While the pandemic facilitated nationalist backlash against global supply chains and international organizations, it has actually revealed we need more globalization, not less. Our problem is overreliance on single-sourcing supplies rather than on a multiplicity of suppliers. Another issue is overreliance on a single international health organization malleable by the country in possession of its presidency rather than a web of many formal and informal groupings whose interests compete to produce Madisonian checks on power and provide a maximum of information as a basis for national and international action. Our vision for a better world should be an international order of greater connectedness and greater accountability. The method and means for attaining such an order should be to use the tools of free societies to protect and advance free societies.

What has made the American-dominated order cost-effective enough to be sustained by a reluctant hegemon is that the rules were beneficial enough to cajole voluntary compliance. Rather than construct an international order that maximized its dominance, the United States limited its direct power normatively, legally, and institutionally. It gave other states leadership roles and the ability to influence terms and institutions, which spread the burden of common problems more widely and made US dominance less objectionable than has been the case.
for previous hegemons. Leading with a light hand has served the United States well. Since the end of the Cold War, Republicans especially have clamored for changing the terms to US advantage and withdrawn from treaties and institutions they considered unduly constraining, believing the magnitude of American power alone is sufficient to safeguard the nation’s interests.

The pandemic and associated policy failures in the United States have created an opening for renewed appreciation of international cooperation to create strategic depth and to identify and begin solving problems before they reach American shores. In the globalized order of our American creation, we are not strong enough to protect our interests alone. We should return to the aggravating work of coalition building, compromise, and institutional leadership so that we have the ability to see problems as they are developing and to address them before they affect American lives and grow to costlier dimensions. The only alternatives are leaving us poorer and more vulnerable to others creating an order hostile to our interests.

G. John Ikenberry’s end-of-history vision of a self-sustaining liberal international order, operable even without American leadership, is not manifesting in the fifteen years of American retrenchment. Middle powers have made some important contributions, but major initiatives elude without a hegemonic prime mover. It is also not clear that free world institutions are any more effective than those with universal membership; like-minded groups are more durable in agreement once compromise has been reached but are often much slower to reach it. Without the United States to drive ambitious multilateralism, middle powers are unlikely to become an effective counter-China coalition. But China’s “wolf warrior” aggressiveness during the pandemic has given free societies the excuse to reevaluate policies and cooperate on both institutional and policy means for rein in China’s ability to partake of the benefits of a rules-based order without shouldering its burdens, which is a good start.

The United States should not settle for a policy that is solely coercive of China, however. We are over-militarizing China policy, which plays to China’s advantage since they have the easier military task, and it leaves on the sidelines the vitality and creativity of free societies. We should instead underwrite allied initiative, expand power-sharing institutions, and invest in a diplomatic and economic corps able to work bilateral relationships and drive policy agendas in overlapping multinational institutions—the G7 and an incipient D10 as well as the G20.

Pandemic recovery in the United States is certain to broaden the aperture of national security, incorporating health and preparedness and perhaps education. We
should welcome those changes, as they will rebuild sources of domestic strength in the United States, which are essential to public support for an activist foreign policy that constraining China and expanding rules-based globalization will require.

The major consequences of the pandemic for the international order may be thus: renaissance in America of the value of international engagement, protection by free societies against China, and strengthening of the domestic foundations of American power.

**The End of Globalization?**

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought some elements of globalization to a screeching halt: movement of people across national boundaries has been completely stopped, shipping goods contracted to a tenth of their volume, and global supply chains have been revealed and questioned as countries limit export of medications, holding onto them instead for national consumption. Governments seeking to prevent crushing economic pain to their citizens are restricting assistance to foreign firms as they dispense stimulus to their own. Yet governments are not evil for preferential treatment of their own citizens, especially in a national emergency.

The United States closed its borders to immigration and barred any entry to travelers from China and other pandemic hot spots on the advice of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The enormous Keynesian splashing out of $2 trillion in economic stimulus was restricted to national recipients. Funding for vaccine development has likewise been national or geopolitical.

Some states, including the United States, go further, seeing economic opportunity in the pandemic to renationalize business lost to lower-cost international producers. America’s trade representative accused China of profiteering off the pandemic. He said, “Onshoring America’s public health industrial base is both a national imperative and the logical conclusion to draw from a pandemic that has exposed the weak underbelly of globalized supply chains and the risks of not domestically producing your essential medicines and medical countermeasures.”

But many of the constrictions on globalization are temporary. Businesses preceded government instruction, curtailing transport and closing shops for reputational or profitability reasons; as the pandemic recedes, those reasons will reverse direction. Draconian immigration restrictions are unsustainable and will quickly run up against the business case for both high-skilled and low-skilled labor. Green card applications are sure to rebound considerably, as will both legal and illegal immigration, once policy impediments become costly.
The activities currently impeded are also not the totality of globalization. Food has remained available and transportable through national screens on other goods. Skilled labor mobility in some fields like health care has been incentivized by relaxing credentialing. Financial markets remain alarmingly volatile but robustly fluid across national borders.

Restrictions creeping into the globalized order and likely to be of long duration are not the result of the pandemic. Cross-border investment has never fully recovered from the 2008 global financial crisis. To the extent cross-border financial transactions are curbed, it is by government monetary policy that preceded the pandemic, as in China preventing convertibility of the renminbi, or using the pandemic as a geopolitical opportunity, as in the case of the United States proscribing pension funds from buying Chinese shares. The same dynamic affects cross-border data transmissions: enormous volumes yet also restricted by authoritarian government efforts to renationalize control or retain advantage in big data research for artificial intelligence.

The Economist predicts “the pandemic will politicize travel and migration and entrench a bias towards self-reliance. This inward-looking lurch will enfeeble the recovery, leave the economy vulnerable and spread geopolitical instability.” Frictions will surely occur as national economies recover at different speeds. But the Economist is generalizing to the entirety of the world what is likelier to be a phenomenon specific to a regime type or even a specific country.

The increase of global connectedness has lurch forward and backward for centuries; it has never been a linear process, and we should not be overconcerned to see it reined back in some in ways that will diminish domestic opposition to the globalization that continues and that protects free societies from surreptitious foreign influence or overt aggression. The pandemic could just as well accelerate globalization into greater diversity of suppliers and markets, reducing single point reliance on China, in particular, to the advantage of other developing countries. That would be a net expansion of globalization, even if restricting it in one instance.

The greatest economic consequence of the pandemic probably will not be wholesale renationalization. Once economies begin to recover and dramatic stimulus measures end, businesses will return to seeking markets, investors, inexpensive supplies, and production centers. Governments worried about economic recovery are unlikely to override the business case for trade and foreign investment, with one exception.
China Rising?

The greatest economic consequence of the pandemic is likely instead to be geopolitical: free societies using policies occasioned by the pandemic to bifurcate technology, investment, education, and supply chains to exclude China. Hostility toward authoritarian regimes generally has been increasing as their incursions into free societies are exposed. But it had not been sufficient before the pandemic to exclude Russian money from the United States and the United Kingdom or to exclude Chinese government–affiliated companies from European and even rural American communications infrastructure.

China’s policy decisions during the pandemic are fueling specifically Sinophobic attitudes. The rejection was already picking up speed before, but the pandemic has revealed China to be an unreliable partner—covering up existence of COVID-19, producing false data that misdirected other states’ responses and inhibited protection of their populaces, grandstanding humanitarian contributions that turned out to be unhelpful, aggressively pursuing military advantage in contested territorial claims while other governments focus on public health, threatening states seeking international inquiry into origins of the pandemic, attempting to mobilize diaspora populations in free societies, and unleashing “wolf warrior” diplomacy to intimidate critics. China has managed to grab international opprobrium from the jaws of early advantage despite the mistakes of free societies.

No country has leaped economically so far and so fast as China since its 1979 jettisoning of Maoist economics, doubling the size of its economy every eight years until 2008. Since 2008, however, gross domestic product growth has been trending downward to around 5.5% and has not yet settled into even a soft seabed. The capital investments and productivity growth that drove China’s rapid economic rise are producing diminishing returns, reforms necessary to stoke continued GDP growth have stagnated, and the middle-income trap that captures so many developing economies looms. A country that has so much to gain from Western tolerance of its continued partial participation in the rules of international order has nonetheless made sustenance of that position much more difficult by overtly rejecting the “responsible stakeholder” partnership on offer.

Whether the scattershot of aggressive policies is the result of disciplined government action, policy entrepreneurialism seeking to align with leadership preferences, or the irrepressible arrogance of a rising power shedding a policy of hiding its strength and biding its time, China has succeeded in turning both the
national security and business communities against it. A general conclusion is forming, and not just among Western countries (in fact, they are some of the slowest to join), that China is seeking “to alter the norms that underpin existing institutions and put in place the building blocks of a new international system coveted by the Chinese Communist Party.”

The United States was not even the first mover; Australia was. Australia was the country that first excluded Huawei from its communications infrastructure in 2011 out of concern China might use access to sabotage power networks and other critical infrastructure. Since then, the base of support has broadened. The Australian Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security concluded “that the Chinese Communist Party is working to covertly interfere with our media, our universities and also influence our political processes and public debates.” That is, preying on the openness of free societies to corrupt and corrode them.

And what has been surprising is how little effort China’s government makes to disguise “the CCP’s repurposing of globalization as an engine meant to power—and win global consent for—the party’s progress toward ‘the center of the global stage.’” Britain’s “golden era” of ties to China that Tory governments were banking on to buffer any economic damage from leaving the European Union has come to a screeching halt. The EU’s lead diplomat Josep Borrell may make soothing noises, but the EU Commission’s 2019 strategy considered China a “systemic rival” and the EU Parliament passed legislation condemning China’s policy on Hong Kong. Japan is reshaping its relations with countries on China’s periphery by strengthening their coast guards to protect fisheries against Chinese intrusion and has teamed up with India to provide infrastructure financing to compete with China’s Belt and Road Initiative.

Australia, India, Japan, and the United States have formed a “security conference of democratic states that seeks to strengthen democracy.” Gears are meshing in many countries to shield themselves from exposure to China.

What might have been handled as the economic jostling to create space and stature for a rising China has, in response to the belligerence of China’s own actions, become a full-spectrum ideological struggle. Countries such as Germany that resent President Donald Trump’s trade wars and distrust his aggressive ignorance are nonetheless being pulled into alignment with his policy direction by the activism of their own values-laden civil society. Countries such as Singapore that desperately do not want to have to choose between economic cooperation
with China and hedging their bets by security cooperation with the United States see that space narrowing.

All this China might have avoided had it not burst from the penumbra of a more accommodating policy that professed to become a responsible stakeholder while continuing to flout decisions of the arbitration tribunal against it, trespass on territorial waters of its neighbors, have support for leadership roles in standard-setting international organizations, contest dominance of the next generation technologies while remaining intertwined with the universities and companies of the West, build military bases on artificial islands while the United States bleated ineffectually, lock poor countries into debt spirals while exporting its labor and capital excesses, and watch retrenchment destroy US alliances. China’s policy choices may result in its worst outcome: the United States reorienting its national security strategy to focus on China and gaining allied support just as China’s prospects of becoming a great-power challenger succumb to the limits of China’s approach.\footnote{16}

The optimal policy for China was the strategy they adopted for the Paris Climate Agreement negotiations: demanding bilateral prior agreement with the hegemon as acknowledgment of stature while pleading the poverty of a developing country to claim the benefits others would receive, validating its partial compliance and creating the precedent of international agreement with special rules that apply only to it. The challenge for those who claim China’s government consists of disciplined mandarins with a hundred-year strategic horizon is to explain why China has activated the antibodies against its continued rise now.\footnote{17} Its current policy choices seem more like trying to act to advantage to reshape the order before their window of opportunity closes.

\textbf{America Sinking?}

China is, of course, not the only country having a bad pandemic, politically and economically. Despite having months of warning plus a well-developed and funded public health infrastructure, the United States leads the world in COVID-19 infections and deaths, with the highest deaths per million population of any country in the world.\footnote{18} The president extols “cures” with no medical foundation and advocates dangerous social practices; enacts policies like visa cancellations that hurt education, innovation, and business creation; evidently has no national or international plan for managing either the pandemic or economic recovery; and retains the ardent support of Republicans in Congress and the party rank and file. American
soft power has seldom looked less magnetic, its ability to shape the international order less persuasive.¹⁹

Yet, as Joseph Nye has argued, the United States has strong structural advantages: good neighbors, strong demographic trends that will keep the workforce expanding, an ecosystem for technology generation.²⁰ It has deep and fluid capital markets and corporate reporting requirements that make equities attractive. In addition to those advantages, it has dollar hegemony. What other country already running trillion-dollar-a-year deficits for consumption (rather than long-term investment) could get away with spending a tenth of its whole GDP in stimulus with no effect on interest rates? Exorbitant privilege indeed.

The United States also has an independent Federal Reserve that despite Trump’s proclivity for narrow, nationalistic “America first” policies, has chosen to become central banker to the world: cutting interest rates, providing dollar swap lines, buying corporate bonds, dampening volatility, and reinforcing Treasury bonds as a safe haven for investors.²¹ The pandemic has been an eye-popping example of the law of gross tonnage applied to economics: ships of large displacement set course and smaller craft navigate around them. In this case, the larger ship plotted a riskier course so that smaller craft would be in less danger. Where its political leadership has faltered, the dollar, capital markets, and government agencies—shielded by design from political influence—have succeeded.

The pandemic has been an elaborate morality play about the American political system, showcasing distributed power as governors, mayors, businesses, and civic groups set policy independent of or in contravention to federal demand. When the Trump administration cut funding to the World Health Organization, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation replaced it. Regional collectives of governors cooperated in absence of federal leadership. Converging in time with protests about police brutality and unequal justice, the military denuded its commander in chief of a praetorian guard by affirming its fealty to the Constitution, a ringing reminder of how little can be done with power unless a leader wins the political argument. American politics are messy, and they have always been messy. They are messy by design, restricting the concentration of power, tying elected officials tightly to public concern, and enabling porousness for influence by civil society.

The risk tolerance of the American public, even when obviously incurring danger, has been breathtaking, even terrifying, to behold. Americans are rebelling against the boredom of pandemic lockdowns, refusing scientific expertise about protection, treating public safety restrictions as unbearable tyranny, and tolerating thousands of new infections and hundreds of deaths each day. Former poet
laureate Robert Pinsky has written, “American culture as I have experienced it seems so much in process, so brilliantly and sometimes brutally in motion, that standard models for it fail to apply.”

We are the country whose Founding Fathers (bar one) published scurrilous diatribes under pseudonyms about one another; the country where a president (Andrew Jackson) challenged the Supreme Court to enforce its unwelcome verdicts, refusing to do so himself; the country that has impeached three presidents. It is an important cultural attribute, with a continuity from our immigrant composition through 19th-century settlers voluntarily moving into Comanche territory to policies like Chapter 11 bankruptcy’s forgiveness of debt, and what Walter Russell Mead describes in Special Providence as “financial esprit.”

A tolerance for volatility in public safety and prosperity marks out the country from other societies. The United States created the global financial crisis and was among the first economies to recover from it. With forty million Americans out of work and the economy contracting by 30% in the second quarter, American stock markets had both their lowest and highest bounds stretched during the pandemic.

And while America’s adversaries may crow about its objective failures, subjects in authoritarian regimes may also notice the limits of power forced on the president: governors and doctors unhesitatingly contradicting the president to reliably inform the public, and police and soldiers kneeling before protesters to acknowledge their demands. These subjects also see the accountability to policy decisions being forced by journalistic exposure or legal action against the government by appeal to the constitutional authority higher than law.

Even in failure, advantage in some ways still accrues to the United States, as Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist Dele Ologode points out: “The reason it has suffered this terrible blow to its reputation is because it holds itself to a higher standard and the world holds it to a higher standard. . . . The world is not protesting that Xi Jinping is locking up 1m Uighurs. . . . Nobody holds China to that kind of standard.”

What we have right in the US model is actually extraordinarily difficult for other countries to get right. Social cohesion may be more difficult amid diversity, but the challenge is not unique. China’s looming demographic impoverishment could easily be overcome by immigration, but it lacks the cultural acceptance that makes the magnetism of America’s appeal. How do you create an ecosystem accepting of change? Numerous countries want their own Silicon Valley but will not tolerate the boom-and-bust economies, build the wealthy and unfettered research universities, accept social and political upheaval of disruptive technologies at scale,
or endure the cultural sanctimoniousness of tech culture. As General Ulysses S. Grant complained about his boss, Secretary of War Edward Staunton, “He could see our weakness, but he could not see that the enemy was in danger.” The same holds true for the United States and the West. We are excellent at diagnosing our own weaknesses and often give our adversaries and competitors unacknowledged benefit of our advantages in our assessments.

The pandemic and protests against police brutality are not the first blows to the attractiveness of America’s image in the world. Those blows are legion. What makes them bruises but not mortal wounds has been two factors: (1) that many Americans shared in the condemnation, and (2) that our struggles are universal. We are not the only country in which citizens are not equal before the law, where police can be brutal, where grifters are elected to high office, or where politicians bungle disaster response. But we have the means to correct those problems, instead of suffering what Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie terms “the oppressive lethargy of choicelessness.” And it is in the correcting that the dynamism of American society restores the country’s stature. We are always one medical breakthrough, legislative compromise, or election away from deserving the power our society wields.

**Durability of the Existing Order**

If China ceases to rise and/or the US fails to recover, the international order could still be reshaped by states other than the great powers. There are at least four options: (1) the “rise of the rest,” (2) cresting the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) wave, (3) middle-power “coalitions of the competent,” and (4) corrosion of the state system. None appear imminent.

Fareed Zakaria’s 2009 prediction of an emerging post-American world anticipated a fundamental redistribution of economic and political power to what had been considered the margins of the international order. “It is the birth of a truly global order.” That has not materialized, and the pandemic is likely to be much more devastating to developing economies since they rely on raw material demand and export-driven growth more than do the developed economies. The pandemic is also likely to put lesser-developed public health systems under crushing strain. Some marginal powers have dramatically advanced their visibility and potentially power through excellence in preparing for and handling the pandemic, but Taiwan’s success is unlikely to translate into supplanting China’s weight in the international order.
Excitement over the BRIC countries (South Africa was added in 2010) dimmed on the basis of their economic underperformance long before the pandemic hit and well before achieving the aspiration that “the dollar will be abandoned by most of the significant global economies and it will be kicked out of the global trade finance.” Collapse of commodity prices, corruption, and divergence of their economies make the grouping less meaningful than anticipated, while political frictions among members inhibit cooperative action (Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro accused China of “buying Brazil”; India and China violently dispute their borders). None of the five countries are weathering the pandemic particularly well. Brazil is second only to the United States in deaths. Russia’s health system is buckling under cases. Vladimir Putin is forced to accept a fourfold decrease in oil production after six weeks of damaging dispute with Saudi Arabia and is pushed to delay the referendum on extending his presidency and further denting its legitimacy with the statistically improbable outcome. So the BRICs are not replacing the existing order anytime soon.

In the absence of great-power success, or emergence of new power centers from the margins, an opportunity yawns open for middle-power cooperation to define the international order. John Ikenberry argued this would be the ultimate fulfillment of the liberal international order, when it did not require American power to sustain it. That Elysian Field has not yet been attained. Ten signatories of the Trans-Pacific Partnership brought it into being even with the withdrawal of the United States, but, as Gideon Rachman has pointed out, it would not have coalesced without the American effort to get the deal in the first place. France’s president Emmanuel Macron corralled fourteen European countries into an Intervention Initiative to claim strategic autonomy from the United States, but it has not actually done anything. The problem with “coalitions of the competent” is that they need a prime mover for their initiatives to reach escape velocity. They can help sustain the order but are unlikely to redefine or expand it.

A final challenger to the existing order is entropy: rules corrode, institutions embrittle, great powers become unwilling or incapable of asserting order. American retrenchment and the lack of alternatives could simply produce the “emergence of a less cooperative and more fragile international system.” Beyond the Economist’s pandemic prediction, the international order could even return to the medieval model where states recede in importance and other groupings—businesses, religious organizations, cities—become the unit of action in the international order. Philip Bobbitt argues the end of international ideological competition
casts into doubt the legitimacy of law, strategy, and the monopoly of violence on behalf of the state, meaning its purposes no longer suit the environment.\textsuperscript{36}

Bobbitt’s prediction may be borne out, but not for the reasons he anticipates. International coalitions of shared values transcending the geographic boundaries of states and creating competing loyalties, pervasive personal communications tools that challenge the state’s control of information, and global transmissibility of money and people have created circumstances in which, for example, the US government can formally withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement, roll back regulation of carbon emissions, and even sue the State of California for establishing standards higher than those required by the federal government. Still the actions of states, cities, businesses, philanthropists, and informed citizens making purchasing choices propel the United States into being the first country to meet its Paris Climate Agreement goals.\textsuperscript{37} Distributed powers and mobilized publics may not destroy the state but can combine to act in its absence. Such a system would play to the civic strengths of free societies that enable such activity and benefit from diversity of activity.

The American experience of the COVID-19 pandemic suggests they cannot yet substitute for action of the federal state, however. Surely most citizens would have preferred a federal government using its international relationships and institutions as strategic depth: identifying burgeoning problems, utilizing international organizations like the World Health Organization and international relationships cultivated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and federal intelligence services to get a robust understanding of pending dangers early, organizing the agencies for developing plans for assistance to affected populations that would tamp down spread, alerting governors to impending dangers so they can prepare in advance of infections, and coordinating international cooperation to create a common understanding and flow resources. These are things only the federal government has the breadth to do, and for sub-federal actors to figure out how to replace federal action takes costly time during a pandemic.

Because there continue to be constraints on acceptance of alternatives, it will be difficult to move from the equilibrium of this international order. So, advocates of the order have few practical alternatives to try to cajole the United States back into a more constructive posture. They may be aided in that task by Americans themselves. The US government’s manifold failures during the pandemic may actually strengthen the current international order by demonstrating to Americans the value of their country constructively engaged in the international order we
created to reduce the plagues, wars, and impoverishment that shaped the lives of World War II’s survivors.

**Connectedness and Accountability**

American administrations of both stripes have missed important opportunities for multilateral advances; for example, no US president has expended the political capital to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, even though we were a major force in its creation. We not only comply with its terms but also enforce them on other countries. But it must be acknowledged that in the past twenty-five years, Republicans have mostly lacked the creativity to pursue multilateral negotiations beyond trade. Instead, they have preferred to withdraw from treaties rather than renegotiate and to withhold funding from institutions not wholly in line with our policy preference. The Trump administration’s bacchanalia of repudiation includes withdrawing from the Trans-Pacific Partnership; the Paris Climate Agreement; the Iran nuclear agreement; the UN Human Rights Council; the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty; the Open Skies Treaty; the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization; and potentially the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty.

While Trump administration actions are damaging to structures of international cooperation and to American reliability as an international partner, they have occasioned a pendular swing toward greater support for alliances, immigration, and international trade among the public. This has resulted in a rare bipartisan congressional action to refuse funds for withdrawal of troops stationed in allied countries or repudiation of alliance commitments.³⁸

Although Americans want a more internationally engaged America, they do not necessarily want the international order to remain exactly as it has been.³⁹ Concerns about allied free riding are not unique to the Trump administration—novel and self-defeating as their approach to achieving it may be. In fact, they parallel concerns about globalization: Americans favor them but are concerned political leaders are not preserving enough of their benefits for Americans. The experience of the pandemic should occasion reconsideration of what Nick Eberstadt terms “global integration without solidarity.”⁴⁰

China was admitted into economies, partnerships, standard-setting bodies, and institutional leadership roles without following the rules that constrained behavior of other states. And China has persisted in projecting its domestic practices onto international fora, kidnapping booksellers in Hong Kong, disappearing its
own head of Interpol, manipulating the World Health Organization, violating the terms of its agreement with Britain about Hong Kong, reweighting the International Monetary Fund basket of currencies without making the renminbi convertible.

Forcing China to play by the rules will only be possible if the United States forms a united front with other countries also experiencing Chinese “exceptionalism.” That means we need to prioritize our grievances and not pick fights—on trade or burden sharing or denigrating leaders—on all fronts. We need to create incentives and alternatives to China’s monopoly positions, and that means further diversifying supply chains, not renationalizing them across the board.

The devastation wreaked by the pandemic on American lives and the economy is sure to engender recovery programs that expand the definition of national security beyond its current pinched and militaristic confines. These programs, too, could strengthen the existing international order by strengthening the domestic foundations of American power. For example, use economic recovery programs to repair and update infrastructure, make health care portable rather than reliant on employment to improve both health and labor mobility, generate broader-based prosperity, and expand access to quality education. These are not only social goods in themselves; they are necessary precursors for Americans to care about the shape of the international order.

The cost of rejuvenating the economy and smoothing over the disruptions caused by the pandemic is likely to create sustained downward pressure on defense spending. If indulged, this will incur increased risk of the United States losing its wars and will encourage challengers to test that proposition. But it will also likely create sustained downward pressure on spending for nonmilitary elements of American power. We already have a foreign policy that lurches toward the military; unless we spend the money and attention to balance our portfolio by expanding the size and capability of our diplomatic and economic professionals, our policies will become even more militarized. As the architect of the National Defense Strategy points out, our strategy for managing China is not over-militarized, but its execution is because the Department of Defense is the only arm of government carrying out the strategy.\(^4\)

US policy in the Trump era has become a jeremiad of demands rather than the practice of diplomacy, that we can wring maximal gains out of every negotiation without creating enduring resentment. It is not and we cannot. We need to work through institutions such as ASEAN or the UN that may not be valuable to us but are to others. We need at least to tolerate institutions we do not participate in such
as the International Criminal Court that serve others well and expend the effort to bring our own practice in line with the rules, by, for example, ratifying the Convention on the Law of the Sea. We even need to make compromises that advantage others to gain their voluntary cooperation, because that is less expensive than coercing compliance.

That international institutions and cooperation are imperfect is, however exasperating, immaterial to the fact that they are the genius of the American-led world order and our greatest lever to bring others into line with our practices. In 1945, when America stood astride the world like a colossus, comprising half of the world’s GDP and with a military that had won wars on both sides of the world, it voluntarily restrained its own power by creating rules and institutions that shared power. It is through those rules and institutions that the United States shares the costs and responsibilities of solving problems before they take on costlier and more dangerous dimensions for us to bear alone.

NOTES

10. Australian Signals Directorate chief Michael Burgess, quoted in Jamie Smythe, “Australia Banned Huawei over Risks to Key Infrastructure,” *Financial Times*, March 27, 2019; and Meaghan Tobin, “Huawei Ban: Australia Becomes Increasingly Isolated among


17. For example, see Michael Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China’s Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2015).


28. The terms come from Fareed Zakaria, Goldman Sachs, and Michael Fullilove, respectively.


