



A Global Strategy for Shaping the Post-COVID-19 World

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Cover credit: Museo del Prado

Title: The Triumph of Death
Artist: Pieter Bruegel the Elder
Year: circa 1562
Location: Museo del Prado

This painting by Pieter Brueghel the Elder is a moral work that shows the triumph of Death over worldly things, symbolized through a great army of skeletons devastating the Earth. The painting captures themes of ever-present plague and death in Europe during the life of the painter. In the foreground, Death is on a reddish horse, destroying the world of the living, who are led to a huge coffin, with no hope of salvation. All the social classes are included in the composition, and no power or devotion can save them.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic is an acute public health and economic crisis that is further destabilizing an already weakened rules-based international system. With cooperation, determination, and resolve, however, the United States and its allies can recover from the crisis and revitalize an adapted rules-based system to bring about decades of future freedom, peace, and prosperity. With crisis, comes opportunity. The Renaissance emerged out of the Black Death in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and the previous rules-based order followed decades of war and economic depression. The purpose of this Atlantic Council Strategy Paper is to articulate a comprehensive strategy for how the United States and its allies can defeat the novel coronavirus and bring about a renaissance for a new and adapted rules-based global system.

This strategy outlines the following overarching goals:

- Mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and recover from the crisis as soon as possible in the health, economic, governance, and defense domains.
- Seize the historic moment to lead a rejuvenation of an adapted rules-based global system that can endure for decades to come.

The strategy focuses on four domains of action: health, economy, governance, and defense. Each domain contains a *recovery* track, involving actions to limit the damage caused by the pandemic and facilitate a global rebound, and a *rejuvenation* track, consisting of actions to adapt and reenergize a rules-based global system. Central to this strategy is close coordination among the United States and its allies and partners to leverage their combined economic, diplomatic, military, and scientific might.

Health

Primary Goals: Defeat the virus and establish a more effective global public health system that has the capacity to monitor and quickly respond to major disease outbreaks.

KEY ELEMENTS:

- Create a Counter Coronavirus Coalition of allied nations, close partners, and like-minded states devoted to defeating the virus.
- Reform and strengthen existing global health institutions (e.g., the World Health Organization).
- Create new institutions to secure public health (e.g., an international public health monitoring agency).

Economy

Primary Goals: Limit the economic damage caused by the virus; facilitate an inclusive, equitable, and rapid rebound; and promote a reimagined, post-COVID open economic system that delivers increased standards of living.

KEY ELEMENTS:

- Work through the G7 and G20 to coordinate a global economic response.
- Protect against economic vulnerabilities (e.g., strengthen and secure supply chains).
- Ensure a globalized, free, and fair system of trade (e.g., negotiate new trade agreements).
- Leverage new technologies and lessons learned from the pandemic to reimagine a prosperous, post-COVID global economy that prioritizes inclusive growth.

Governance

Primary Goals: Stem the tide of democracies backsliding toward autocracy, advance the spread of democracy, and achieve greater unity within and across democracies.

KEY ELEMENTS:

- Tout successful democratic models of pandemic response (e.g., Finland, Iceland, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan).
- Counter nefarious Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Russian influence and disinformation in allied and partner nations.
- Engage in closed-door diplomacy with countries at risk of autocratic backsliding.
- Leverage new technologies, especially digital platforms, to modernize elections and help revitalize existing democracies.
- Increase responsibility for institutions like the G7 or a new D10 to strengthen coordination among democratic allies.

Defense

Primary Goals: Strengthen deterrence and dissuasion against revisionist actors and prepare to defend against twenty-first century challenges, including biological threats and pandemics.

KEY ELEMENTS:

- Strengthen deterrence and demonstrate US and allied readiness (e.g., joint statements, shows of force, etc.).
- Prepare US and allied forces for the future of warfare.
- Broaden concept of security to include pandemic security.
- Use crisis and pressure on defense budgets to transform US and allied capabilities away from legacy platforms and toward emerging defense technologies central to future warfare (e.g., drone swarms, artificial intelligence, space, etc.)

This strategy accounts for the fact that these domains, while analytically distinct, are interconnected. For example, achieving the central goal in the domain of health—defeating the virus—is a necessary precondition for a full economic recovery. A revival of the global economy, in turn, will diminish the prospect of political instability and help the United States and its democratic partners prepare for the future of warfare to defend a revised and adapted rules-based global order.

This paper is grounded in the conviction that both the United States and the world benefit from US leadership. Although times are challenging, the United States can succeed by asserting its still-unmatched capacity for global leadership and inspiring collective action around the world.

The world stands at a precipice akin to similar historic periods such as in 1919 and 1945. In the earlier case, the United States chose isolation and protectionism, and world order unraveled. In the latter case, the United States and its allies led the creation of a new, lasting order.

Since 1945, the world has witnessed an unprecedented flourishing of peace, prosperity, and freedom. But the system is increasingly facing both internal structural and external challenges. The current crisis presents an opportunity for the United States and its allies to build upon the work they started seventy-five years ago and to revitalize and adapt a global system to succeed under the very different circumstances of this century.

TABLE 1. A GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR SHAPING THE POST-COVID-19 WORLD

	RECOVERY	REJUVENATION
HEALTH	Create a Counter Coronavirus Coalition of like-minded states devoted to defeating the virus	Reform existing global health institutions (e.g., WHO) Create new global public health institutions (e.g., an international public health watchdog)
ECONOMY	Convene the G7 and G20 to coordinate a global economic response Secure supply chains	Pursue a globalized, free, and fair trade system Leverage new technologies and lessons from the pandemic to reimagine a post-COVID-19 global economy
GOVERNANCE	Promote successful democratic models of COVID-19-response Counter disinformation Engage in closed-door diplomacy with countries that risk autocratic backsliding	Leverage new digital technologies to modernize elections and revitalize existing democracies Increase responsibilities for institutions like the G7 or a new D10
DEFENSE	Strengthen deterrence and demonstrate US and allied readiness	Prepare US and allied forces for the future of warfare Broaden the concept of security to include pandemic response Transform US and allied capabilities toward emerging defense technologies



REUTERS/MIKE SEGAR

The USNS Comfort passes the Statue of Liberty as it enters New York Harbor during the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in New York City, U.S., March 30, 2020.

CHAPTER 1

THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the rules-based international system, which had brought decades of peace, prosperity, and freedom to the world, was under strain. Threats from revisionist great powers and unrest within democracies placed great pressure on the system. These threats remain, but the virus has added a massive strategic shock. The COVID-19 pandemic is arguably the greatest disruption to global order since World War II and could upend an already beleaguered international system. It has also unleashed secondary shocks and could result in additional jolts to the global order. The global economy is suffering from a severe downturn, US-China rivalry has intensified, the transatlantic alliance has frayed, and seemingly impotent international institutions are facing a legitimacy crisis. The future of the world order could proceed along several paths, ranging from a complete breakdown of the rules-based global system to one where the system is revitalized and adapted for the twenty-first century.

Under Pressure: The Rules-Based International System and Its Pre-COVID-19 Challenges

The US-led, rules-based international system was constructed mostly by the United States and its democratic allies at the end of World War II.¹ The system reflects a set of norms and principles pertaining to global security, the economy, and governance. The primary attributes of this system include 1) a set of rules encouraging peaceful, predictable, and cooperative behavior among states that is consistent with liberal democratic values and principles; 2) formal institutional bodies, such as the United Nations and NATO, that serve to legitimize and enforce these rules, and provide a forum to discuss and settle disputes; and 3) the role of powerful democratic states to help preserve and defend the system.

In the security realm, the system is characterized by formal alliances in Europe and Asia in addition to rules that protect state sovereignty and territorial integrity, and place limits on the use of military force and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. In the economic domain, the rules-based system has served to promote an interconnected global economy based on free markets and open trade and finance. Finally, in the realm of governance, the rules-based system has advanced democratic values and human rights.

This system was successful beyond the imagination of its creators and has brought the world decades of unprecedented peace, prosperity, and freedom. It has contributed to the absence of great power war for more than seven decades and a reduction in wartime casualties from more than one percent of the human population from the 1600s to 1945 to less than one-hundredth of one percent today. In the economic realm, worldwide living standards have nearly tripled as measured by GDP per capita, and the percentage of people living in extreme poverty has dropped from 66 percent to less than 10 percent since the mid-1940s. Finally, the number of democratic countries worldwide has grown from seventeen in 1945 to ninety-six today.

Importantly, the US-led system has also benefited the average American. For decades, allied military forces have fought and died alongside US troops in US-led wars, from the Korean War to the First Gulf War and the war in Afghanistan. The international economic system crafted at Bretton Woods in 1944 opened markets and increased trade, thereby bringing more goods and services at lower prices to the United States, while creating jobs for millions of Americans. Since that conference, US GDP has increased by a factor of eight, and the same holds true for the income of the average US citizen, adjusted for inflation. Finally, the expansion of freedom around the globe has protected the United States' experiment with open government and has granted Americans the ability to travel, study, and explore the world more easily.²

While this system has greatly benefited the United States and the world, it has been facing increasing internal structural and external challenges.

In recent years, revisionist powers such as Russia and China have sought to disrupt, and even displace, this system, while rogue states such as Iran and North Korea continue to violate core values of the rules-based order. Meanwhile, the order is facing vast internal difficulties as populist movements challenge globalization and US allies doubt its willingness to lead a response to these many challenges.³ And as a recent Atlantic Council Strategy Paper, *Taking Stock: Where Are Geopolitics Headed in the COVID-19 Era?*, demonstrated, these negative trend lines have been accelerated by the pandemic, which also has unleashed additional secondary strategic shocks.⁴ In sum, the pandemic has exacerbated pressure points in the international system so much so that there are real questions as to whether key elements of the current rules-based order can survive.

Strategic Shock: The Public Health Crisis

The most immediate threat presented by the pandemic is a rapidly spreading virus with no currently available vaccine or confirmed treatments. As of the writing of this paper, more than nine million people worldwide had been infected by the virus, and more than 470,000 had died. Within the United States, more than two million people had been infected and more than 120,000 had died.⁵ The virus's mortality rate may be around one percent, but fatalities are higher among elderly individuals and persons with underlying conditions.⁶ Furthermore, as hospitals wrestle with an influx of COVID-19 patients, others have died because of an inability or an unwillingness to undergo treatment for otherwise survivable maladies.⁷

More than 100 vaccines are currently in development and a dozen are undergoing clinical trials. Despite optimism that a vaccine could be ready for mass distribution by the end of the year, it is more likely going to take at least until mid-2021 to have a widely available inoculation.⁸ Skepticism of vaccines based on misinformation could prolong the health crisis even after a vaccine is available. Daily life, meanwhile, has changed for billions of people around the world, with governments mandating lockdowns to curb the spread of the virus.

Despite the lockdowns, the virus still threatens to overwhelm health care systems across the planet and create secondary and tertiary strategic shocks. Italy and Spain, two of the United States' transatlantic allies, already witnessed their health care systems overrun with patients, with many requiring intensive care and tens of thousands dying. The United States has suffered similarly. Other major countries that have suffered the most currently include Belgium, Brazil, France, Italy, Russia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.⁹ And, of course, it is almost certain there will be an additional spike of the virus in the fall.

In addition to its immediate impact on individuals' health and countries' health care systems, the virus has revealed the fragility of the global public health system.

Many international institutions are working to facilitate global coordination on the pandemic. The WHO has advanced a program known as Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) to accelerate access to COVID-19 therapeutics and vaccines.¹⁰ The WHO's "Solidarity" clinical trial, meanwhile, is comparing four different treatment options using several thousand patients across more than thirty countries.¹¹

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, is working with the WHO and nonprofits to develop and deliver COVID-19 vaccines to those in need, and has made hundreds of millions of dollars available for this effort.¹² The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) is focused on funding vaccine candidates. It is coordinating with Gavi and pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca to prepare for the widespread distribution of COVID-19 vaccines.¹³ CEPI receives funding from many European countries, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Wellcome Trust. The European Commission pledged €300 million to Gavi in early June. In mid-June, several European countries struck a deal with AstraZeneca to supply at least 300 million doses of a COVID-19 vaccine being developed at Oxford University.¹⁴

Apart from the previously mentioned bodies, there are others designed to facilitate public health coordination across countries. The Global Health Security Initiative consists of the G7, Mexico, and the European Union (EU), but it last convened in May 2019 well before the COVID-19 outbreak.¹⁵ Regional governmental and multilateral bodies, such as the African Union (AU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), also operate their own health-focused groupings. The Africa CDC, for example, is trying to coordinate a continent-wide response to boost testing, tracing, and treatment of the virus.¹⁶

Despite the existence of these organizations, cooperation has often been fraught with difficulty. The WHO has turned into an arena for US-China competition, with the former stating it will withdraw from the body. China, meanwhile, stalled in delivering vital information to the WHO, prompting behind-the-scenes concerns about delays and a lack of transparency.¹⁷ In May, the United States did not participate in an EU-hosted fundraiser for a COVID-19 vaccine.¹⁸ While the infrastructure for a global response is present, key international relationships are fraying amid the crisis, limiting the degree of global coordination.

More broadly, the virus has catalyzed an increasingly competitive US-China relationship beyond multilateral bodies. The pandemic also has delivered a profound shock to the world's economy, sending it into a tailspin and threatening to undo the decades-long process of globalization. Due to an uneven US global leadership role and other tensions, the US alliance system in Asia and in Europe also is under new stresses. Finally, uncertainty about how long the virus will remain prevalent in the global population and about the looming seasonal waves means prolonged and additional shocks to the rules-based global system likely are pending.

Secondary Shocks and Potential Crises

GLOBAL ECONOMY

The world's largest economies have been forced to partially shut down to limit the spread of the virus and preserve the integrity of their health care systems. The negative effect of the pandemic on the global economy is evident in unemployment on a scale not seen since the Great Depression, rising mortgage defaults, fluctuating oil prices, volatile stock markets, and the disruption of global supply chains due to factories and other businesses reducing outputs amid lockdowns.¹⁹

Initially, there was some hope of a V-shaped global economic recovery in which the United States, China, and Europe would experience a rapid downturn followed by an almost immediate recovery. A recent survey of economists found, however, that a plurality of those polled think the economic recovery will be U-shaped, and many admit that this is the optimistic scenario.²⁰ The path could also follow a “W,” in which a secondary, lesser downturn could follow an initial boost after lockdowns are eased. This is a significant risk in the United States where stimulus fatigue is weighing on policymakers.²¹

No matter the shape of the recovery, it is likely that different regions will follow divergent paths. There will be no unified global recovery. It is plausible that growth will be fractured, which could exacerbate geopolitical tensions and further strain globalization. While the United States experiences a double-dip W-shaped rebound, China's recovery could approximate a V curve. Moreover, China's path for a quick recovery could be through Europe and emerging Asian markets, and, therefore, bypass the United States. It is unclear where this type of fractured growth would leave the United States in the global economy and as a global leader. We should recognize this pattern is different from global growth between 2008 and 2020 when the global economy largely moved up and down in synchronized swings.

If the United States emerges from the crisis much more slowly than the rest of the world, the ripple effects could be transformative. It could have an adverse impact on the United States' reputation and power, and limit its ability to coordinate a global response as the crisis worsens in emerging markets.

On the other hand, while this dire scenario is possible, the United States retains some core economic strengths, including, but not limited to, the role of the dollar as the global reserve currency. Additionally, the world-leading ability of US companies to innovate and adapt to challenges makes the United States one of the most economically resilient countries on earth. The World Economic Forum's *Global Competitiveness Report*, which assesses factors conducive to growth in nations' economies, ranks the United States behind only Singapore.²²

Even as advanced economies are beginning to return to normalcy, the developing world is still in the early stages of dealing with the virus and is already experiencing the negative economic impacts. African countries that

depend on exports to China are witnessing a significant decline in demand, while global travel restrictions are limiting tourism.²³ Developing countries face a dilemma as they can ill afford lengthy lockdowns that quash economic activity. But their often fragile health care systems are at a high risk of being overwhelmed by the virus. These countries have trillions of dollars in financing needs but lack the fiscal and monetary tools available to more advanced economies. An under-resourced International Monetary Fund (IMF) leaves these nations in an even more precarious position. An economic calamity in the developing world would lead to shocks that would boomerang into the developed world.

While the extent to which recovery will be uneven is unclear, the IMF currently projects the global economy will contract by three percent in 2020, a worse downturn than that experienced during the 2008 financial crisis.²⁴ If the pandemic does not fade significantly over the next six to eight months, it is possible that the current global economic calamity will prove worse than the Great Depression. Analysis from April found the negative impact of the pandemic on real GDP in the United States could exceed anything since the immediate aftermath of World War II.²⁵

With the world's economy in tatters and global supply chains being questioned, some analysts have raised questions about the future of globalization.²⁶ A prolonged downturn could invigorate opponents of globalization and unleash forces that favor economic nationalism.

US-CHINA RIVALRY INTENSIFIES

The foremost geopolitical rivalry of today is that between the United States, the world's premier power, and China, which has undergone a dramatic economic rise in recent decades and is now the world's second-largest economy.²⁷ According to the 2017 *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, the return of great power rivalry with China and Russia is the foremost threat to US security and economic well-being.²⁸ In the months since the virus emerged, the relationship between the United States and China has become decidedly confrontational.

Economically, both the United States and China are suffering severely from the pandemic. China's economy shrunk by 6.8 percent in the first quarter of 2020, its first contraction in almost half a century.²⁹ Despite efforts to stimulate the economy with trillions of yuan, China's growth for the year is projected to be around three percent, although it could end up lower.³⁰ This economic decline will strain China's domestic politics given that the CCP maintains its power, in part, by promising economic stability and growth in return for submission to its political dominance.

In the United States, meanwhile, more than thirty million Americans had filed for unemployment since mid-March, while the economy contracted by 4.8 percent in the first quarter of 2020.³¹ Trillions of dollars in economic stimulus will provide some relief, but the United States' economic outlook is uncertain for the rest of 2020 and beyond.

Whichever country emerges stronger and more quickly from the global economic downturn will be in a prime position to assert global leadership

and shape the post-pandemic world. Furthermore, Asia is the only region in the world projected to grow this year. If China recovers quickly, it could pressure neighbors to align more closely with it since its markets would be able to provide consumer demand.

On the other hand, this conventional wisdom that whoever emerges first will definitively shape the global order for years to come should not be taken as gospel. Slow and steady often wins the race. After the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the United States responded by placing the first person on the moon. A faster recovery by China would give it an advantage, but it may not automatically lead to a lasting alteration of the global balance of power. That depends more on the fundamentals of economic and other forms of national power.

Globally, the United States and China are engaged in a battle for soft power and influence. The pandemic gives China an opportunity to attempt to showcase its model of authoritarian state capitalism as superior to the US, European, and like-minded Asian countries' model of open-market democracy. To accomplish this task, China is trying to change the narrative regarding its significant early missteps—which included suppression of information and silencing those who spoke out about COVID-19—that allowed the virus to spiral into a global pandemic.³² Chinese officials have tried to obscure the virus's origins, even spreading conspiracy theories that the virus was brought to Wuhan by the US Army.³³

China sent medical equipment and other aid to European nations fighting outbreaks of the virus, but much of the equipment it sent was faulty.³⁴ China's increasingly aggressive diplomats, labelled "wolf warriors," have contributed to the growing alienation of China in Europe and the United States. Moreover, China's image has been damaged in Asian and African countries where it has invested in infrastructure projects as part of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Many Chinese workers have been forced to return to China, while factories have been unable to produce necessary materials, thereby delaying projects. Cases of xenophobia toward Africans living in China have also prompted rebukes from African officials.³⁵ In sum, China's early missteps and bumbling efforts to expand its soft power abroad have led to official rebukes from many nations and, on balance, damaged its global standing.³⁶

While China stumbles, allies perceive the United States as absent from its historic leadership role. But US leadership has not been entirely lacking. The Federal Reserve has coordinated closely with other countries' central banks and has been perhaps the single most important actor in mitigating a global economic downturn.³⁷ It has, however, added more than \$6 trillion to its balance sheet, which will trigger long-term risks on debt and moral hazard. In addition to the Federal Reserve's work, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the State Department have given more than \$1 billion to combat the global spread of the virus.³⁸

Militarily, the United States has had to divert resources to pandemic relief efforts and, until recently, faced a shortage of aircraft carriers in the Pacific. The USS *Theodore Roosevelt* was stuck in Guam while its crew tried to mitigate an outbreak of the coronavirus, while the USS *Ronald Reagan* was



Russia's President Vladimir Putin attends the Victory Day Parade in Red Square in Moscow, Russia, June 24, 2020. The military parade, marking the 75th anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany in World War Two, was scheduled for May 9 but postponed due to the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

undergoing maintenance in Japan. For a time, China operated the only carrier in the Pacific and sent it near Japan and Taiwan's territorial waters.³⁹ However, the US Navy subsequently surged seven carrier strike groups globally at once, including three operating in INDOPACOM. While the virus has made some inroads among US forces, China has downplayed any impact on its military, even suggesting it is virus-free.⁴⁰

Any subsequent perceptions of diminished US readiness could raise the possibility that the Chinese leadership could see the pandemic as an opportunity to commit an act of military aggression against Taiwan or another regional rival. As a result, the risk of armed conflict between the world's leading powers is higher than before the pandemic.

RUSSIA IS WEAKENED, BUT STILL HOSTILE TO THE WEST

Russia is a declining nuclear power with the capacity to damage US and allied interests, but it has struggled to contain the virus. Recently, Russia has witnessed a surge in cases and more than 500,000 people are now infected in that country, putting its fragile health care system at risk of being overwhelmed.⁴¹

The deteriorating situation has exacerbated Russian President Vladimir Putin's domestic challenges. Living standards have declined since Russia's

invasion of Ukraine in 2014 and trust in Putin has fallen precipitously.⁴² Historically low energy prices have also hurt Russia's energy dependent economy.⁴³ Putin has been forced to delay a planned referendum on constitutional changes that would have extended his tenure as Russia's president.⁴⁴

Yet the pandemic has not stopped Russia from implementing disinformation campaigns abroad, including the spread of false theories about the origins of the virus and efforts to sow distrust and confusion in Europe. In addition, Russia and China's disinformation narratives are increasingly aligned.⁴⁵

Meanwhile, the pandemic weakened NATO's military preparedness in Northern and Eastern Europe. NATO was forced to cancel exercises, and troops in its forward defense battalion in Lithuania were stricken with the virus. The US Department of Defense issued a two-month-long, sweeping stop-movement order for military personnel in March, and some restrictions remain in place at the time of writing.⁴⁶

Indeed, internal public health and political problems might incentivize Russia's leadership to commit hostile acts abroad. Putin could see a weakened NATO as an opportunity for military adventurism, which would distract from his increasingly precarious domestic political position.

ROGUE STATES AND POPULAR UNREST COULD FUEL INSTABILITY

In addition to these great powers, the rules-based global system contends with other external threats, including rogue states, terrorists, and civil conflict, which also have been affected by the pandemic.

Iran, for example, is an aspiring nuclear power that supports terrorism and instability in the Middle East and beyond, but has been riven by factionalism amid the pandemic. More than 180,000 people have been infected by the virus in Iran.⁴⁷ The spread of the virus has catalyzed an internal rivalry between Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.⁴⁸ The latter is hoping to discredit Rouhani with the intention of bolstering the position of hardliners who favor a more confrontational approach toward the United States and its interests in the Middle East. This factionalism has hampered Iran's response to the virus, leading to one of the world's worst outbreaks.⁴⁹ As recently as January, Iran was on the brink of war with the United States, and it has waged a proxy war on the United States and its allies in the Middle East for decades. If conservatives and hardliners in the regime emerge stronger at Rouhani's expense or Iran accelerates its pursuit of nuclear weapons, the United States and Iran could be on a collision course for armed conflict.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, North Korea claims to be unscathed by the virus, but this is highly unlikely. The nation sparked a frenzy in April after its leader, Kim Jong-un, disappeared for several weeks before images of him alive and working were released.⁵¹ Kim's disappearance, which prompted speculation about severe health issues and even death, raised questions about the future of the Kim family regime. Regime collapse in North Korea would

likely force the United States and China to step in to secure their interests and could raise the prospect of armed conflict between the two. More recently, North Korea has returned to a confrontational approach, shunning diplomacy and literally destroying the linkages it had established in recent years with South Korea. Thus, over the next several years, the Korean Peninsula is likely to see a return to higher tensions and even crisis.

Apart from rogue states, terrorism and violent civil conflict can pose threats to the global order. A high risk of political instability and state failure, especially in developing countries, provides an opening for terrorists to commit acts of violence and find new breeding grounds for extremism.

Worldwide, the economic crisis unleashed by the virus will also lead to a drop in socioeconomic status for those who are struggling to stay in the middle class. The world could conceivably witness a global middle-class rebellion and broader political instability born out of economic discontent. The United States and European nations will have to contend with extremist movements that will try to take advantage of the global disruption with the support of adversarial nations such as Russia. On the other hand, there will likely also be peaceful pro-democracy and civil rights movements. The year 2019 was a year of protests, with movements arising from Hong Kong to Venezuela. The people's grievances remain even as the virus temporarily quelled their manifestation in the streets. Pro-democracy protesters and racial justice movements such as Black Lives Matter in the United States could help positively reshape democracies and geopolitics.

TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP FRAYED

The transatlantic relationship remains crucial for maintaining a stable, peaceful, and prosperous global order, but tensions in this relationship, already heightened in recent years, have increased as a result of the pandemic. While the United States and much of Europe recognize China's culpability in permitting the spread of the virus, they have not yet cooperated on putting forth a coordinated, global response to the pandemic and to China's newly assertive rhetoric and policies.

European countries were dismayed the United States did not coordinate with them on travel restrictions for Europeans visiting the United States in mid-March. At that time, US President Donald J. Trump also claimed the EU "failed to take the same precautions" as the United States to combat the virus.⁵² Furthermore, European nations have taken issue with the United States' aggressive tactics for procuring critical medical supplies.⁵³

Internally, Europe is trying to stay united amid the crisis, but China's rising influence raises questions about Italy's future relationship with the EU and whether Serbia will accede to the body. Italy, which has received assistance from China and is part of that country's BRI, appears to be moving away from the United States and the EU. A recent survey found most Italians think EU membership is a disadvantage, and a plurality favor looking to China over the United States as a non-European partner.⁵⁴ Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić has also praised China for its support to his country.⁵⁵



REUTERS/THOMAS PETER/POOL

Chinese President Xi Jinping and officials, some wearing face masks following the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, attend the closing session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China May 27, 2020.

The EU has also struggled to coordinate on economic relief. In mid-March, the European Central Bank (ECB) agreed to buy €750 million worth of EU bonds to support hard-hit countries. In early April, EU finance ministers agreed on an economic support package that would give severely affected countries access to the credit lines of the European Stability Mechanism, the EU's bailout fund.⁵⁶ EU leaders are currently divided over a €750 billion package, which includes €500 billion in grants to member states suffering the worst from the virus. This package, which requires unanimous approval, is facing opposition from several countries.⁵⁷

KEY PACIFIC ALLIES RESPONDED EFFECTIVELY TO THE PANDEMIC, BUT PROBLEMS REMAIN

Several of the United States' key allies and partners in the Pacific have served as models of democratic states' capacity to act swiftly and successfully to stop pandemics and other crises. Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, and Taiwan have responded extraordinarily effectively and quashed the spread of the virus through decisive, early action

and widespread testing.⁵⁸ Taiwan's provision of millions of masks to countries hit hard by the pandemic has boosted its soft power. Furthermore, Taiwan's success has provided an opportunity for the United States to promote its cause abroad and advocate for its legitimate inclusion in multilateral bodies.⁵⁹

All four countries have demonstrated the durability and resilience of the political-economic model of open-market democracy against China's model of authoritarian state capitalism. They could, however, become more economically dependent on China if it recovers faster than the United States.

Other US allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region, including India and Japan, have not had as much success against the virus.⁶⁰ A worsening outbreak in Japan forced it to declare a state of emergency in early April.⁶¹ Since late May, however, the country began easing restrictions and the spread of the virus appeared to be slowing down.⁶²

India is the world's largest democracy, a pivotal actor, and a potentially important partner for the United States. But given its population of more than one billion people, India risks a public health catastrophe if the virus continues to make inroads. At the time of writing, India had roughly 400,000 COVID-19 cases and the situation was deteriorating.⁶³ A severe outbreak of the virus could lead India to turn inward and curtail its economic growth, potentially giving China a freer hand in the Indo-Pacific region.

GLOBAL INSTITUTIONS QUESTIONED

Many international institutions have proven ineffective during the pandemic. These pillars of the rules-based system are perceived as weak and too fractured to address the crisis. A continued feeble or lethargic response could fuel populist, or anti-globalist, criticism of these institutions as illegitimate or lacking purpose.

The WHO, the primary international body for governing global public health, is facing criticism for its slow response to the pandemic and, at least in the United States, its deference to China. The body praised China's supposed transparency and its efforts to contain the virus despite China's apparent mismanagement and private complaints by WHO officials about China not being forthright about the spread of the virus.⁶⁴

Trump has announced he will withhold funding from the WHO and has said the United States will withdraw from the body.⁶⁵ The United States gave more than \$400 million—a combination of assessed and voluntary contributions—to the WHO in 2019, far more than China.⁶⁶ In response to the Trump administration's threats, China said it would increase its contribution to the WHO.⁶⁷

Other international bodies, such as the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), have also faltered during the crisis. The UNSC has been largely silent during the pandemic, failing to organize a cooperative response to the multifaceted challenge posed by the virus. This, at least in part, reflects the division between the United States and China, two veto-wielding members of the Council.⁶⁸ The crisis has also brought into sharp relief



REUTERS/DENIS BALBOUSE

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director-general of World Health Organization (WHO), attends a news conference in Geneva, Switzerland, June 25, 2020.

problems in the World Trade Organization (WTO). Some members of the US Congress, such as Sen. Josh Hawley (R-MO), have called for the United States to withdraw from the WTO.⁶⁹

The G7 and G20 also have been slow to address the pandemic. In March, a meeting of G7 foreign ministers failed to produce a joint statement over disagreements about the phrase “Wuhan virus” that was promoted by the United States.⁷⁰ In mid-April, however, G7 leaders agreed that a “thorough review and reform process” for the WHO was needed.⁷¹ The United States has since announced its withdrawal from the WHO, although this has not yet formally taken place.

Also in mid-April, members of the G20 agreed to delay debt payments owed to them by many developing countries.⁷² This was a welcome first step, but there has been little subsequent action to provide clarity. More recently, G20 health ministers were unable to come up with a joint statement on the WHO’s role in responding to the pandemic.⁷³

Working through the IMF and the World Bank, the world’s largest economies have put trillions of dollars toward economic recovery, but, to date, unified global action has been absent.

DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE CHALLENGED

The pandemic poses a threat to nations' political stability as people question governments' responses to the crisis. The risk of widespread domestic political instability increases the longer it takes nations to control the virus, identify treatments, and ease lockdown measures to allow economic and social activity to restart.

Democracy, moreover, remains under threat as adversaries harness digital technology to spread disinformation to divide and weaken democratic states. The pandemic also opens the door to autocratic backsliding and increased authoritarianism as leaders consolidate power to address the outbreak. Indeed, in recent years there has been a global trend toward authoritarianism, and 2019 marked the fourteenth consecutive year that Freedom House documented an overall decline in global freedom.⁷⁴

In Russia, despite being forced to delay the referendum on prolonging his tenure, Putin is bolstering the country's surveillance capabilities and employing advanced facial recognition software while using the virus as a cover.⁷⁵ In Hungary, parliament gave Prime Minister Viktor Orbán the power to rule by decree and banned elections indefinitely.⁷⁶ The law prompted former Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi to call for Hungary's removal from the EU.⁷⁷ In Africa and Asia, several leaders are using the crisis as an opportunity to move toward authoritarianism or solidify their hold on power.⁷⁸ On every continent, leaders may use the virus as an opportunity to embrace authoritarianism or strengthen their grip on power.

Amid the crisis, democracies are also reckoning with shortcomings in their own societies. The United States is wrestling with internal turmoil born out of racial tensions and protests against police brutality. Such inequities at home risk damaging US credibility to effectively defend the rules-based global order against authoritarian challengers.



A relative touches 76-year-old Jaime, who is infected with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), during a final goodbye inside an Intensive Care Unit of the University of Chile's clinical hospital in Santiago, Chile June 18, 2020. Picture taken June 18, 2020.

REUTERS/IVAN ALVARADO

CHAPTER 2

LOOKING AHEAD

The rules-based global order was already under stress prior to the pandemic and its subsequent strategic shocks. The pandemic has accelerated these trends and exacerbated pressure points that threaten to undo this order.

Key attributes of the rules-based global order have faltered. Norms relating to multilateral cooperation have fallen by the wayside in important cases as US-China competition grows more tense and transatlantic coordination remains limited. Some formal institutions, such as the UNSC, have been impotent, while others, such as the WHO, have struggled to bring together squabbling member states. There are also doubts about whether powerful democratic states, most notably the United States, have the will to lead through the crisis. Meanwhile, globalization is under fire and autocratic backsliding continues apace.

The rules-based global order is not destined to collapse, but it entered the crisis battered and finds itself severely ill. This raises questions about the direction of this order and possible scenarios for the post-pandemic world. This question has been explored in depth by the Atlantic Council's Mat Burrows and Peter Engelke in their paper, *What World Post-COVID-19? Three Scenarios*.⁷⁹ They propose three scenarios:

- **Great Accelerator Downwards:** In this scenario, the economies of the United States, China, and Europe all struggle to recover quickly from the pandemic-induced downturn. This world is marked by deglobalization, increased poverty in the developing world, and a heightened risk of armed conflict among the United States, Russia, and China.
- **China First:** In this scenario, China expands its influence abroad while the United States struggles to revive its economy. The United States and its European allies fear a rising China, while US allies in the Indo-Pacific grow economically dependent on China. The United States is perceived as declining, while China emerges stronger from the pandemic.
- **Recovery and Rejuvenation:** In this scenario, the United States works with its allies and other like-minded countries to lead a recovery and rejuvenation of the rules-based global order. They put forth a global response to the pandemic and facilitate an economic resurgence and a reformed Bretton Woods system. Achieving this scenario depends on deep, sustained US and allied cooperation and would benefit from coordination with China.

The strategy proposed in this paper seeks to bring about the third scenario, a recovery and rejuvenation of a significantly adapted rules-based international system. The stricken rules-based order requires more than just a revival of its previous form; on the contrary, it needs a bold vision for revitalization that includes new institutions, a more resilient economic system, new efforts to uphold good governance and democracy, and a rethinking of defense in the twenty-first century. The next section of this paper will expand on this outcome by articulating the strategy's goals.



Joaquim Correia of College Barber Shop cuts a customer's hair as the provincial phase 2 of reopening from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) restrictions begins in Toronto, Ontario, Canada June 24, 2020.

REUTERS/CARLOS OSCORIO

CHAPTER 3

GOALS

The overarching goals of this strategy are twofold: First, to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and recover from the crisis as soon as possible in the health, economic, governance, and defense domains. Second, to seize the historic opportunity to lead a rejuvenation of a revitalized and adapted rules-based system that can endure for decades to come.

The pandemic has sharply exposed the fragilities of the current rules-based international system, but the system should not be abandoned altogether. Over the past seven decades, undergirded by vigorous exertions of US leadership, the system demonstrated an unparalleled ability to provide

global peace, prosperity, and freedom. On the other hand, it would not be wise to cling to an aging system as the world enters a very different historic era than the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Instead, we must work to:

- Revitalize support for key principles of a rules-based system;
- Adapt the system by reforming and developing entirely new global institutions and arrangements wherever needed (e.g., the WHO, and on new disruptive technologies, such as biotechnology); and
- Defend this new and adapted international system from threats and challenges.

The post-pandemic rules-based system should be shaped by the values articulated in the Atlantic Council's 2019 *Declaration of Principles for Freedom, Prosperity, and Peace*. The principles affirm the following:

1 The right of all people to live in free and just societies, where fundamental rights are protected under the rule of law;

2 The right of all people to make decisions about their own affairs through elected governments that reflect their consent, free from foreign interference;

3 The right of all people to live in peace, free from threats of aggression, terrorism, oppression, crimes against humanity, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction;

4 The right of all people to engage in economic activity based on free market principles, with equal opportunity to contribute to and the ability to share in the benefits of national prosperity;

5 The right of all people to enjoy free and open access to the global commons and a safe and healthy planet;

6 The right of national sovereignty, while recognizing that sovereignty obligates governments to uphold these principles;

7 The right of all people to cooperate in support of these principles and to work together to advance them.⁸⁰

Guided by these principles, this strategy will seek to achieve the following goals in each specified domain of action:

Health

- Lead a *recovery* of global public health by defeating the virus.
- Move toward *rejuvenating* a global public health system that is better suited for an era of more frequent pandemics, including a more responsive global capacity to monitor and quickly respond to disease outbreaks.

Economy

- Lead a *recovery* of the global economy by coordinating measures to limit the economic damage caused by the virus and facilitating an inclusive and rapid rebound.
- Move toward *rejuvenating* the global economy by promoting a reimagined, post-COVID-19 economic system that is more resilient to shocks and delivers improved equality of opportunity.

Governance

- Lead a *recovery* of democracy and good governance by stemming the tide of autocratic backsliding.
- Move toward *rejuvenating* good governance by advancing the spread of democracy and achieving greater unity within the democratic world.

Defense

- Lead a *recovery* of global security and diminish the prospect of armed conflict by restoring deterrence against revisionist actors.
- Move toward *rejuvenating* global security and peace by preparing for twenty-first-century security challenges, including pandemics and biological threats.

Having articulated the strategy's top goals, the paper will now turn to the strategy's core elements.



REUTERS/KIM HONG-JI

National Election Commission officials count ballots for the parliamentary elections, amid the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, in Seoul, South Korea, April 15, 2020.

CHAPTER 4

ELEMENTS OF THE STRATEGY

The United States, its allies and partners, and like-minded states should take steps in the near term to lead a coordinated and comprehensive *recovery* from the crisis, while laying the groundwork for a longer-term *rejuvenation* of a rules-based system. This will require adapting and reforming existing structures, as well as creating new ones to build a more resilient and effective system.

The strategy calls for the United States to take a more active international role as it remains the only country in the world capable of leading a collaborative global strategy to take on these large-scale challenges. The United States should not take on this role primarily for the benefit of the rest of the world, but because such an approach would benefit everyday Americans and their way of life, too. By cooperating internationally, the United States and other states can pool their collective economic strength and scientific knowledge to more quickly discover and distribute a vaccine to the American people. Furthermore, leading nations working together can organize a coordinated economic response that could reduce the depth of the economic downturn and advance a faster recovery with benefits accruing to US citizens struggling with unemployment and reduced wages. Finally,

the continuation of a rules-based system will continue to make the average American safer, richer, and freer than in the absence of such an order. In the 1930s, when Americans shunned global engagement, economic discord and a world war followed. The United States was forced to return to the world stage and pay a great cost in lives to restore order. After 1945, however, when the United States committed to establishing and undergirding a stable international system, the American people were rewarded with decades of peace, prosperity, and freedom. Instead of repeating the mistakes of the past, therefore, the United States must seize the opportunity presented now to recommit to global leadership and work closely with other states to build a stronger global system. To sustain public support for their effort, US leaders should clearly and consistently communicate these benefits to the American people.

The United States should seek to coordinate with other states along two tracks. The first track would pursue broad cooperation with an inclusive group of global powers, including China, in fora such as the WHO and the G20. China is the source of the pandemic and the world's second-largest economy. Its participation will be necessary for the most effective public health and economic responses. On the other hand, we should recognize that the CCP's lack of transparency contributed to the pandemic. Moreover, Beijing is actively challenging key aspects of a rules-based international system and the intensification of the US-China rivalry will limit the prospects for cooperation. Several of the goals of the strategy will, therefore, require actively defending against direct challenges posed by the CCP.

For these reasons, the United States also should pursue a second track of international collaboration centered on deeper cooperation with allies, partners, and like-minded states. Together, the United States and its formal treaty allies possess 59 percent of global GDP. Adding other democracies brings this total to 75 percent of the global total. Despite persistent talk of the decline of the West, the United States and its friends in the free world maintain a preponderance of global power that enables them together to decisively shape global outcomes. This group of like-minded states should pursue inclusive cooperation with China, but it must also be prepared to work around, and for some issues against, China when that broader collaboration proves impossible. This means that relations between the United States and its partners on one hand and China on the other will be characterized by a mix of cooperation and competition. Some might argue that the United States and its allies and partners must choose whether they will work with or against China, period. However, in international politics, and especially in the world we now face, these kinds of mixed relationships are commonplace.

The rest of this section is divided into four key domains of action: health, economy, governance, and defense. Addressing each of these arenas, as well as the interrelationships among them, is necessary for achieving the goals of the strategy.

Health

Defeating the virus is of paramount importance to this strategy as a prolonged pandemic risks worsening the global economic downturn and giving rise to additional strategic shocks. The United States and its partners should leverage and strengthen existing global public health institutions. Furthermore, they should establish new institutions where necessary to create a more effective and resilient public health system that can withstand future outbreaks.

CREATE A COUNTER-CORONAVIRUS COALITION

The United States and like-minded states should create a Counter-Coronavirus Coalition (CCC) devoted to defeating the virus and reforming the future global health system, which will be required to face an era of more frequent pandemics.⁸¹ This can be done most effectively through global collaboration. Since this is a global pandemic, a continued or renewed outbreak anywhere on the planet has the potential to come back and harm all nations. Every country has an incentive, therefore, to work toward the global eradication of the virus. While steps to counter the virus will be costly, they will be far less costly than suffering a prolonged pandemic and keeping the global economy shuttered.

As discussed above, there already is a broad institutional architecture in place to facilitate global health cooperation. The foremost responsibility of the CCC should be to leverage, coordinate, and strengthen those existing efforts to bring about a truly global and effective response to COVID-19. This mandate would give the CCC wide-ranging responsibilities as it works to counter the effects of the virus.

It should begin with developing a vaccine. In this pandemic, the normal process for developing a vaccine has been transformed from a long linear one to a compressed and parallel process. Many different groups are working to develop a vaccine. Testing, clinical trials, and even mass production will need to occur simultaneously to ensure that as soon as a vaccine is proven safe and effective it can be distributed rapidly to millions. We do not know which of these many competing efforts will pan out, so international collaboration will be required to ensure we get as many shots on goal as quickly as possible.

The CCC should work to form a “buyers’ club” for vaccines. We need a precommitment to the large-scale manufacturing of hundreds of millions of doses of vaccines even before they have finished testing in human clinical trials. If they are not mass produced before they have been proven there will be a lag time between when the vaccine is ready and when it can be broadly disseminated. But the private sector will not have an incentive to mass produce unproven vaccines without a guaranteed market. The United States and other leading economies can collaborate on establishing an effective buyers’ club to ensure market incentives exist to rapidly mass produce promising vaccines. This is already happening on an ad hoc basis as nations are forming agreements with companies such as AstraZeneca to

manufacture and supply vaccines. The CCC could redouble and coordinate these efforts.

The CCC also should work on guidelines for the international sharing of a vaccine once discovered. There is a danger of “vaccine nationalism” as the first country to discover the vaccine could provide it to its own population first, gaining an economic and possible geopolitical advantage. This would be damaging to global public health and the world economy. The CCC should seek to ensure that a vaccine is rapidly shared and that priority is given to frontline and health care workers and the elderly. The CCC also can develop common standards for determining what percentage of a population must be vaccinated before reaching herd immunity. Ultimately, these decisions should be based on universal values, universal access, and an enlightened self-interest to protect vulnerable countries and others that are unable to speak for themselves.

The CCC should devote resources and pursue global collaboration on testing and treatments. Testing and contact tracing are essential for identifying and containing future waves of the virus. A multinational approach to testing is needed because testing is most critical in high-outbreak areas, and it is not known which countries will be suffering from high outbreaks several months from now. There is a need for global collaboration to ramp up therapeutics, which are already helping to lower the virus’s mortality rate and increase space in hospitals as recovered patients leave after a shorter period.

Further, the CCC can help reorient economies toward producing vital medical equipment and developing plans for international sharing to make up for shortages. Supply chains for personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks have been hit hard in recent months—cooperation and sharing among coalition members is one way to ameliorate this situation in the short term. Individual members of the coalition should increase their own supplies of vital medical equipment, but they also should be willing to share them with other members in need. The CCC should support coalition members by sharing resources and medical equipment (e.g., PPE, swabs, testing kits), and improving global supply chains for these items. The United States, for example, successfully increased its supply of ventilators to the point that it is now sharing that equipment with other countries, including Russia.⁸²

Support to the developing world also is critical. The virus is making inroads into the developing world and South America was an epicenter of the pandemic at the time of writing.⁸³ Many developing nations lack the health care infrastructure and fiscal tools needed to mitigate the damage caused by the pandemic. The spread of the virus in the developing world risks unleashing additional economic shocks and limiting the capacity of states to curb extremism. Advanced economies within the coalition should take the lead to support the developing world with supplies as well as therapeutics and vaccines as they become available. They also could coordinate to provide aid and capacity-building to developing nations and serve as a compelling alternative to countries that might otherwise turn to China’s Health Silk Road initiative.

The CCC also will need to counter the “info-demic,” especially misinformation about vaccines. The rise of anti-vaccine movements in recent years poses a global public health issue as many individuals refuse to vaccinate themselves or their children against contagious diseases. The CCC should organize a campaign to educate the public about the importance and safety of vaccines to ensure any inoculation against the coronavirus is widely used and thus effective.

Finally, given its size, economic strength, and its recent history as a source of deadly outbreaks, China should be engaged as part of the coalition’s effort to strengthen global health security and quash the pandemic. China should be welcomed into the coalition as long as it can meet international standards of health transparency and data integrity. The CCC must press China to reveal information about how the outbreak started. This is not to assign blame, but rather to better understand how we can prevent the next outbreak. This will be challenging as tensions between the United States and China are high, and much of Europe also is wary of China’s behavior. While the coalition should seek cooperation with China to defeat the virus, it should be prepared to work around China, if necessary.

After COVID-19 is defeated, the CCC should be converted into a body that meets regularly to discuss potentially severe outbreaks and prepare for future pandemics. The purpose of the CCC is not to supplant the WHO. The current crisis showed, however, that coordination among countries and across public health institutions can falter. The CCC is primarily meant as a safeguard to ensure the full array of global health institutions are cooperating effectively and maximizing their utility in response to pandemics. It is not meant to replicate the functions of each separate institution.

REFORM EXISTING PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTIONS

While the CCC would be the centerpiece of the near-term effort to defeat the coronavirus, the United States and like-minded states also should use the crisis as an opportunity to reform the global public health system so that it can prevent and, if necessary, better manage the next pandemic. This effort begins with fixing existing public health institutions.

The WHO’s response to the pandemic has been imperfect, but it remains a crucial institution for facilitating a global response to health crises. The United States should not abandon it to China; rather, it should work to reassert its influence and the influence of like-minded nations in the body. They should encourage norms of transparency, cooperation, and accountability to make the WHO more robust and better able to address both the current and future health crises.

In addition, the United States and like-minded states should strengthen international health frameworks such as the International Health Regulations, which concern nations’ efforts to secure public health and monitor and report outbreaks. The IHR should take a page out of the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)—often considered the most successful treaty in history—and hold a review conference

every five years.⁸⁴ This review conference would provide nations with an opportunity to assess IHR's performance, identify weaknesses, and produce amendments.

ESTABLISH NEW PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTIONS

In addition to strengthening the existing system, new public health institutions may be necessary to ensure better security against future outbreaks. Australia has floated the idea of creating an international global public health watchdog.⁸⁵ This body could include a team of investigators sent into a country to determine the source of a disease outbreak. In addition, much like the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) conducts inspections of the nuclear facilities of NPT member states, this body could conduct regular inspections to ensure state compliance with global health commitments. It should work closely with the WHO but retain at least some independence to maximize its flexibility to respond to crises without getting bogged down in WHO member-state politics.

Economy

Decisive action is needed to mitigate the extent of the global economic downturn and facilitate a recovery. There should be a coordinated effort among nations to address the economic crisis, and the United States and its partners should strive to strengthen globalization and resist the temptation of protectionism. Steps should be taken to prepare for long-term transformations in the global economy by prioritizing emerging technologies, which will fuel advanced economies' growth in the coming decade.

This strategy's recommendations on economic policy assume the virus will continue to spread in ebbs and flows throughout 2020 and well into 2021. Even after a vaccine is potentially delivered, the distribution process globally may take years. Coordinated fiscal stimulus, synchronized monetary policy, and developing economy debt relief are needed to confront the economic headwinds facing the global economy. Even if the virus is contained earlier than expected, the economic scars from the worst global recession since the Great Depression require a massive rebuilding effort.

COORDINATE ECONOMIC STIMULUS, REOPENING, AND RELIEF

The United States and its allies should leverage the G7 and G20 to coordinate a global economic response. These bodies should develop synchronized economic stimulus packages to both mitigate the economic damage caused by the pandemic and facilitate recovery and renewed growth. The United States and other leading economies already

have passed large stimulus packages, but future efforts would be most effective if conducted simultaneously and in coordination. According to the Atlantic Council's analysis, many major economies, including China and India, have provided smaller financial stimulus packages than during the 2008 crisis.⁸⁶ Major economies also should cooperate on fiscal and monetary policy measures to provide economic relief and sustain economic confidence. These investments should not only be directed at temporary unemployment relief but also long-term rebuilding of infrastructure, research and development, and other ways to reenergize productivity growth.

The G7 should serve as fora to develop common worldwide standards for safely reopening international trade and travel, returning employees to work, as well as sanitizing global supply chains. By establishing standards for disinfecting cargo, for example, world leaders could increase confidence in supply chains and help to revive international commerce.⁸⁷ The G20 should also strive to embrace common standards for supply-chain sanitation, but this will require a clear and definitive commitment on China's part to transparency. Buy-in from China would greatly help revive international commerce, but common standards may only be achievable within the G7.

In addition to securing their own economies and altering supply chains, members of the G7 and G20 should organize relief for the developing world. The G20 already has started to coordinate on debt relief, but more will have to be done and relief will need to extend through 2021. China should extend debt relief to countries heavily indebted to it due to BRI infrastructure investments. The US Federal Reserve should also be willing to extend swap lines to more emerging markets if the need arises. The ability of countries to access dollars quickly can make the difference between an economic downswing and a catastrophe. By working with central banks with sound fundamentals, the Federal Reserve reinforces the power of the dollar as the global reserve currency and strengthens the global economy in the process.

In addressing the economic effects of the pandemic, the United States should aim for consensus within a broader G20 framework, but should cooperation prove elusive or shallow, the free world can aim for deeper cooperation within the G7.

PROTECT AGAINST ECONOMIC VULNERABILITIES

Even as it recovers from the economic crisis, the United States and its allies should work toward securing themselves against economic vulnerabilities that were revealed during the crisis. This requires reorienting global supply chains, especially for vital pharmaceutical and medical equipment, and boosting stockpiles of these critical supplies, and reducing economic dependency on adversaries for materials critical to national security. Japan offers a model as it has set aside \$2 billion to support companies that move production out of China.

The natural “decoupling” that is occurring as a result of the crisis and global economic slowdown also provides an opportunity for the United States and its allies to strategically decouple from the dangers of an

overreliance on economic exchange with China. Crude debates about whether or not to decouple from China fail to distinguish between different types of vulnerabilities that require different responses. In areas that directly threaten national security, such as Chinese investments in critical infrastructure, for example, the United States and its allies must take steps to limit or prohibit exchange with China. For non-strategic sectors affected by unfair Chinese economic practices, the United States and its allies should develop countervailing measures to offset their impact, such as tariffs. For other types of trade that do not fall under these problematic categories, free commercial exchange can continue unfettered.⁸⁸

RESIST PROTECTIONISM AND STRENGTHEN GLOBALIZATION

Even as the United States and its allies seek a selective decoupling from China, they should resist protectionism and aim to maintain and expand an open international economic system. Following World War I, the world steered toward protectionism and depression. Following the next global conflagration, the victors of World War II set up a liberal global trading system, which led to decades of prosperity. Leading democracies need to again make the correct choice and use this crisis as an opportunity to secure a globalized economic system with free and fair trade that is adapted to the needs of the twenty-first century. This will require adapting to growing trade in e-commerce and services, a preexisting trend that is being accelerated by the crisis.

The G7 and G20 should take on increased responsibility as steering committees of the global economic system. The G7 is the principal body for wealthy, like-minded democracies, and these democratic nations have much work to do together to ensure that the prosperity gains of the last seventy-five years are not lost due to nationalism. The G20 will serve as the more inclusive forum to include wealthy autocracies, such as China.

The WTO will need to be reformed to reflect the modern nature of trade in commerce and e-services. Barriers to trade in services should be reduced, including the 50 percent of trade in services that is now digital trade. Twenty-first century trade deals should be designed to facilitate data flows while protecting data privacy, promoting cybersecurity, and ensuring that financial regulators can access data as needed without stifling innovation.

In addition to bolstering institutions, the United States and its close allies should resolve existing trade disputes, such as that between Boeing and Airbus. And they should take the lead in negotiating new agreements that foster free and fair trade. Some may argue that this recommendation does not fit the moment, but, in fact, new trade deals such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) have been negotiated among leading democracies in recent years.⁸⁹ And the Trump administration in the United States also has struck new trade agreements, such as the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), and is actively negotiating other free trade pacts, including one with the United Kingdom.

These negotiations should continue. The conclusion of USMCA means that a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the United States and the EU is all but inevitable.⁹⁰ Progress also should be made on a US-EU-Japan agreement with the ultimate objective of working toward a global Free World Free Trade Agreement.⁹¹

REVIVE GROWTH IN A REIMAGINED POST-PANDEMIC ECONOMY

The crisis should be used as an opportunity to revive economic growth in the free world, particularly by investing in new technologies that will shape the global economy in the coming decades.

Future stimulus packages should be directed to investments in R&D and infrastructure. These investments will boost productivity and generate growth to help offset the debt governments are accruing to fight the crisis.⁹²

Priority areas for technology investment include: artificial intelligence, biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, and quantum computing. These technologies will be central to advanced economies in the near future, reshaping and accelerating innovation and production, transforming health care and defense, and pushing the frontiers of human knowledge. The economic downturn places smaller technology firms at risk of collapse, threatening a base of innovation that also is critical to national security. The United States should ensure these firms have access to adequate resources to withstand the economic slump. As we invest in technology, we must encourage competition. The concentration of market share by the Big Five technology companies in the United States is not conducive to the kind of innovation needed to regenerate growth.

The leading democracies should follow through on plans to create a D10 or democratic technology alliance. This grouping could help advance technological breakthroughs in the free world and mitigate against the risks from overreliance on technology from potentially hostile competitors. The members of this grouping could develop plans for joint investments in R&D, sharing of data, export controls, restrictions on foreign inward investment for sensitive technologies, developing standards for ethical uses of new technology, the development of central bank digital currencies, and much else.

Particularly important infrastructure investments will include national broadband networks across the United States, especially in rural areas. The pandemic has made it clear that national broadband access is a necessity, not a luxury. The post-pandemic economy will provide new economic opportunities. Infrastructure should be put in place to permit remote work, virtual learning, and telemedicine to be central features of the post-pandemic landscape. Office space, for example, is being reconfigured to enable social distancing. Urbanization is being rethought, especially given that cities are hot spots for viruses. As emerging technologies become the new engines of economic growth, they should be incorporated into a reimagined and digitally driven post-pandemic economy.

Finally, public-private partnerships will be vital to securing a robust post-pandemic economy and restoring trust in governments. Rebuilding confidence in capitalism requires a reinvention of the private company and how it interacts with shareholders and the public writ large. Public-private partnerships can leverage the spending power of the government with the dynamism of the private sector. These partnerships are necessary to achieve results, including when it comes to environmental challenges. An S&P 500 company declared bankruptcy due to climate change for the first time in 2019. This will continue to be an issue in the coming years. Governments can incentivize adaptation to climate change and other arenas of the post-pandemic economy. In the end, these partnerships can help bring about new technologies, mitigate the effects of climate change, and renew trust in both the public and private sectors.

Governance

The twin shocks of a global health crisis and worldwide economic downturn are the most visceral consequences of the pandemic. They must be swiftly addressed. The pandemic also threatens political stability and democratic governance, however, and this strategy offers a guide for preventing autocratic backsliding, countering disinformation, and strengthening democracies and global democratic coordination.

PREVENT AUTOCRATIC BACKSLIDING

To prevent would-be autocrats from using the crisis as an opportunity to grab power, the United States and like-minded states should issue public statements emphasizing the importance of maintaining democratic values even in trying periods and that, indeed, this is when they are needed most. While emergency measures are sometimes justified for dealing with a crisis, the world's leading democracies, in the D10 forum, can formulate and issue guidelines on returning emergency powers and easing restrictions as the virus wanes. Rather than publicly shaming specific leaders or countries abusing emergency powers, the United States and like-minded states should engage in closed-door diplomacy to express their displeasure and make clear that there will be consequences for autocratic backsliding, especially in an era when the democracy-versus-autocracy fault line carries significant geopolitical repercussions.

PUBLICIZE DEMOCRATIC SUCCESSES AND COUNTER AUTOCRATIC DISINFORMATION

To prevent the autocrats from gaining a soft power advantage from their handling of the COVID-19 crisis, the United States and its allies and partners should publicize democratic successes and counter autocratic disinformation. The United States should promote successful

democratic models of pandemic response, such as Australia, Finland, New Zealand, South Korea, and Taiwan. This should take the form of a public diplomacy campaign that showcases the strengths of democracies in fighting pandemics, emphasizing their values of openness, transparency, adaptability, resilience, and innovation.

The United States and like-minded states should strengthen public diplomacy efforts to better publicize the steps they have taken to respond to the crisis and help the world recover. They can make clear that, despite Beijing's misleading claims, Washington and its allies and partners have provided much more than China in coronavirus aid to the developing world. Moreover, the crisis would have been much worse if not for the measures the United States and like-minded states have put in place to strengthen fragile public health systems around the world over the past several decades. Finally, the United States should highlight that the Federal Reserve has been the single most important actor in providing stimulus and preventing a global economic depression.

Furthermore, the United States and like-minded states should counter nefarious CCP and Russian disinformation. They should keep the spotlight on China's mismanagement in instigating the pandemic and demand that Beijing take the necessary steps to prevent a reoccurrence. They should correct China's false claims of providing expansive global health relief. For example, the CCP's vaunted provision of medical aid was often in reality Chinese firms profiteering from providing faulty medical equipment to stricken nations.⁹³ The United States and its partners should work together to prevent democratic states from growing too dependent on China and turning away from key institutions such as the EU or alliances such as NATO.

STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY WITH NEW PRACTICES AND TECHNOLOGIES

Crisis present opportunities. In the governance space, COVID-19 may allow the reimagining and strengthening of democracy with new practices and technologies. The pandemic should not become a legitimate excuse to cancel or postpone elections or otherwise inhibit democratic practices. To ensure that campaigning and elections can continue even with social distancing practices in place, the free world should update democratic practices for the twenty-first century.

There are successful examples to draw on, and innovation is already taking place. In April 2020, for example, South Korea held a successful nationwide election in the midst of the pandemic. Voters went through extensive sanitation procedures before casting their ballots. In Estonia, voters can cast ballots on their cellphones from their homes with robust cybersecurity protections. In the United States, campaigns are holding fundraisers and candidates are communicating with voters over virtual platforms. Citizens are voting by mail in increasing numbers with little evidence of fraud.⁹⁴

With any luck, updated democratic practices also may strengthen pro-democracy movements and weaken existing autocratic governments in closed societies. Much recent commentary has highlighted the role of new

technology in strengthening autocratic control. Communications technology enables mass surveillance and disinformation campaigns, but it also allows social movements to communicate and assemble. Technology helps bring about wider participation and helps leaders engage directly with the people they represent. A recent survey of technology experts found almost half thought technology would likely weaken democracy in the next decade. But one-third disagreed, saying technology would strengthen democracy. It is possible that new forms of digital democracy may facilitate democracy's Fourth Wave.⁹⁵

Internally, democracies must assess where they have fallen short of their ideals and recommit to them. In addition to expanding freedom at home, this effort will improve their ability to unite amid crises and strengthen their moral authority vis-à-vis autocracies. Within the United States, this means continuing what has been a long, arduous, and bloody journey toward racial equality. The United States and its democratic partners should think creatively about how to get their houses in order to ensure they have the necessary internal cohesion and moral clarity to uphold a revitalized and adapted rules-based global system.

REVITALIZE AND ADAPT MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS FOR A NEW ERA

The United States and like-minded states should work together to revitalize and adapt multilateral institutions for the twenty-first century. We saw above that the rules-based system already was under stress and that COVID-19 accelerated these trends. Some would lead us to believe that the solution is to abandon the battered order altogether, while others seem to believe that we should fully recommit to the past system. Neither option is suitable. We should not abandon a rules-based system that has brought decades of peace, prosperity, and freedom. But, at the same time, we cannot return to a world that no longer exists. Rather, a better approach would be to create, revitalize, and adapt multilateral institutions for a new era.

This effort should proceed on the two tracks recommended in this strategy. First, leading democracies should create new institutions that deepen cooperation among the nations of the free world. This should include a formal D10 arrangement of leading democracies, an Alliance of Free Nations, a free world technology alliance, and a Free World Free Trade Agreement.

The D10 should be an updated and expanded version of the G7, adding Australia and South Korea (and, potentially, India), and should function as a steering committee of the democratic core of the rules-based global system. An Alliance of Free Nations would include a broader grouping of democracies from around the world to facilitate strategic cooperation among democracies on issues of governance, economics, and security. The free world technology alliance should boost information sharing, foster common norms, and bolster innovation to give democracies an edge in emerging technologies that will both shape the coming economy and the future of defense. Finally, a Free World Free Trade Agreement will

encourage closer commercial and economic ties among democratic states and set standards for the future of the global economy. These new bodies will strengthen coordination among democracies and facilitate the sharing of best practices across democracies. Moreover, greater unity will strengthen democracies as they engage with revisionist powers that seek to disrupt the rules-based system or replace it entirely.

Second, and at the same time, the United States and like-minded states should pursue cooperation with a larger and more inclusive set of countries, including China. This could be accomplished by giving greater authority to the G20 as a global coordinating body on a wider range of security, economic, and governance issues. Legacy institutions of the UN system still have a role to play and may increasingly become arenas for “competitive multilateralism” in which the United States and China jockey for influence and control. The United States and like-minded states should not abandon these institutions to China. Rather, they should seek to reassert their influence within and reform them.

Defense

The United States and its allies must be prepared to defend a rejuvenated rules-based global order. In the short term, this requires reestablishing deterrence to ensure adversaries do not mistake the crisis as an opportunity for aggression. In the long term, the United States must rethink security to encompass manmade and natural biological threats, and invest in twenty-first century military capabilities.

RESTORE DETERRENCE AND DEMONSTRATE READINESS

The United States and its allies and partners should mitigate the risk of armed conflict during the crisis period by restoring deterrence and demonstrating military readiness to adversaries. With infections on carriers, stop-movement orders, and canceled exercises, there is a danger that US adversaries may perceive a lack of readiness and decide that this is their time to engage in aggression or coercion. Already, we have seen China increase activities in the South China Sea, the Senkaku Islands, and around Taiwan in addition to taking action against Hong Kong and along its disputed border with India. A similar move against Taiwan or a Russian incursion into a NATO member state could spark a major crisis. While the risks remain low, they are higher now than just before the pandemic.

The United States and its allies and partners should use high-level statements and private messaging to clearly demonstrate their resolve to adversaries during this moment of crisis. The United States should also continue demonstrating readiness, as it did recently with a major show of force in Asia, to demonstrate that it remains capable of major power projection operations. As the crisis ebbs and flows, it will be important to continue to signal large-scale military readiness at key junctures.⁹⁶

PREPARE FOR FUTURE BIOLOGICAL AND PANDEMIC THREATS

The United States and its allies should expand their concept of national security to include defense against biological warfare and pandemics. Their citizenry will demand nothing less to regain their sense of security. Future pandemics are inevitable, and the future of warfare also likely will involve new uses of biotechnology and bioweapons. Great power adversaries already have been investing in new doctrine, concepts, and capabilities to navigate the biological domain drawing on advanced biotechnology capabilities.⁹⁷ With the explosion of advances in the commercial fields of genetic engineering, synthetic biology, and related disciplines, biological space could become the military's sixth operating domain in the 2030s. It also is likely that rogue states may be motivated by the havoc wreaked on advanced countries by the COVID-19 outbreak and seek to weaponize similar pathogens. Thus, the United States and its allies should broaden concepts of national security to include pandemic security as well as increase investments in defenses against biological threats and deterring actors that seek to use bioweapons.

The next National Defense Strategy, scheduled for 2021, provides an opportunity for a serious debate about US defense priorities. Even if the top priority remains great power competition with China, biological threats will merit significantly increased emphasis. Depending on how the US government decides to reorganize after the lessons of COVID-19 are assessed, the US Department of Defense likely will have important roles to play in a wide range of pandemic security activities. The military has capabilities that are relevant to preventing and mitigating pandemics, including intelligence, command and control, and logistics and transport. Internationally, hospital ships enable the United States to provide relief and demonstrate presence to allies and partners in the midst of a crisis. Such capabilities and the operations in which they would be marshalled may be more important for US geopolitical influence than more exquisite weapons systems.

The US Department of Defense should consider internal reorganization to ensure that this mission remains a priority, such as creating an assistant secretary for pandemics and biological defense. The US military also should work toward being able to operate effectively in the new, sixth military operational domain of bio-space without violating the Biological Weapons Convention. This entails preparing for a different type of biowarfare that includes human performance enhancement and genetic engineering.

The United States and its allies and partners should explore how to make their militaries more resilient to pandemics to avoid severe lapses in readiness. This could include exploring how to safely conduct recruiting, training, military exercises, and large-scale operations in a pandemic environment.

Furthermore, boosting cyberspace resilience is critical to defending against biological threats. In April 2020, INTERPOL stated that it observed an uptick of cyberattacks against hospitals amid the pandemic.⁹⁸ A 2018 global cyberattack cost the United Kingdom's National Health Service more than \$100 million and caused more than 19,000 appointments to be canceled.⁹⁹ Securing cyberspace is thus a vital component of health security.

SHAPE THE MILITARY OF THE 2030S

More broadly, the United States and its allies should use the crisis—and the strategic reviews that will be conducted in its wake—as an opportunity to reorient defense expenditures away from legacy platforms and toward the technologies that will play major roles in shaping the combat outcomes of the future. Many analysts have argued that to prepare for the future of warfare, the United States needs to do what China is doing—invest in the technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, such as artificial intelligence, unmanned systems, hypersonic missiles, quantum computing, directed energy, advanced manufacturing, space-based sensors and missile defense interceptors, and many others. Yet, according to critics, the US defense budget still prioritizes legacy systems, such as aircraft carriers, that will be vulnerable in a high-end fight with a peer adversary, such as China.¹⁰⁰ The resistance to transformation comes from entrenched interests in the US Congress, the military services, and defense industry. But the pandemic provides an opportunity. A depressed global economy, growing US debt and deficit due to stimulus spending, and the need to reallocate significant resources to pandemic security will place substantial downward pressure on defense budgets among the United States and its allies and partners. Washington will be forced to make difficult strategic and capability tradeoffs. Farsighted defense leaders should make the case that now is the time to reapportion resources from legacy platforms to the capabilities necessary for twenty-first century warfare.



OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY SHEALAH CRAIGHEAD

President Donald J. Trump listens as Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe delivers remarks at the G20 Leaders Special Event on the Digital Economy at the G20 Japan Summit Friday, June 28, 2019, in Osaka, Japan.

CHAPTER 5

GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

This strategy proposes a bold vision for shaping a post-pandemic world that is more favorable to security, open market economies, and the values that the democratic world holds dear. It identifies health, economy, governance, and defense as vital domains of action for shaping the post-pandemic global order and understands these domains to be interconnected. The first half of 2020 showed how a public health crisis can precipitate a global economic downturn, threaten the stability of governments, and increase the prospect for armed conflict among leading powers. Vulnerabilities in global supply chains yielded shortages of medical equipment and fostered a competition for PPE even among democratic allies. Moving forward, a durable economic recovery is unlikely without a vaccine and a commitment to defeating the virus. Governments could struggle with widespread unrest born out of individuals falling out of the middle class. Pandemics could become a persistent and devastating threat to the United States and like-minded partners if they do not pursue public health and

forward-thinking defense reforms. Given how these domains are interconnected, it is preferable that this strategy be implemented in full.

Critics might argue, however, that the articulated strategy is appealing, but unrealistic. Will the United States embrace this strategy, especially given its turn away from multilateralism in recent years? And if the United States leads, will like-minded states follow? This section addresses these challenges and provides guidelines for implementation.

To be sure, it is unlikely that the Trump administration will adopt the above strategy whole cloth. But it can lead on elements of the strategy that mesh with its top priorities. For example, it has focused on confronting China and would support proposals to secure supply chains, protect critical industries, and strengthen the US military with new technology. Moreover, there is evidence the administration is amenable to a revitalized G7 that includes other leading democracies, such as Australia, India, and South Korea.¹⁰¹ These are but two of many examples.

Moreover, the US executive branch has been, and may continue to be, more active in this crisis than many critics acknowledge. For example, the State Department has engaged in frequent consultations with allies in Europe and the Indo-Pacific on a coronavirus response and USAID has provided large-scale medical aid to the developing world.

Furthermore, much of this strategy must be executed by actors outside of the US executive branch—other branches of government, state and local governments, and private actors. For example, the Federal Reserve and the US Congress have provided massive economic stimuli to the US and global economy. And state and local governments and political campaigns are innovating with new democratic practices.

In addition, some of the above proposals can be advanced by a network of like-minded states without US participation. Pacific nations moving ahead on the CPTPP trade pact even after the US withdrawal provides an example of such cooperation among middle powers.

Finally, the US government's priorities change. It is possible that a new administration in 2021, whether a second-term Trump administration or a newly-elected administration led by Joe Biden, would decide to fully execute the above strategy.

Critics might question how the United States can rally its allies, partners, and other like-minded states to pursue this strategy. In recent months and years, the United States has witnessed a decline in its soft power and influence, which has damaged its ability to energize partners toward a common end.

To address this problem, Washington should simply make clear its commitment to global engagement. The main complaint against the United States from its allies and partners during the COVID-19 crisis has been about Washington's absence, not that it is *too* involved in global affairs. Like-minded states would be eager to see the United States make a clear commitment to play a leading role in shaping the post-pandemic world.

Moreover, the United States should be clear that its role in executing this strategy in certain domains would be less of a leader and more of a co-collaborator. Like-minded states bring unique strengths to the table that

should be leveraged, especially in the areas of global public health and the global economy. Indeed, traditional US partners are already engaged in many of the steps advised above, such as collaborating on vaccine development, and they would almost certainly welcome further cooperation.

A final objection might be that the above strategy forces traditional US partners to make an unwanted choice between Washington and Beijing, but this is not true. As articulated above, the strategy calls for a two-track approach, with one of the tracks emphasizing attempted engagement with China. Indeed, the long-term goal for a revitalized international system should be one in which the United States and China have a more cooperative relationship. Realistically, however, that outcome is unlikely in the short term given the more assertive CCP approach under Chinese President Xi Jinping. In many domains, therefore, the United States and its allies and partners will need to lean more heavily on collaboration with like-minded states and defend against the challenges China poses. Increasingly, US allies and partners recognize this. The United Kingdom, for example, has announced a cap on Chinese telecommunications firm Huawei's role in building its 5G infrastructure and is undertaking a security review of the company. The United Kingdom is, meanwhile, pushing for the creation of a technology alliance among the D10.¹⁰² The EU has declared China a "systemic rival." And the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the Quad), which includes Australia, India, Japan, and the United States, has deepened its cooperation as an informal response to China's increased assertiveness.

The strategy offered in this paper aims to strike a balance between adapting and defending a rules-based order against the challenges posed by China, while remaining engaged with China on areas of mutual interest and in the hope that future generations of Chinese leadership will pursue a more cooperative relationship.



The USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71) is seen while entering into the port in Da Nang, Vietnam, March 5, 2020.

CONCLUSION

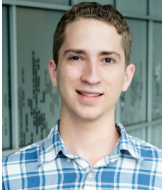
The pandemic threatens to fundamentally alter global order and upend the rules-based international system established by the United States and like-minded states after World War II. The rivalry between the world's largest powers has intensified, the global economy is facing its worst downturn since the Great Depression, and protest movements born of political grievances and economic discontent threaten to create widespread instability.

The current moment calls for bold and decisive action to emerge from the crisis and shape a better world going forward. Out of this crisis, the United States and like-minded states can work to recreate, revitalize, and adapt a rules-based system. If they do not, a system will be shaped by others to the detriment of the free world.

People around the world, including US citizens, stand to benefit from the United States taking on an international leadership role. The first seventy-five years of a US-led rules-based system unleashed an unprecedented period of peace and prosperity. By addressing the vulnerabilities exposed and accelerated by the virus, the United States and like-minded states can rejuvenate a rules-based system that surpasses the first in its capacity to help individuals pursue life, liberty, and happiness.

By their actions, the United States and its allies can either make 2020 a moment akin to 1919—which future generations will scorn for its failures—or 1945—a year of triumph and renaissance. This strategy offers a platform for catalyzing a renaissance across the democratic world and beyond.

About the Authors



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Endnotes

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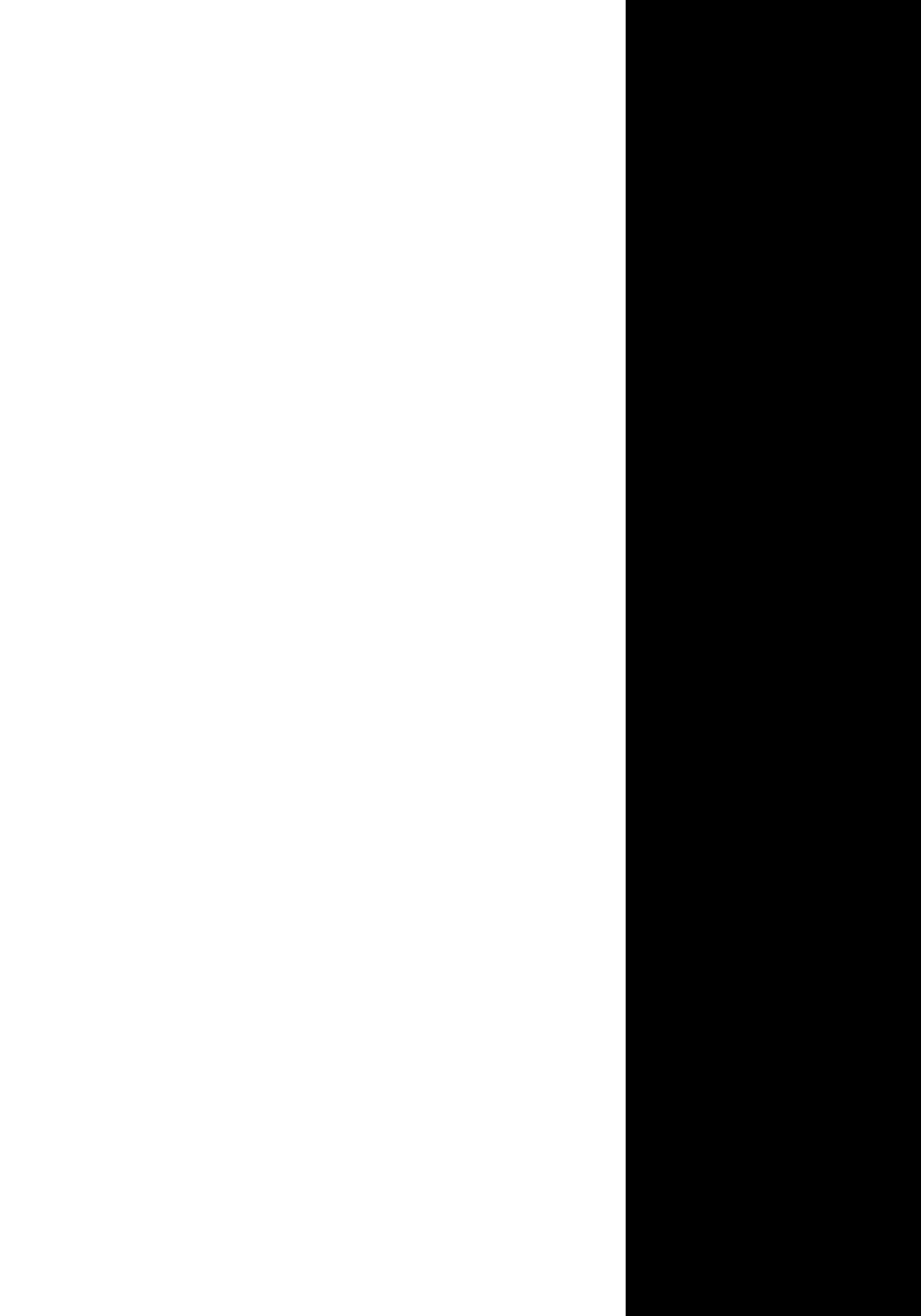
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