full-scale invasion of Taiwan today and succeed. Even if a few hawkish generals were prepared to roll the dice, the costs and risks entailed by the war would be enormous and potentially fatal for the regime. PLA strategists know they still have a long way to go before they will be able to achieve their objective. The bad news is that China's leaders recognize the roadblocks in their path and will continue to invest heavily in strategic deception, intelligence collection, psychological warfare, joint training and advanced weapons. Barring countervailing efforts, their investments could result in a world-shaking conflict and an immense human tragedy.

Turn: The U.S. should actually increase its military commitment to protect Taiwan

Shay Khatiri 2020 (graduate student of Strategic Studies at Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies. He grew up in Iran and left the country in 2011. He is currently seeking political asylum in the United States.) 9 April 2020 “Treat Taiwan Like the Independent Ally It Is” <https://thebulwark.com/treat-taiwan-like-the-independent-ally-it-is/>

Last year, it was a Pentagon official who visited Taiwan. Next time, a higher-ranking official should visit. Recently, the two militaries held a joint cyber exercise. This is a good start, but they should move toward joint kinetic exercises. Taiwan’s military equipment is mostly American-made, and there is no better teacher on how to use it than the United States—and the Taiwanese military could benefit from joint air and sea exercises. Additionally, the United States can increase the sale of its military equipment to Taiwan. As most experts predict the rise of China to be a naval challenge first and foremost, the U.S. Navy needs to increase its presence in the Taiwan Strait.

Link: China is increasing military drills around Taiwan

Dr. Ted Galen Carpenter 2018 (Carpenter is contributing editor to both the National Interest and American Conservative, serves on the editorial boards of Mediterranean Quarterly and the Journal of Strategic Studies, and is the author of more than 800 articles and policy studies. Carpenter received his Ph.D. in U.S. diplomatic history from the University of Texas.) 20 February 2018 “Will the U.S. Go to War with China over Taiwan?” <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/will-us-go-war-china-over-taiwan>

The military maneuvers are especially unsettling. According to Taiwanese media accounts, China has conducted 16 military drills around Taiwan in 2017, compared to just eight in 2016 and even fewer during the years between 2008 and 2016. Chinese military aircraft engaged in exercises near Taiwan’s northern coast in December. Beijing’s naval and air power war games culminated in January 2018, when a flotilla including China’s only aircraft carrier sailed through the Strait. A senior Chinese official, Liu Junchuan, the liaison head of China’s Taiwan Affairs Office, boasted that “the contrast in power across the Taiwan Strait will become wider and wider, and we will have a full, overwhelming strategic advantage over Taiwan.”

Link & Brink: Arms are key to contesting a Chinese invasion

Dr. Scott W. Harold 2019 (PhD; Senior Political Scientist and the Associate Director of the Center for Asia Pacific Policy at The RAND Corporation. Adjunct Professor at Georgetown University School of Foreign Service) Making Sense of US Arms Sales to Taiwan 23 July 2019 <https://www.institutmontaigne.org/en/blog/making-sense-us-arms-sales-taiwan>

Taipei’s arms purchases simultaneously take low-grade coercion off the table and signal determination to defend itself, in essence forcing China to escalate to riskier high-end military options if it wishes to conquer Taiwan. While systems such as the M1A2T may be vulnerable to Chinese air strikes in all-out invasion scenarios, Chinese fighter/bombers would need to approach the island in order to target such mobile systems, at which point they would become vulnerable to Taiwan’s integrated air defense systems. The sale of [Stinger Block I-92F](about:blank)is significant in this regard, since it can be useful against the PLA’s fixed-wing ground attack airframes, rotary-wing transport or attack helicopters, UAVs and cruise missiles. **China has little experience in combat search-and-rescue for downed pilots and the PLA knows any all-out invasion could well fail if the air or maritime domain are contested**, and as some recent surveys have shown, Taiwan is likely to [resist vigorously](about:blank).

Impact: World War III

Ian Easton 2019 (research fellow at the Project 2049 Institute, where he conducts research on defense and security issues in Asia; former visiting fellow at the Japan Institute for International Affairs in Tokyo. Previously worked as a China analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses) 6 Sept 2019 “Imagine This: China Starts a War in Asia (And Invades Taiwan)” <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/imagine-china-starts-war-asia-and-invades-taiwan-78411>

It is clearly in the American interest to develop a nuanced understanding of the threat China poses to Taiwan, and to cultivate a strategy that takes this into account. Indeed, it is often the case that only by thinking tragically can tragedy be avoided. It is also true that in the absence of understanding many will buy into Chinese propaganda. Going forward, American policymakers need to realize that North Korea is not the only threat to peace in Asia, nor is it the worst. China is planning to invade a pro-American democracy at the center of the first island chain, something likely to spark World War III.

Impact: Human rights. Taiwanese know that China massively violates human rights – and want nothing to do with it

Prof. Michael Hunzeker and Mark Christopher 2020 (Hunzeker is an assistant professor at George Mason University’s Schar School of Policy and Government. He is also the associate director of the Center for Security Policy Studies. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 2000–06 and holds an A.B. from the University of California, Berkeley, and a Ph.D., M.P.A., and M.A. from Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School. Mark A. Christopher is a fellow with the Truman National Security Project) 24 February 2020 “It’s Time to Talk About Taiwan” <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2020/02/its-time-talk-about-taiwan/163291/>

It makes sense that Taiwanese voters don’t trust Chinese promises and assurances. They are all too aware that Xi has reinforced the Communist Party’s role at the center of Chinese economic and political life, pulled back from market-based reforms, and ruthlessly crushed any perceived challenges to China’s territorial integrity. They have also watched the CCP round up millions of Uyghurs in Xinjiang and put them [in reeducation camps](https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-repression-uighurs-xinjiang), stonewall [pro-democracy protests](https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/12/16/hong-kongs-protest-movement-and-the-fight-for-the-citys-soul) in Hong Kong, and respond to the coronavirus outbreak with [draconian quarantines and Orwellian propaganda](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/06/world/asia/coronavirus-china-wuhan-quarantine.html). The recent election results, in which Tsai received more votes than any president in Taiwanese history, were a resounding rebuke of Beijing’s agenda.

Impact: Freedom and democracy lost. Taiwan has high level of freedom and democracy

Shay Khatiri 2020 (He is a graduate student of Strategic Studies at Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies. He grew up in Iran and left the country in 2011. He is currently seeking political asylum in the United States.) 9 April 2020 “Treat Taiwan Like the Independent Ally It Is” <https://thebulwark.com/treat-taiwan-like-the-independent-ally-it-is/>

Alongside Japan, and perhaps even more than Japan, Taiwan has the most pro-U.S. population in Asia. Taiwan’s regime is, in fact, the most similar to that of the United States in all of Asia. And Taiwan always scores high marks for freedom and democracy in Freedom House’s indexes.

Impact: Economic destruction and famine in Japan. China will wreck Japan if they take over Taiwan

Ian Easton 2019 (research fellow at the Project 2049 Institute, where he conducts research on defense and security issues in Asia; former visiting fellow at the Japan Institute for International Affairs. Previously worked as a China analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses for two years) 6 Sept 2019 “Imagine This: China Starts a War in Asia (And Invades Taiwan)” <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/imagine-china-starts-war-asia-and-invades-taiwan-78411> (ellipses in original)

PLA intentions and plans for a conquered Taiwan are made plain in another internal document, The Japanese Air Self Defense Force, a handbook studied by mid-career officers at the PLA Air Force Command College in Beijing. The stated purpose of the text is to help Chinese pilots and staff officers understand the strengths and weaknesses of their Japanese adversaries. Buried amidst hundreds of pages of detailed maps, target coordinates, organizational charts, weapons data and jet fighter images are the following lines:  
As soon as Taiwan is reunified with Mainland China, Japan's maritime lines of communication will fall completely within the striking ranges of China's fighters and bombers...Our analysis shows that, by using blockades, if we can reduce Japan's raw imports by 15-20%, it will be a heavy blow to Japan's economy...After imports have been reduced by 50%, even if they use rationing to limit consumption, Japan's national economy and war-making potential will collapse entirely...blockades can cause sea shipments to decrease and can even create a famine within the Japanese islands.

Taiwan is dedicated to both free markets and civil liberties

[Anthony Kim](about:blank) and [Ambassador Terry Miller](about:blank) 2019 (Kim - Research Manager in the Center for International Trade and Economics of the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy, at The heritage Foundation. Miller – former ambassador to the United Nations and U.S. representative on the U.N.’s Economic and Social Council) 5 Mar 2019 “The Taiwan Relations Act at 40: New Opportunities Ahead” <https://www.heritage.org/asia/report/the-taiwan-relations-act-40-new-opportunities-ahead>

In its latest edition of Freedom in the World, an annual report that assesses political rights and civil liberties around the globe, Freedom House classifies Taiwan as a “free” nation. On the economic front, The Heritage Foundation’s 25th edition of the Index of Economic Freedom now ranks Taiwan as the 10th-freest economy in the world.

A/T “Taiwan doesn’t have coherent defense strategy, so arms don’t matter” – Taiwan has new, workable strategy

Dr. Scott W. Harold 2019 (PhD; Senior Political Scientist and the Associate Director of the Center for Asia Pacific Policy at The RAND Corporation. Adjunct Professor at Georgetown University School of Foreign Service ) Making Sense of US Arms Sales to Taiwan 23 July 2019 <https://www.institutmontaigne.org/en/blog/making-sense-us-arms-sales-taiwan>

Western defense analysts have long pointed out the desirability of shifting towards a more asymmetric approach, advising a "[porcupine strategy](about:blank)" that would turn Taiwan (formally the Republic of China, or ROC) into a ‘hard ROC’, that is to say, make it difficult to conquer and in so doing improve its ability to [protract](about:blank) any conflict. Taiwan’s defense strategy [has evolved over the years](about:blank) as Taipei seeks to respond to growing PLA military capabilities. **Recently, some observers**[have seen hope](about:blank)**in the Tsai administration’s adoption of an Overall Defense Concept that shifts Taiwan’s defense strategy in the direction of force preservation**, making the island’s defenders more agile, concealable, survivable, and lethal.

2. Chinese hegemony / loss of US hegemony in East Asia

Link: Backing away from Taiwan signals lack of support for democracy and abandonment of U.S. leadership

[Yu-Hua Chen](http://chl.anu.edu.au/our-people/details/yu-hua-chen)*2019 (Chen is a Lecturer in the School of Politics and International Relations at the Australian National University, with particular expertise in Chinese foreign and security policy, international relations theories, and the history-security nexus in the Asia-Pacific region.) 21 August 2019 “What Brings the US and Taiwan Close Together?”* <https://theasiadialogue.com/2019/08/21/what-brings-the-us-and-taiwan-close-together/>

Finally, US resolve for maintaining international order based on freedom and democracy cannot be underestimated. Many believed the US would choose to withdraw from Asia when faced with China’s growing material power and proactive behavior, but that is not how the US has written its history. The US sacrificed approximately 500,000 men to fight against Germany in two world wars and rivaled the Soviet Union for 45 years in arms races and proxy wars until the latter collapsed. On what basis can one safely assume that the US will back off when China, without any actual ally except for North Korea, is challenging this US-led order? When US leaders refer to the importance of Taiwan, democracy is often the keyword. For instance, in his remark at the Hudson Institute, Vice President Mike Pence said explicitly “America will always believe Taiwan’s embrace of democracy shows a better path for all the Chinese people.” Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also emphasised, “America will always believe Taiwan’s embrace of democracy is an example to be internationally supported.” Taiwan embracing democracy is the essential reason the US will maintain strong relations with Taiwan.

Link: China wants Indo-Pacific hegemony, wants to replace U.S. in the region

Prof. Oriana Mastro 2019 (Assistant Professor of Security Studies at Georgetown Univ) “The Stealth Superpower” [https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/china-plan-rule-asia](about:blank) Jan/Feb 2019

China has no interest in establishing a web of global alliances, sustaining a far-flung global military presence, sending troops thousands of miles from its borders, leading international institutions that would constrain its own behavior, or spreading its system of government abroad. But to focus on this reluctance, and the reassuring Chinese statements reflecting it, [is a mistake](about:blank). Although China does not want to usurp the United States’ position as the leader of a global order, its actual aim is nearly as consequential. In the Indo-Pacific region, China wants complete dominance; it wants to force the United States out and become the region’s unchallenged political, economic, and military hegemon. And globally, even though it is happy to leave the United States in the driver’s seat, it wants to be powerful enough to counter Washington when needed.

Link: China wants to dominate the Indo-Pacific

Ian Easton 2019 (research fellow at the Project 2049 Institute, where he conducts research on defense and security issues in Asia; former visiting fellow at the Japan Institute for International Affairs (JIIA) in Tokyo. Previously worked as a China analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses for two years) 6 Sept 2019 “Imagine This: China Starts a War in Asia (And Invades Taiwan)” <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/imagine-china-starts-war-asia-and-invades-taiwan-78411>

The PRC, then, has compelling political, economic and military reasons to want to control Taiwan. In the eyes of Chinese strategists, this island's importance is unparalleled. For historical and practical reasons, the PLA assumes that it will have the leading role in the campaign. Military theorists in the PLA write that, sooner or later, the attack will be ordered and the island invaded and turned into a giant base for projecting China's strength and prestige across the region. They envision a world in which Chinese troops, planes and ships stand watch over this chokepoint, controlling all its activities. They contemplate a future where China dominates the Indo-Pacific.

Link: Maintaining US relations with Taiwan is key to maintaining freedom & democracy in the region

Dr. Edwin Feulner 2019 (PhD; former Chairman of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy (1982-91); served as Public Member (Ambassador) of the U.S. Delegation to the United Nations Second Special Session on Disarmament in New York, as a consultant for domestic policy to President Reagan, and as an adviser to several government departments and agencies) “Helping the United States by helping Taiwan” 27 Mar 2019 <https://www.heritage.org/asia/commentary/helping-the-united-states-helping-taiwan>

American interests in Asia require more than soaring rhetoric and frequent meetings. They require action. Moreover, American interests are not well served by a partnership with Beijing, particularly not if that partnership flourishes at the expense of other U.S. allies — and not if it undermines the U.S. goal of promoting and protecting freedom and democracy among our allies. U.S. policymakers need to maintain close, secure relations with Taiwan.

Link: China gaining Asian regional hegemony leads to gaining global hegemony, replacing USA

Min-Hyung Kim 2019. (Dept of Political Science and International Relations, Kyung Hee Univ., South Korea) 4 Feb 2019 A real driver of US–China trade conflict: The Sino–US competition for global hegemony and its implications for the future <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/ITPD-02-2019-003/full/html>

Although China repeatedly claims that it does not seek to replace US hegemony in the world, its behavior revealed by the initiatives of the BRI, the AIIB and Made in China 2015 illustrates that its ultimate goal is to be a global hegemon. This is not surprising because all the rising powers in history invariably sought to first dominate the region they are situated ([Mearsheimer, 2011, 2014](https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/ITPD-02-2019-003/full/html#ref031%20ref032)) and expand their power globally ([Gilpin, 1981](https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/ITPD-02-2019-003/full/html#ref012)).

Impact: World peace & prosperity at risk without US influence. US hegemony is key to global peace & prosperity

Capt. M. V. Prato 2009 (United States Marine Corps,Command and Staff College, Marine Corps Combat Development Command,Marine Corps University) “The Need for American Hegemony” <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a508040.pdf>

The world witnessed a vast shift in the polarity of geopolitics after the Cold War. The United States became the world’s greatest hegemon with an unequalled ability to globally project cultural, political, economic, and military power in a manner not seen since the days of the Roman Empire. **[END QUOTE]** Coined the “unipolar moment” by syndicated columnist Charles Krauthammer, the disparity of power between the U.S. and all other nations allows the U.S. to influence the world for the mutual benefit of all responsible states. Unfortunately, the United States is increasingly forced to act unilaterally as a result of both foreign and domestic resentment to U.S. dominance and the rise of liberal internationalism**. [He goes on to say later in the same context QUOTE:]** The United States must exercise benevolent global hegemony, unilaterally if necessary, to ensure its security and maintain global peace and prosperity.

Impact: Abandoning Taiwan = less democracy, less freedom, less human rights and more communism

Jansen Tham 2018 (He is a Masters of Public Policy candidate specialising in Politics and International Affairs at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore.) 15 June 2018 “Can the United States abandon Taiwan?” <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/06/15/can-the-united-states-abandon-taiwan/>

First, the Trump administration has articulated an Asia policy of a ‘Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy’. While the [details of this strategy](http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2017/11/14/freedom-and-openness-in-the-asia-pacific-free-and-open-for-interpretation/) remain unspecified with clarity needed in several areas, the fundamental [premise](https://thediplomat.com/2018/04/trumps-free-and-open-indo-pacific-strategy-needs-clarity/) is to ensure that states straddling the Indian and Pacific Oceans remain free from coercion. Abandoning Taiwan — ostensibly an [Indo-Pacific](http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/03/13/asia-pacific-history-trumps-indo-pacific-fantasy/) territory with a vibrant democracy and successive governments that espouse universal [human rights](http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/05/29/will-the-trump-administration-get-serious-on-human-rights-in-china/) — would denigrate the credibility of the administration’s Indo-Pacific policy as it runs counter to the principles of deterring coercion and promoting freedom of governance and fundamental rights. This is particularly damaging as the source of coercion is China — a state with communism enshrined in its constitution and a less-than-stellar human rights record.

3. Pacific Security Endangered

Link and brink: The U.S. is a sitting duck in the Pacific

Prof. Peter Navarro 2016 (professor at the University of California-Irvine) 4 December 2016 “Will Guam Be America’s Next Pearl Harbor?” <https://www.huffpost.com/entry/will-guam-be-america-next_b_8725188>

As for America’s “sitting duck” forward bases in the event of such an attack, the Pentagon has bet the strategic farm in Asia on a relatively small handful of large bases arrayed along the First and Second Island Chains of defense. For example, Guam anchors the Second Island Chain and bristles with the best weapons America has in its arsenal. Warns Princeton’s Aaron Friedberg: “China is in the process of developing and deploying new weapons that will soon bring Guam well within range.”

Application: Bases in Japan are vulnerable to Chinese attack

Prof. Peter Navarro 2016 (professor at the University of California-Irvine) 4 December 2016 “Will Guam Be America’s Next Pearl Harbor?” <https://www.huffpost.com/entry/will-guam-be-america-next_b_8725188>

Other key bases anchoring the First Island Chain now firmly in the crosshairs of China’s vaunted Second Artillery Corps include the Sasebo and Yokosuka Naval Bases and Yokota Air Force Base on the home islands of Japan and the Kadena Air Force Base and Torii Station Army Base on Okinawa. Says Friedberg, these bases are “fixed. They’re not going anywhere; and they can conceivably be struck repeatedly by Chinese conventional weapons. So our posture in that part of the world is somewhat precarious; and the strategic policy question is how to make it less so.”

Link: Taiwan is key to US hegemony in the Indo-Pacific

Ian Easton 2019 (research fellow at the Project 2049 Institute, where he conducts research on defense and security issues in Asia; former visiting fellow at the Japan Institute for International Affairs. Previously worked as a China analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses) 6 Sept 2019 “Imagine This: China Starts a War in Asia (And Invades Taiwan)” <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/imagine-china-starts-war-asia-and-invades-taiwan-78411>

While not as binding as a mutual defense treaty, the TRA (U.S. Public Law 96-8) makes it clear that Washington is likely to intervene if China uses force. In addition to being a matter of principle and honor, the United States needs Taiwan for geostrategic reasons. It has become increasingly clear to American strategists that China has embarked on a long and intense competition for dominance over the Indo-Pacific. Taiwan is at the geographic and political heart of this competition.

Link: Taiwan is critical for control of the Pacific Ocean

Prof. Peter Navarro 2016 (He is a professor at the University of California-Irvine. He is the author of Crouching Tiger: What China’s Militarism Means for the World (Prometheus Books) and director of the companion Crouching Tiger documentary film series.) 18 January 2016 “Is It Time For America to ‘Surrender’ Taiwan?” <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/it-time-america-%E2%80%98surrender%E2%80%99-taiwan-14955>

In thinking about the best answer, it should be noted that it’s not just that the United States has significant moral and ideological stakes in Taiwan’s survival as a thriving democracy committed to free and peaceful trade. There is also this cold geostrategic reality described by Heritage Foundation scholar Dean Cheng: “Taiwan is perhaps the single most developed piece of the First Island Chain once you leave Japan and Okinawa. So to walk away from Taiwan would, in a sense, be to open the gates for China's navy to be able to access the central Pacific with very little in the way of other obstacles.”

Link & Brink: Look at a map—Taiwan is key to US strategy

Dr. Loren Thompson 2019 (the Chief Operating Officer of the non-profit Lexington Institute and Chief Executive Officer of Source Associates. Former Deputy Director of the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University; doctoral and masters degrees in government from Georgetown) 18 Oct 2019 “Why Sell Weapons To Taiwan? Because Washington’s China Strategy Won’t Work Without It.” <https://www.forbes.com/sites/lorenthompson/2019/10/18/why-sell-weapons-to-taiwan-because-washingtons-china-strategy-wont-work-without-it/#5c1e00d9263c>

There are multiple reasons for Washington’s willingness to arm Taiwan despite Beijing’s anger over what it sees as meddling in Chinese internal affairs. From a military perspective, though, the most important reason is that without Taiwan, the Pentagon’s strategy for containing China would be severely weakened and might come completely unraveled. To understand why, all you have to do is look at a map.

Link: Taiwan is part of the “first island chain” and key to blocking Chinese expansion

Dr. Loren Thompson 2019 (the Chief Operating Officer of the non-profit Lexington Institute and Chief Executive Officer of Source Associates. Former Deputy Director of the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University; doctoral and masters degrees in government from Georgetown) 18 Oct 2019 “Why Sell Weapons To Taiwan? Because Washington’s China Strategy Won’t Work Without It.” <https://www.forbes.com/sites/lorenthompson/2019/10/18/why-sell-weapons-to-taiwan-because-washingtons-china-strategy-wont-work-without-it/#5c1e00d9263c>

The People’s Republic is hemmed in to the North, South and West by geographical barriers that make eastward movement—into the Pacific Basin—its most viable path for military expansion. There are over a thousand miles of ocean between the southernmost of Japan’s home islands and the northern tip of the Philippine island of Luzon that would seem to afford easy access to the world’s biggest ocean. However, strung across this expanse is a series of islands from which other countries could potentially block Chinese naval movement eastward, and by far the biggest is Taiwan. Beijing and Washington both view this “first island chain” as the geographic perimeter that must be controlled by outsiders if China’s military is to be contained. For instance, most of the U.S. military forces in Japan are concentrated on the small island of Okinawa, roughly equidistant between Japan’s home islands and Taiwan. This is not a coincidence: from there, U.S. forces can defend Japan, quickly reach Korea, and block aggressive moves the PLA Navy might choose to make in Northeast Asia. Islands to the south of Taiwan stretching across the Luzon Strait could afford a similar defensive position, assuming the under-armed government in Manila was receptive to an outside military presence on its territory.

Link: Arming Taiwan is key to U.S. Pacific strategy

Dr. Loren Thompson 2019 (the Chief Operating Officer of the non-profit Lexington Institute and Chief Executive Officer of Source Associates. Former Deputy Director of the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University; doctoral and masters degrees in government from Georgetown) 18 Oct 2019 “Why Sell Weapons To Taiwan? Because Washington’s China Strategy Won’t Work Without It.” <https://www.forbes.com/sites/lorenthompson/2019/10/18/why-sell-weapons-to-taiwan-because-washingtons-china-strategy-wont-work-without-it/#5c1e00d9263c>

Against that backdrop, the logic of arming the Republic of China becomes strategically compelling. Without Taiwan, the U.S. defensive posture containing China is greatly diminished, and maybe even unworkable. Once you get east of Taiwan and the other parts of the first island chain, there isn’t much to impede Chinese military maneuvers. Washington could further expand its Pacific Fleet and bolster overhead reconnaissance capabilities, but the Pacific is a big place, and China would have many options once it escapes the main geographic barrier blocking its eastward movement.

Link: Losing Taiwan means the U.S. cannot contain China

Dr. Loren Thompson 2019 (the Chief Operating Officer of the non-profit Lexington Institute and Chief Executive Officer of Source Associates. Former Deputy Director of the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University; doctoral and masters degrees in government from Georgetown) 18 Oct 2019 “Why Sell Weapons To Taiwan? Because Washington’s China Strategy Won’t Work Without It.” <https://www.forbes.com/sites/lorenthompson/2019/10/18/why-sell-weapons-to-taiwan-because-washingtons-china-strategy-wont-work-without-it/#5c1e00d9263c>

But without control of Taiwan, this defensive perimeter loses much of its value to China’s rivals. If Beijing were to successfully occupy the Republic of China, it would shatter the U.S. defensive posture in the Western Pacific. As General Douglas MacArthur observed during the early days of the Cold War, Taiwan is an “unsinkable aircraft carrier” – nearly 14,000 square miles of territory, much of it suitable for military bases. The island even has a deepwater port that could host aircraft carriers. If the PLA were able to operate freely from Taiwan’s eastern coast, it would effectively be outside the first island chain that currently is its main obstacle to Pacific access.

Link: Undermines U.S. commitment to its allies

Jansen Tham 2018 (Masters of Public Policy candidate specialising in Politics and International Affairs at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore) 15 June 2018 “Can the United States abandon Taiwan?” <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/06/15/can-the-united-states-abandon-taiwan/>

Second, discontinuing its backing of Taiwan would severely erode the current balance of power in Asia. Beijing’s ongoing moves at consolidating control over its disputed periphery, including militarising its installations in the South China Sea, hint at a paradigm shift in the way it is utilising its new-found national power in the diplomatic, economic and military spheres. While Beijing constantly decries Washington’s ‘Cold War mentality’ in creating spheres of influence in China’s immediate neighbourhood, the reality is that states in the vicinity of the middle kingdom want a choice — instead of bandwagoning to Beijing’s preferences. The United States provides this choice, allowing states to hedge their bets between the global hegemon and Asia’s rising power. But the United States’ role in balancing China in Asia is credible only insofar as it can maintain the trust and confidence of its treaty allies — such as Japan, South Korea and Australia — and partners like India and Vietnam. Abandoning Taiwan to China’s coercion would decimate this trust.

Impact: Apocalyptic consequences if we lose US hegemony

Brook Manville 2018 (principal of Brook Manville LLC, consulting on strategy and organization) 14 Oct 2018 “Why A Crumbling World Order Urgently Needs U.S. Leadership” FORBES [https://www.forbes.com/sites/brookmanville/2018/10/14/why-a-crumbling-world-order-urgently-needs-u-s-leadership/#2bb8912f2e61](about:blank#2bb8912f2e61) (brackets added)

The botanical metaphor in [Brookings Institution Senior Fellow Robert] Kagan’s book title began our recent conversation. “We’ve been living in a tranquil garden of largely peaceful practices and liberal expectations across much of the world, ignoring the dark forces of jungle multiplying under the rocks. If we don’t defend civilization’s cultivation—especially American’s guarantee of peace and economic integration across the world—the toxic creatures and weeds will roar back.” Thus [China’s determined military rise](about:blank), [Russia’s continuing aggressions](about:blank), [fiery authoritarians on the march in so many once democratic countries](about:blank). [**END QUOTE]** As [Brookings Institution Senior Fellow Robert] Kagan continued, “[Trump has been damaging the system](about:blank)—he too seems to have forgotten what good it has delivered—but actually America’s desire for maintaining the global order has been diminishing for years. After [the dissolution of the Soviet empire in the 1990s](about:blank), people talked about [‘the end of history”](about:blank)—that America didn’t have to worry anymore about war or aggression. History doesn’t end, it simply paused. [**He goes on later in the same context to say QUOTE:]** The ugliest aspects of human nature are surging again.”  
**Vanishing Leadership, Vanishing Peace**  
Kagan’s apocalyptic message, repeated [in other recent writings](about:blank), is lucid and terrifying, all the more devastating for its relentless use of history. It’s a footnoted plea that “we’ve seen this movie before.” He reminds us that Americans have frequently turned away from defending world order, with regrettably familiar outcomes: to be dragged in later at greater cost (e.g. [helping to stop Hitler earlier might have prevented World War II](about:blank)); or, simply hoping that “the problem would go away,” to watch it get ten times worse (e.g. [Obama’s policy in Syria](about:blank)). Kagan acknowledges that America has sometimes misstepped (e.g. Viet Nam, Iraq), but he still argues that overall our foreign engagement has produced more peace and prosperity than not. “History shows,” he summarized, “that world order has never been achieved without some constructive force to keep the peace. The relative harmony and fair play we’ve created in the modern world will vanish if the U.S. forsakes international leadership.”

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