NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

JULY 2025

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The Gold Institute
For International Strategy

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

My fellow Americans, the United States now confronts a threat of unprecedented character, scope, and immediacy. In an earlier era, President John F. Kennedy described a long twilight struggle between freedom and authoritarianism, between democratic self-government and centralized control. That contest, once defined by geopolitical confrontation abroad, has entered a new and more insidious phase. Today, the principal strain on the American Republic arises not from foreign shores, but from within our borders.

The adversary is no longer merely approaching, it is already here. It operates from within our institutions, distorting systems of governance, undermining public trust, and weakening the civic and cultural foundations that uphold our constitutional order. This strategy of internal subversion, carried out by foreign powers through ideological infiltration, institutional capture, and strategic psychological warfare, represents an existential challenge to the American experiment in self-government.

In such an environment, traditional approaches centered on deterrence and containment are no longer sufficient. The United States must adopt a strategy that identifies and neutralizes the root causes of internal degradation. This effort must be grounded in the founding principles that have long protected the American people: limited government, the rule of law, individual liberty, and public accountability. This 2025 National Security Strategy builds upon that legacy.

This strategy is grounded in enduring American principles, a clear-eyed understanding of our national interests, and an unwavering commitment to confronting the full spectrum of threats we face. It offers a comprehensive framework for defending and renewing American primacy in an era marked by deep institutional corruption, ideological infiltration, and expanding strategic competition with authoritarian powers.

At its core, the 2025 National Security Strategy is punctuated by the belief that peace, security, and prosperity require strong, sovereign nations that protect the rights of their citizens and work in concert to uphold global stability. It affirms that the principles enshrined in the Constitution of the United States remain a powerful and enduring force for liberty and justice around the world.

The United States was founded on the belief that every individual is entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and that unchecked political power leads inevitably to oppression. Guided by these principles, the Founders established a republican form of government based on limited authority, the separation of powers, and the consent of the governed. The 2025 National Security Strategy renews this foundational vision and offers a path forward to confront the current era's unique challenges.

The strategy is structured around three core sections and five key focus areas. First, it provides a threat-informed assessment of the current global environment, offering strategic context for understanding the shifting geopolitical landscape. Second, it examines the growing threat to America's constitutional order, with emphasis on how adversaries exploit legal, institutional, and cultural vulnerabilities. Third, it outlines a strategic roadmap to restore national primacy through the revitalization of deterrence, development of net-assessment-driven policy, and coordinated whole-of-government engagement. The strategy also addresses alliance logic and global posture, detailing how the United States must align its partnerships and regional strategies across the Indo-Pacific, Europe, the Western Hemisphere, and the Middle East. It concludes with operational recommendations and implementation pathways designed to restore deterrence, secure liberty, and defeat ideological, societal, and political subversion.

This document is intended for senior defense leaders, interagency partners, congressional stakeholders, allied national security counterparts, and the American people. It responds directly to a rapidly evolving threat landscape in which America's core vulnerabilities are no longer confined to distant battlefields but are being actively exploited within its own borders by foreign adversaries and their ideological surrogates.

This strategy has been prepared by the National Strategy and Planning Team under the direction of The Gold Institute for International Strategy. Strategic assessments were developed under the leadership of Adam Lovinger, former Senior Director for Strategic Assessments at the National Security Council and informed by alliance coordination groups from key global regions. Together, this team brings deep expertise in national security, intelligence analysis, and allied strategy.

Over the past century, authoritarian adversaries, including the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, the Islamic Republic of Iran, North Korea, and radical Islamist networks, have evolved from direct confrontation to indirect subversion. Through the placement of ideological allies, or "fellow travelers," in federal agencies, universities, media platforms, and cultural institutions, they seek to dismantle the constitutional framework that underpins American strength. Their objective is not merely to diminish U.S. influence abroad but to transform the nation from within into a mirror of their own authoritarian models.

To counter these threats, the American people must demand a strategy rooted in clarity, courage, and constitutional fidelity. It requires leadership across every level of government and a unified commitment to defending liberty. The 2025 National Security Strategy provides that roadmap. It is designed to stop the spread of ideological subversion, secure our national sovereignty, and reassert American leadership across all domains of power: military, economic, diplomatic, and informational.
We are not in a twilight struggle; we are in an existential one. Our adversaries understand this clearly. It is time that we do as well.

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INTRODUCTION & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this National Security Strategy (NSS) is to identify three strategically significant but neglected threats and opportunities that directly impact U.S. national security long-term. The first is an "uncomfortable truth" for much of official Washington. America's authoritarian adversaries have infiltrated and subverted from within every key American government agency and institution. This is not a new phenomenon, but the current depth, breadth, and ferocity of such is unprecedented. The underappreciated reason for this is that, unlike during the Cold War, America's authoritarian adversaries see their transformation of America into an authoritarian regime, like them, as a matter of life-or-death for their continued survival.

The second neglected threat addressed by this NSS is another uncomfortable truth. It is a byproduct, or natural consequence, of the aforementioned ideological infiltration of our government and institutions. Today, a significant percentage of America's most senior leaders, including government and military officials, have adopted Beijing's and Moscow's strategic objectives for America as their own. This has resulted in a level of U.S. policy convergence with Beijing and Moscow that is weakening the U.S. and its allies while strengthening our strategic adversaries.

The third threat addressed by this NSS is a natural outgrowth of the second. Like America, most of our democratic allies face a plague of foreign adversary internal subversion. Given this common threat, instead of each ally addressing it alone, we should confront it together and see this shared, persistent, threat as an opportunity to professionalize the crafting and execution of alliance strategy against these and other challenges to our alliances.

I. THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: AMERICA'S ENEMIES HAVE FULLY PENETRATED U.S. INSTITUTIONS AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

America's adversaries are united in their shared objective to transform America into an authoritarian regime.

Today, America's strategic adversaries are China, Russia, the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI), North Korea, terror-sponsoring Islamist countries, and sub-state actors. Their individual historical experiences, religions, cultures, and civilizations are among the most diverse on the planet. But they are united in ways that directly impact the peace, prosperity, and well-being of the United States. Each is:

- Ruled by an authoritarian regime or leadership structure.
- Threatened existentially more by what America "is" and "stands for" than by what we could "do" to them.
- Infiltrating the U.S. federal government directly, but mostly through proxies ("fellow travelers"). Once inside, they:

    1. *Steer U.S. policies to advance their strategic objectives.*
    2. *Transform the U.S. Government into an authoritarian regime, to make America like them.*
    3. *Execute the foregoing with a degree of determination, intensity of focus, and expenditure of resources to suggest that they consider their success a matter of life-or-death, for them.*

FIVE PHASES OF STRATEGIC COMPETITION - HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR OUR CURRENT SITUATION

Phase one: The Axis Powers, USSR, and CCP Mistook American Strength for Weakness

During WWII and the Cold War, the leaders of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, followed later by those from the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China (PRC), learned two lessons:

- Any country that pits itself against America's strengths "head on" risks existential peril.
- While America's material and geopolitical competitive advantages are self-evident, America's greatest source of strength is our intangibles.

America's Intangible Powers

It took America's adversaries over half a century to sufficiently appreciate the ingredients and mechanisms that account for America's intangible sources of power. Mirror imaging in two respects was responsible for much of that delay:

- Racialist preconceptions and prejudices clouded the thinking of the leaders of the WWII Axis powers, Soviet Union, and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). America, they concluded, was a "mongrel nation," racially, ethnically, and religiously divided. They could not understand how our diversity could be anything but a weakness.
- In the Soviet system, and later in the CCP, communist values and principles were used by government authorities as a "smoke screen," or "window dressing" to:

    1. *Legitimize their seizure of power.*
    2. *Justify their looting of private property.*
    3. *Excuse their extra-legal, authoritarian ruthlessness.*
    4. *Bamboozle the masses into thinking that Soviet and CCP policies of diversity, equity, and inclusion were real.*
    5. *Eliminate anyone who stood in their way.*

By contrast, the Founders did not employ our Judeo-Christian and Enlightenment principles for ulterior motives. What proves this is that they turned them into the bedrock for the supreme law of the land.

The U.S. Constitution institutionalized those values by giving them agency. Unlike in Moscow and Beijing, where power is exercised arbitrarily and capriciously from on high, the Constitution:

- Empowered the American people, not the state, with the authority to delegate power to the federal government.
- Made government officials, up to the president himself, the servants of the people.

With the federal government subservient and accountable to the people, Americans "got the government they deserved." Through our elected representatives in Congress and the presidency, the American people were responsible for ensuring that the federal government:

- Respected the separation of federal powers to hold governmental tyranny at bay.
- Rooted out fraud, waste, and abuse.
- Held government officials accountable for their actions.
- Protected the rights and liberties of individuals through self-governance, the rule of law, and ordered liberty. While still to this day far from perfect, throughout our history enough Americans of diverse backgrounds and beliefs have benefited from their constitutional protection of equality before the law to:

    1. *Enjoy the accumulation of wealth, providing upward mobility.*
    2. *Heal, harmonize, and dignify America's racial, ethnic, and religious differences.*
    3. *Leverage our diversity as an engine of innovation and creativity.*
    4. *Invest our diverse population in the proper working of our constitutional order, and the long-term success of the United States.*

The U.S. constitutional order, when operating in accordance with the checks and balances envisioned by the Framers, is a constantly functioning competitive process. It normalizes rules-based competition that permeates every aspect of American life, from the halls of Congress to the boardroom to the Little League pitch. That competitive process compels Americans to quickly try out ideas, discard bad ones, and hone the good ones. Those ideas then become the inspiration for policies and solutions to practical problems that are, in turn, subject to a similar refiner's fire of competitive process.

By contrast, for our authoritarian adversaries, competitors in politics and business, if they cannot be co-opted first, are frequently singled out for destruction. Removing competitors deprives our authoritarian adversaries of a key mechanism to spark creativity and innovation. It also prevents an even greater source of strategic power from taking root and emerging as well.

Phase Two: The Soviets Learned the Secret to American Power too Late

The Axis powers of WWII did not survive long enough to understand why they never stood a chance against the "mongrel" United States. And it was only in the twilight years of the Soviet Union that Moscow learned that America possessed the greatest source of civilizational strength the world has ever known, and that was only because President Reagan spoke a language that Soviet prisoners rotting in Gulags understood. Curiously, those prisoners were the Russian-speaking dragomans who explained to the Kremlin what Reagan was speaking of, but by then it was too late.

Reagan understood, perhaps better than any president in U.S. history, the essential algorithm to America's long-term competitive advantage. Like the Framers, Reagan understood that a properly functioning U.S. constitutional order:

- Operationalizes America's Judeo-Christian and Enlightenment values.
- Produces a protective cocoon around our "pursuit of happiness" so we could enjoy what the Framers called the "Blessings of Liberty."
- Was designed to ensure each American's enjoyment of the freedom to make choices that lead to a fulfilling and productive life.
- Is the driving force of America's unrivaled creativity, innovation, and productivity.

What America's adversaries in WWII and the Cold War learned too late, but our authoritarian adversaries now know is that a properly functioning U.S. constitutional order:

- Is the envy of freedom-loving people the world over. This includes the subjects of authoritarian regimes who look to America, in President Reagan's words, as "a beacon of hope and freedom in a turbulent world."

- Makes Americans:

  1. *Proud of our culture and civilization.*
  2. *Invested in the success of our government.*
  3. *Patriotic.*
  4. *Willing to make material and professional sacrifices to bring children into this world.*
  5. *Willing to fight and risk our lives for our country.*

- Provides America an insurmountable, enduring, systemic, long-term comparative advantage over any authoritarian regime.

Phase Three: America's Strategic Character Poses an Existential Threat to Our Adversaries

After almost one hundred years of competing with the United States, the leaders of our authoritarian adversaries learned chronologically through a process of elimination that they:

- Cannot defeat America "head on" (as the WWII Axis powers tried to do).
- Cannot survive, as Former President of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev learned the hard way with his Glasnost and Perestroika, if they even consider opening up and reforming to give their people what they want: the same freedoms and rights that Americans enjoy under the U.S. Constitution.
- Are sitting on a powder keg: A critical mass of their subjects:

    1. *Yearn to live in a democracy with the rule of law and to enjoy individual human rights.*
    2. *Know in their hearts, if not their minds, that "the Blessings of Liberty" cannot take root in their countries, because their authoritarian overlords "rule by fear" and thus intentionally crush their souls and spirits.*

- Are more threatened by their own subjects than any outside enemy, including the United States.

Our adversaries have concluded that their only chance of survival is to:

- Derail our pursuit of happiness.
- Crush our "Blessings of Liberty."
- Subvert the U.S. constitutional order.
- Transform America into an authoritarian regime, like them.

Phase Four: Our Authoritarian Adversaries' Net Assessment of America

To inform their strategy to subvert and undermine America, our adversaries completed a two-part net assessment.

Part one was to identify American strategic vulnerabilities that were:

- Enduring. These vulnerabilities had to be so deeply rooted in our national culture, civil society, and constitutional order, that America would be incapable of overcoming them.
- Systemic throughout our governments and institutions.

Part two of that net assessment was to sort through those American strategic weaknesses and identify those that best corresponded to our authoritarian adversaries' strengths.

Adversary strategists focused on four aspects of American strategic character. They found that American leadership, institutions, and government agencies are characterized by:

- Openness. As a nation of immigrants, and because through much of our history Americans believed in the promise of equality, our political and economic culture is characterized by openness and the capacity of outsiders to become insiders. By contrast, the leadership of our adversaries is comparatively homogenous and insular.
- Stove-piped organizations. This is where large and unwieldy offices, bureaus, and agencies, 1) fail to communicate and cooperate, and 2) are riddled with institutional "seams," where authority and responsibility get diffused and confounded, and where corruption flourishes.

- Linear thinking. Americans, as the intellectual heirs of Athens, tend to be linear thinkers. We organize strategic competition in binary terms, such as "peace v. war" and "friend v. foe."
- Near-term thinking. Our political system is dynamic, which is both a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing because we are a culture of rapid response. Business leaders must innovate or perish ("creative destruction"). In politics, successful government leaders must respond quickly to multiple constituencies (political friends and foes, the media, and the U.S. taxpayer). Such near-term thinking, however:

    1. *Makes it hard for America to focus the time and resources necessary to understand and confront our authoritarian adversaries' strategies targeting the United States.*
    2. *Means culturally we have no patience for developing our own competitive strategies against our adversaries, especially if they require short-term sacrifices to achieve long-term gains.*

- Conversely. Our authoritarian adversaries have the luxury of dispensing with messy democratic processes and focusing on long-term strategies.

Phase Five: Our Authoritarian Adversaries' Strategy to Derail our "Pursuit of Happiness" and Crush our "Blessings of Liberty"

Our adversaries have discovered that:

- America's Judeo-Christian values are the inspiration and the guide for our "pursuit of happiness."
- America's "Blessings of Liberty," as the Founders called them, are fragile and ephemeral.
- The U.S. constitutional order, while resilient, with enough patience, effort, endurance, and time, can be fundamentally undermined.
- Employing American agents of influence (i.e., "fellow travelers") to win the "war for position" in our government and related institutions (like think tanks and universities) is more effective and cost-efficient than employing their own operatives.

Because America's "Blessings of Liberty" are, 1) an existential threat to our adversaries, 2) made possible by the flourishing of our Judeo-Christian values, and 3) transformed and channeled by the U.S. constitutional order into a source of long-term strategic advantage, our authoritarian adversaries have targeted each of these intangible sources of U.S. power for destruction.

Their Strategies

Our authoritarian adversaries' strategy is to pit their comparative advantages against America's weaknesses. Specifically, they employ:

- The Indirect Approach. Moscow, Beijing, and radical Islamist states (like Iran) and organizations (like the Muslim Brotherhood):

    1. *Recognize that taking America "head on" plays into America's civilizational comparative advantages.*
    2. *Come from cultures of deception and intrigue and thus are predisposed to engage in the "indirect approach" to strategic competition against their adversaries.*

The weaponization of time. Our adversaries can afford to be patient. They enjoy both the luxury and curse of having no term limits, or other messy, inefficient, democratic processes to constrain their authoritarian rule. This plays into their comparative advantages and opens up an array of adversary tactics, techniques, and procedures to divide America from within.

- Long-term cultivation of fellow travelers. For about one hundred years, our adversaries have waged a "war for position" to install their "fellow travelers" into positions of leadership in, 1) U.S. Government agencies, 2) state and local governments, 3) America's educational system (K-12 schools, colleges, and universities), and 4) our most influential think tanks and media organizations.

During the Cold War, Soviet agents co-opted student groups, peace movements, civil rights groups, university administrators, and other leaders of civil society to characterize America as a racist, imperial aggressor.

Today, to sow divisions in America and make and keep our government and institutions more authoritarian (like them), our authoritarian adversaries have the added benefit of social media and "big tech" to aid and abet their long-standing practices of blackmail, payoffs, internal subversion, and institutional sabotage. Their goal is to normalize the ideology of our authoritarian adversaries.

A robust civil society requires free speech to ensure that the best ideas and solutions to modern challenges can rise to the top of our awareness. Our adversaries know this is a key to America's success. By contrast, there is no free speech in China, Russia, Iran, or North Korea because, as George Orwell warned vividly in his masterpiece 1984, free speech threatens "Big Brother."

With the end of the Cold War, this problem should have disappeared. But it didn't. Today, with the omnipresence of social media, America's enemies enjoy a depth and breadth of reach in America that their Cold War forbears could only have dreamed of.

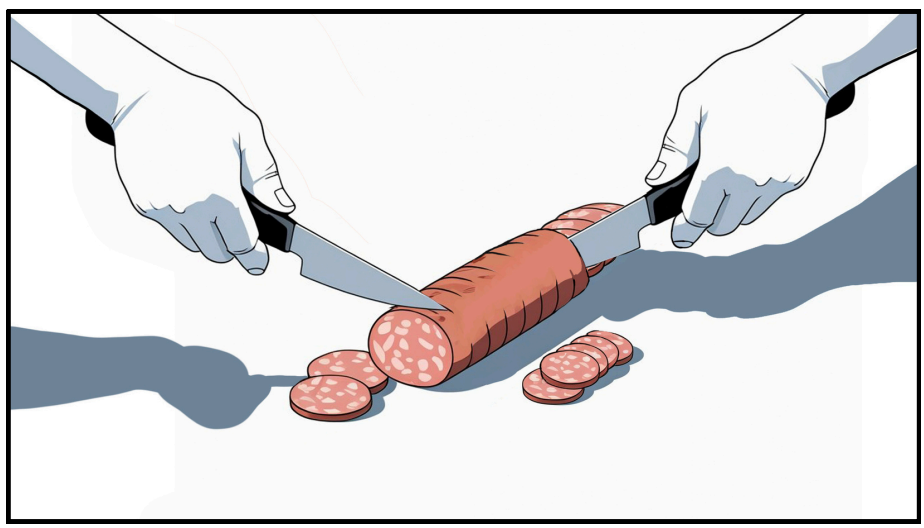
Advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning-enhanced capabilities, third-party intermediaries, ubiquity of cheaply paid social media users, and false online personas allow our authoritarian adversaries to:

- Penetrate effortlessly and turn American institutions, the U.S. Government, the media, and "big tech" against the viewpoint that is necessary for a healthy republic.
- Cancel or deplatform ideologically non-conforming American voices with large domestic followings.
- Target young Americans through their phones directly, with precision, and without adult supervision. Our adversaries employ psychological algorithms, based on rapidly advancing knowledge of brain chemistry pleasure centers, to increase the breadth and depth of their ideological subversion of America.
- Propagate "Cultural Marxist" (now called "woke") content.
- Divide the world into "oppressors" and the "oppressed." The former, namely America and Israel and their citizens, can do no right. The "oppressed," namely non-Western countries, nations, and individuals can do no wrong. For the "oppressed," the ends justify the means.
- Exploit, bamboozle, and marginalize America's racial, ethnic, and religious minorities so that they turn against Judeo-Christian and Enlightenment values. For example, they:
    1. *Advance the factually discredited "1619 project," and antisemitic tropes e.g., that hold American Jews and Israel to a double-standard imposed on no other American minority group or U.S. ally.*
    2. *Agitate for substituting "equality" under the law for "equity." Today, the Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) agenda is perhaps the most high-profile example of Cultural Marxism in practice. Proponents of DEI have a subversive agenda. They know full well that substituting group "equity" (the "E" in DEI, and the bedrock of communist ideology) for individual "equality," 1) is a direct assault on the very foundation of the U.S. constitutional order, 2) turns our societal focus away from innovation and productivity by pitting minorities against one another in a zero-sum battle for "victimhood," 3) harms the prestige, standing, and prospects of proud and self-sufficient minorities in American culture and civil society, and 4) ghettoizes those who are not racially preferred.*

- Divide America more deeply and broadly than at any time in human history.

Our adversaries promote their ideology through incrementalism. In the Cold War, Moscow attempted to "divide and conquer" America from within. That proved a bridge too far. In the early 2000s, as American blood and treasure seeped into the bottomless sands of Iraq and Afghanistan, fissures in our civilization emerged. Beijing and Moscow recognized that they could:

- Do more to undermine America by doing less. That more modest approach would drive a wedge into our institutions and between Americans, while generating fewer "antibodies" in the American system.
- Undermine Americans' faith in our Judeo-Christian values, government, and our rule of law.
- Employ "Salami tactics" as the preferred PRC and Russian approach to incrementalism. The term "salami tactics" refers to a strategy of gradual, stealthy, and incremental gains designed to avoid provoking a strong or unified response. It is widely attributed to Mátyás Rákosi, the Stalinist leader of Hungary in the late 1940s, who used the phrase to describe how the Communist Party eliminated its opponents by *"cutting them off like slices of salami."* Rival parties and factions were isolated and removed one at a time, with each move appearing too minor to justify a major reaction. Over time, however, these seemingly small actions accumulated, leaving the opposition powerless and allowing the regime to consolidate total control without triggering widespread resistance.



Once embedded in America's institutions and government, our adversaries' agents pursue a slow, nearly imperceptible, and systematic strategy of subversion to divide Americans against one another. Salami tactics are well suited for subverting America from within because they do not trigger the necessary political friction (or "crisis") that is typically required (think Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941) to galvanize Americans in common cause against a vivid threat.

Many senior U.S. officials are now sophisticated practitioners of our adversaries' salami tactics. On the 2016 campaign trail, Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton explained how to conceal from the American people the creation and execution of policy for ulterior motives:

"I don't believe you change hearts. You change laws, you change allocation of resources, you change the way systems operate."

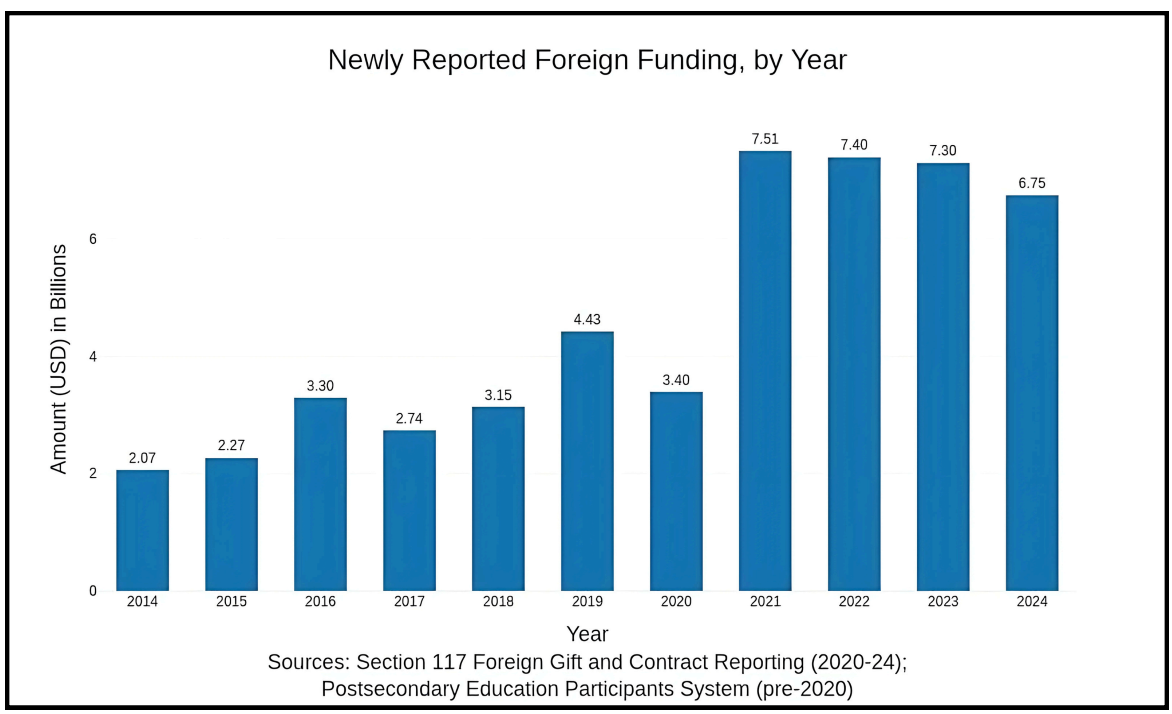
By then, Clinton had honed that art for nearly half a century:

"We had a fundamental disagreement. He [Saul Alinsky, Clinton's college mentor] believed you could change the system only from outside. I didn't," she wrote in her 2003 autobiography, Living History. "[M]y decision was an expression of my belief that the system could be changed from within."

Clinton's clandestine, authoritarian, approach to policy implementation was a radical transformation from that held by John F. Kennedy, who had warned his fellow Americans in April 1961 that:

"Without debate, without criticism, no Administration and no country can succeed—and no republic can survive... [Americans] decided long ago that the dangers of excessive and unwarranted concealment of pertinent facts far outweighed the dangers cited to justify it. Even today, there is little value in opposing the threat of a closed society by imitating its arbitrary restrictions. Even today, there is little value in ensuring the survival of our nation if our traditions do not survive with it."

The Clinton-Kennedy difference on the importance of open debate on critical policy matters suggests just how far the leadership of one major U.S. political party has transformed in one generation.
But the deepest and broadest use of salami tactics in America has taken place inside our educational system. Over the course of just a few decades, America's colleges and universities (and more recently, K-12) have been transformed into the most anti-American, racist, and antisemitic of all American cultural and civic institutions.



China and Qatar, authoritarian regimes, have been the highest contributors to U.S. universities, with a combined reported total of $11.9 billion in foreign funding. (Source: U.S. Department of Education, Section 117 Foreign Gift and Contract Reporting.)

How this happened is a complex story, but the foreign sources of funding for America's schools suggest what America's youth are learning in the classroom. And this isn't just any foreign funding. America's allies are not the greatest contributors to our K-12 schools, colleges, and universities. Rather, external funding for our educational system comes principally from authoritarian regimes, and in many cases from our most formidable nation-state enemies.

American higher education is so drunk on lavish adversary funding that America's youth are now exposed to unconscionable risks. Once inside our institutions and agencies, our adversaries' agents and American fellow travelers wage war against America with U.S. taxpayer dollars. For example, in recent years, our federally funded national scientific and educational institutions have collaborated with the Chinese government to develop pandemics and fungi that possess the potential to wipe out American civilization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

How to Safeguard Education and Security by Ending Authoritarian Influence:

1. U.S. educational institutions that take funds from authoritarian regimes must lose their accreditation, charters, and eligibility for federal funds.
2. End federal funding of any institution that promotes woke/cultural Marxist ideology (to include DEI, antisemitism, and other ideologies that unlawfully discriminate against Americans based on race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or national origin). This includes ending the racism and sexism in federal preferences e.g., "women owned" or "minority owned" businesses.
3. Close all authoritarian regime-sponsored propaganda and espionage a) operations and centers in America (e.g., Confucius Institutes), and b) platforms (e.g., TikTok).

Illegal immigration and lawlessness have been intentionally weaponized by:

- Turning American freedom, and openness to newcomers, into a weakness. In recent years, our authoritarian adversaries have weaponized undocumented mass migration to sow divisions in America. By weaponizing our southern border, they have "killed many birds with one stone" by:

  1. *Undermining U.S. sovereignty.*
  2. *Infiltrating clandestine special operatives and Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) into the heartland to probe the weaknesses of U.S., a) law enforcement, b) institutions and government agencies, c) critical infrastructure, including our energy, aviation, and maritime sectors, and d) military basing (e.g., for the purpose of purchasing land close to such bases to use as potential drone launch sites).*
  3. *Smuggling illicit pathogens, and drugs over the porous border to kill Americans.*

- Fueling a culture of lawlessness: For our authoritarian adversaries, the state is judge, jury, and executioner. The law is what the supreme leader says it is. By contrast, the U.S. Constitution makes clear that America is a nation governed by the rule of law. For this reason, our adversaries normalize a culture of lawlessness in America for the purpose of:

  1. *Undermining America's founding values and principles.*
  2. *Extinguishing America's "Blessings of Liberty."*
  3. *Eroding our faith in the U.S. constitutional order.*
  4. *Demoralizing law-abiding Americans.*
  5. *Causing us to despair for the future of our families, communities, and way of life.*

In recent years, our adversaries have advanced lawlessness in America by:

- Undermining the U.S. Government's will and capacity to hold U.S. officials to account for their crimes (including the crime of treason).
- Incentivizing the authoritarian "Deep State" to remain unresponsive to Congress. When the Soviet Union collapsed, western intelligence agencies seized a treasure trove of KGB documents. The contents of that archive revealed, 1) the Soviet leadership specifically targeted our federal "checks and balances" for destruction, and 2) that one high priority target was the executive branch's respect and responsiveness to legislative oversight. Over the course of the Cold War, and continuing today, our authoritarian adversaries:

    1. *Identified that the growth of the U.S. administrative state provided them a powerful weapon to undermine America's constitutional order.*
    2. *Found they could hide their activity from Congress because the size of the administrative state grew to such an enormous extent that Congress was incapable of overseeing it and holding it accountable for following the law. The relative weakness of Congress compared to the federal bureaucracy is self-evident; and an iron law of politics is that weakness is provocative.*
    3. *Celebrated the growing incapacity and will of Congress to meaningfully check and balance the federal bureaucracy. For example, as if following the authoritarian playbook:*

        - The U.S. offices of inspectors general have been captured by the very agencies they are supposed to check and balance. While IGs technically have a dual-reporting responsibility to both federal agency heads and Congress, having two masters means having no master. IGs have gone rogue.
        - Overworked congressional staffers, 1) rely on agency inspectors general and others within the federal bureaucracy to "do their jobs for them" i.e., the fox was guarding the hen house, and 2) lobby federal agencies to hire them (an oversight conflict of interest), because executive branch civil service work, a) pays better, b) is less demanding, and c) offers more job security.

RECOMMENDATIONS

How to End Bureaucratic Conflicts to Thwart Adversaries:

End structural conflicts of interest in the federal bureaucracy that aid and abet America's adversaries. This should include the impossibility of federal IGs being required to conduct oversight on the very agency that pays its budget.

To be true to the "checking and balancing" function of the U.S. Constitution, 1) transfer the IG oversight function to Congress, and 2) shift those resources from the executive to the legislative branch.

- As with federal agency inspectors general, the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) has been corrupted. Established in the wake of the Watergate scandal to protect whistleblowers, the OSC now does the opposite, and targets whistleblowers to cover up agency fraud, waste, and abuse.

RECOMMENDATIONS

How to Reform Oversight to Eliminate Corrupt Agencies:

1. Transfer the IG oversight function to Congress.
2. Shift those resources from the executive to the legislative branch.
3. Abolish the Office of Special Counsel, an agency that does much more harm than good.

- Weaponizing the federal investigative process. It is no accident that our authoritarian adversaries target and corrupt the leadership of our most sensitive national security, law enforcement, and intelligence offices and agencies. Once corrupted, senior official "fellow travelers" erode standards, good order, and accountability by:

1. *Seizing, controlling, and weaponizing the federal investigative process to target law-abiding officials, especially federal whistleblowers.*
2. *Subverting or simply ignoring whistleblower protection laws.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

How to Counter Corruption in Federal Investigations:

Prosecute to the full extent of U.S. law any U.S. official who knowingly and willfully subverts federal process.

Spreading such institutional rot is a win-win for both the Deep State and our foreign adversaries. The authoritarian governments get a free hand to normalize unaccountable and tyrannical political power in America. This makes our government more like those of our authoritarian adversaries. The Deep State "wins" because they enjoy the backing, operational support, and political "top cover" of a foreign state intelligence service. This supercharges their capacity to destroy (e.g., through kompromat, or blackmail) any honest and principled federal official who dares resist their lawlessness.

- Compromising our democratic elections. To divide America from within, our adversaries have funded and supported one side of the "election integrity debate," to ensure it remains a partisan issue in America. The conclusion that America's authoritarian adversaries are tampering with our electoral process can be reached both deductively and inductively.

    1. *Deductively, all Americans of good faith benefit by the integrity of our electoral process. And no American of good faith wants to worry that U.S. government officials, foreign powers, or "big tech" titans, are interfering with our democratic elections. For these reasons, ensuring election integrity should not, under any circumstances, be controversial. But there are many Americans today that do not welcome more transparency and accountability in our electoral process.*
    2. *Inductively, there are now reams of U.S. Government documentation evidencing Russian and Chinese tampering with the American political process. This includes the "hacking" of our voting machines.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

How to Remove Foreign Influence of Voting Machines:
End our reliance on complex technologies that can be hacked by foreign subversives and their surrogates.

For most of our history, we have relied on cheap, low-tech, ways to count votes. In an attempt to ensure free and fair elections, and deepen our civic culture, traditionally Democrats and Republicans have counted and agreed on individual votes together. But in recent years, America's adversaries and their fellow travelers have sought to make vote counting both become more complex, more hi-tech, and more dependent on foreign computer hardware, software, and networks.

Foreign active measures are also now seamlessly integrated into our political/governmental process:

1. Triangulating with one U.S. politician against a rival politician for high office. In the 2016 presidential election, one presidential candidate hired, through a series of "cut outs," individuals linked to Russian intelligence to generate a "dossier" on her rival candidate. The sitting president at the time, a) was aware of this strategic subversion of America's electoral process for the highest office in the land, and nevertheless, and b) aided and abetted that foreign power by joining it in a "conspiracy of silence" for the purpose of deceiving the American people.
2. Steering U.S. foreign policy into doing the bidding of America's adversaries. Over two centuries ago, John Jay warned his fellow countrymen about the dangers of foreign subversion. Writing in Federalist No. 2 and 3, each titled "Concerning Dangers from Foreign Force and Influence," Jay foresaw how America's adversaries would exploit America's open and free society to exacerbate divisions from within. He was prescient. This subject is of such critical importance that it will be explored in detail in the following section of this document.

II. AMERICAN PRIMACY IS NOW MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER

America's Theory of Victory: U.S. Primacy Across All Strategically Significant Realms of Global Competition

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, America emerged as the world's sole superpower. That unsurpassed U.S. primacy permitted Washington to uphold a pro-U.S. global order based on rule of law, open commons, and "peace through strength." That primacy is now contested by China, the second most powerful country in the world, and a serious peer competitor.

Now, more than ever in its history, America must be judicious in how it expends U.S. power. On one end of the spectrum, the leaders of China, aided by their partners in Russia and Iran, have been cultivating for decades "fellow travelers" in the U.S. national security establishment to advance their policy preference of U.S. isolationism. They do so because a policy of isolationism would cripple American power:

- Militarily: U.S. isolationism will trigger what is called the "security dilemma." That means, when America pulls its forces out of theater, other countries panic, militarize, launch an "arms race," and inadvertently trigger a war that threatens U.S. interests.
- Economically: America is and always has been a competitive trading nation. We require an open global commons (air, sea lines of communication, sub-sea, space, and cyber) to conduct economic transactions globally.

If those commons are not kept stable and unmolested by bad actors, America's economic health suffers. If America retreats from those commons, power abhors a vacuum, and other powers will fill that void. American economic global engagement also sharpens America's competitive advantage. To remain a prosperous country, we must continuously compete. But to compete, America must show up for the competition.

Peaceful economic competition is good and natural, even among allies and partners. Just like in the American political, economic, and intellectual marketplace, and as the Enlightenment thinkers envisioned, economic competition ensures that the best economic approaches and policies rise to the surface.

While America's adversaries would like nothing more than for the U.S. to irresponsibly involve itself in conflicts in which we have little at stake, Washington owes it to the U.S. taxpayer to be judicious and strategic in any power projection decision.

In the past, Washington projected power over extended periods of time without a strategy for what it was trying to accomplish. America made this mistake during the Vietnam War. We did so again during our recent "forever wars" in Iraq and Afghanistan. Each of those three foreign policy catastrophes were launched without:

- A clear understanding of our strategic objective.
- Knowing who the adversary was.
- Understanding the strategic character of the operating environment.
- Having a clear sense of America's strengths and weaknesses, and thus what we were capable of accomplishing for our effort.

Our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan cost the U.S. taxpayer trillions of dollars and sacrificed thousands of our best and brightest. They were driven by a multitude of motivations, some of them unsavory, even shameful. But it is undeniable that most Americans who answered the call of duty were driven by patriotism and belief that our democratically elected leaders were doing what they thought was best for America. That is because, throughout our history, Americans have been:

- A generous people.
- Proud of our tradition of helping others fend off tyranny and barbarism.
- Exceptional.

Unfortunately, too many U.S. officials have learned the wrong lesson from our mistakes in Iraq and Afghanistan. Instead of working in good faith to study "what went wrong?" and learn from those mistakes so we don't repeat them, they have turned against America itself.

A U.S. President and His Secretary of State Adopted Moscow's Strategic Objectives for America's Own

As John Jay warned a young America, our openness to new immigrants and foreigners, as well as our trusting national character that has historically reduced commercial transaction costs in ways unimaginable in many other parts of the world, also exposed the U.S. Government to the ongoing threat posed by foreign infiltration and subversion.

"That power to influence policy has always been the ultimate purpose of the Communist Party's infiltration," is how Whittaker Chambers described the greatest strategic threat to America. "It was much more dangerous, and, as events have proved, much more difficult to detect, than espionage, which beside it is trivial, though the two go hand in hand."

The capacity and power of America's enemies to hijack the direction of U.S. foreign policy has grown significantly since Whittaker Chambers wrote those words in the 1950s. Today, myriad American politicians and policymakers through the U.S. Government advance the strategic objectives of America's adversaries.

Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and Vladimir Putin Worked in Tandem to Craft a Global "Balance of Power"

Both Trump administrations adopted a policy of comparative "primacy," "preeminence," or "overmatch" relative to our strategic competitors. This policy is built on the concept of deterrence i.e., "peace through strength." This was a sharp break from the Obama and Biden administrations, which adopted the strategic objectives of Moscow, Beijing, and Tehran for their own.

The concept of "balance of power" in international relations envisions American power equal to those of its adversaries, to achieve balance. Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. has been the world's sole superpower. Not surprisingly, Beijing and Moscow have pursued policies to undermine U.S. global primacy and supplant it with a:

- "[B]alance of influence in the world".
- "Multi-polar world" order of roughly equal great powers.

To consummate that vision, the Obama Administration aided and abetted our authoritarian adversaries by:

- Removing, in 2009, U.S. missile defenses in Eastern Europe that were emplaced by the previous administration to deter Russia from attacking Ukraine (which it did in 2014 and 2022-present) and NATO.
- Approving, in 2011, the transfer to Moscow of a U.S. hypersonic cruise missile engine. According to that U.S. European Command report, balance of power considerations justified that transfer of cutting-edge technology.
- Supporting, in 2012, Russia's Most Favored Nation (MFN) trading status.
- Permitting Putin between 2009-2017 to reconquer more of the former Soviet Union than during any previous U.S. presidency. The Biden Administration picked up where Obama left off.
- Sharing in Syria U.S. battlefield intelligence with the Russian military.
- Permitting Moscow to build up unopposed a naval base at the Syrian port of Tartus and an air base at Latakia.
- Publicly announcing, via his Secretary of State, that:
    1. *"[W]e want very much to have a strong Russia…. One of the fears that I hear from Russia is that somehow the United States wants Russia to be weak. That could not be farther from the truth. Our goal is to help strengthen Russia."*
    2. *"Russia has been an ally."*

Clinton conceded that *"we want very much to have a strong Russia"* despite acknowledging later that *"I am also a former senator and secretary of state who served during much of Vladimir Putin's ascent, sat across the table from him and knows firsthand that he seeks to weaken our country."*

A U.S. President and His Top Pentagon Strategist Cede East Asia to China

Too many of America's leaders disdain the United States and believe there is nothing wrong with wielding their authority on behalf of themselves, their families, vague international "causes," or foreign powers, rather than for the well-being of ordinary Americans. The People's Republic of China (PRC) is America's nearest "peer competitor" across all areas of national power. Militarily, the PRC:

- Is undergoing an unprecedented military buildup.
- Demonstrating a capacity for global power projection.
- Building and modernizing its nuclear forces to rival those of the U.S.
- Has committed to conquering Taiwan and integrating it into the PRC.
- Threatens all of America's treaty allies in the Western Pacific (Philippines, South Korea, and Japan).

Despite these threats, through a series of actions and omissions, Obama:

- Broke with the policies of his three predecessors in the Oval Office by refusing to conduct Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOP) through the Taiwan Strait.
- Deemed America's naval presence in disputed territorial waters of the Western Pacific "innocent passage" under international law. That designation strengthened Beijing's claims to those waters.
- Removed, as a "peace offering" to the world, all U.S. supercarriers from the world's seas and oceans during the final month of his eight-year presidency.

To justify Obama's concessions to China, the Pentagon's top strategist at the time, Office of Net Assessment (ONA) Director, James H. Baker advised Admiral Michael Mullen, Obama's Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

- *"Losing Taiwan to China would not be a great insult to U.S. national interests."*

In 2016, Beijing's Belt-and-Road Initiative (BRI) reached east Africa. To solidify that outpost, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) constructed a military base in Djibouti. Defying that reality, former ONA Director Baker announced publicly that:

- *"China's military plans remain decidedly regional in nature"* because Beijing is *"constrained by historic territorial norms."*
- *"China's domestic troubles are legion,"* and that the PRC is too feeble to *"revise the present international order through violent or coercive means."*

A U.S. President, his Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and His Top Pentagon Strategist Balance a Nuclear Israel with a Nuclear Iran

Throughout his political career, Obama has exhibited a high level of policy consistency between his domestic and international policy prescriptions for America. His policy "north star" has been generating "balances of power" to disempower one group and empower another. He justifies this, to this day, under the banner of "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion."

Applied internationally, Obama sought "equity" between Israel and its Muslim neighbors. The "ultimate goal" of the Obama administration's Middle East policy, explained Obama's Middle East advisor Robert Malley, was to create "a more stable balance of power" in the region.

To achieve that, he sought to balance a nuclear Israel with a nuclear Iran. He did that through the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), an agreement between China, France, Germany, Iran, Russia, the United Kingdom, the European Union, and the United States. That agreement, also known as the "Iran Deal," contained what came to be called "sunset clauses." After a period of time:

- Those limiting provisions would expire.
- All the substantive restrictions on Iran's nuclear program would vanish.
- The world's greatest state sponsor of terror was then free to develop a fully-fledged, internationally sanctioned, industrial-scale nuclear weapons program.

In April 2015, retired Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen wrote that the "*Iran nuclear deal would also more fairly rebalance American influence.*" America's senior military officer was worried about American primacy, which gave us too much "influence" in the Middle East. *"We need to re-examine all of the relationships we enjoy in the region… Détente with Iran might better balance our efforts across the sectarian divide."*

Three months later, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei and Iran's Foreign Minister declared that they, like Admiral Mullen, also viewed the Iran Deal in a favorable light:

"The Americans say they stopped Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. They know it is not true." In that same speech Khamenei declared: *"Even after this deal, our policy toward the arrogant U.S. will not change."* That same month, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif boasted that *"this nuclear agreement puts the Zionist regime in an irrecoverable danger."*

To aid and abet Iran's strategic objectives, Obama, and later Biden, transferred to Tehran tens of billions of dollars. ONA leadership, the highest-level strategists in the Pentagon, concurred with Admiral Mullen's assessment that:

- Obama's "Iran Deal" constituted a "significant and selective common gain."
- "Iran may, if it chooses, 'safely' possess a nuclear weapon."
- Nuclear weapons "offer Iran only limited use in reshaping the power dynamics in the region."

The Objective of the Pentagon's Highest-Level Strategy Office Was to "Walk [America] Back from a Strategy of Primacy"

According to former ONA Director Baker:

"The greatest challenge for U.S. foreign policy' is deciding whether to double down or to walk back from a strategy of primacy… Those who would double down on primacy have no lack of suggestions for how to do so: by intervening more dramatically in Iraq and the Syrian civil war, or more forcefully challenging Chinese or Russian creeping aggression by increasing the defense, diplomacy, and development budgets."

For two reasons, the strategic objective of Moscow and Beijing since the early 1990s to the present is to convince America to "walk back from a strategy of primacy."

First, if America forfeits its superpower status or, better yet for them, cedes that power to Russia and China, there will be a "balance of power" in the world, and a "multi-polar world order."

Second, America's adversaries know that once Washington decides to "walk back from a strategy of primacy," all of America's highly classified war plans (or "operational plans") will be subverted. Those war plans:

- Are the Pentagon's most important guidance documents.
- Detail all U.S. military forces and equipment directed to any theater of conflict.
- Inform decisions on recruitment, training, logistics, transportation, budgeting, and virtually all the organizational and managerial functions of the U.S. armed forces.
- Contain detailed guidance on shaping the competition with one's adversary (Phase 0), followed by deterring (Phase I), seizing the initiative (Phase II), and then dominating the enemy on the battlefield such that U.S. forces emerge overwhelmingly victorious (Phase III).

America's adversaries and former ONA Director Baker all know that having America "walk back from a strategy of primacy":

- Cripples the capacity of the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) to achieve Phase III dominance.
- Undermines the capacity of DoD to fulfill its constitutional duty to "provide for the common defense."
- Acts as a "cost imposing strategy" against the U.S. Specifically, DoD's budget is nearly a trillion dollars annually: more than half of all the USG's discretionary spending. If funds are expended "walking [America] back from a strategy of primacy," then they are draining America's power, not strengthening it.

ONA leadership justified this proposal to Pentagon leadership to forfeit U.S. primacy on economic and popular political grounds:

- *"[P]rimacy is clearly and increasingly costly,"* and the U.S. national debt is America's greatest national security threat.
- *"[A]dvocates for primacy face a lack of domestic consensus."*

Yet as the leaders of the Pentagon's top strategy office knew, they would be expected to offer an alternative strategy to upholding U.S. primacy and America's superpower status, once they walked it back.

Thus, ONA leadership developed a new strategy. They called it a "muddling through" strategy. That suited America's enemies, who also wanted America to have no strategy to compete against them. Former ONA Director Baker did not disappoint:

- He informed Pentagon leadership that instead of having a strategy to compete against rogue regimes and radical Islamists and Transnational Criminal Organizations, *"muddling through, defending present commitments, holding to the status quo… this maintenance mindset may be sufficient."*

In June 2016, then ONA Associate Director Andrew D. May reported on the fruits of Obama's eight years of "muddling through" Asia:

"As a military we have no real conception of what a proper 'pivot to Asia' should look like … We do not know what sort of alliance structure we want, what geography is really most important, or what contingencies we should be thinking about. Consequently, we have only the dimmest of ideas about the sort of strategy we should develop, or the character of the force posture we should pursue … We have no good ideas about the sorts of initiatives or institutions we should be fostering, or how those should be administered."

After Biden assumed the presidency in January 2021, he retained Obama's ONA leadership as his top Pentagon strategists. In August 2022, President Biden:

- Hastily evacuated U.S. forces from Afghanistan. Eleven years before Biden's evacuation of Afghanistan, Obama evacuated U.S. forces from Iraq and declared victory with the words: "we're leaving behind a sovereign, stable, and self-reliant Iraq." A 2019 Army after action report explained what Obama meant by victory: An "emboldened and expansionist Iran" filled the vacuum in Iraq left in America's wake, and the Islamic Republic of Iran was the "only victor" in that war.
- To retain a "balance of power" in the region, decided to leave behind and gift billions of dollars worth of cutting-edge military equipment it held in Afghanistan to the new Taliban government. This was the same regime that had hosted Osama bin Laden back in 2001, providing him the support and sanctuary he needed to launch the September 11 attacks on America, which precipitated the Afghanistan War in the first place. Biden's multi-billion-dollar transfer of military equipment left that terrorist organization better equipped than ever in its history.

Intentionally Producing No Net Assessments to Inform U.S. National Security Strategy

To cripple U.S. primacy and ensure that the U.S. military had no choice but to "muddle through" our wars, the highest-level strategy office in the Pentagon refused to produce the necessary precursors to competitive national security strategies: Net assessments.

In May 2016, Andrew D. May, the number two in the Pentagon's Office of Net Assessment (ONA) reported on his success to his immediate supervisor, *"There is no way that we will be able to deliver mature net assessments anytime soon."*

Over two years later, in December 2018, former ONA Director Baker admitted under oath that "2007 perhaps" was the last time ONA produced its statutorily required annual net assessment. That meant, the U.S. military was strategically blind.

In 2020, a DoD investigation confirmed that ONA had not produced a single net assessment, its only statutory duty, in fifteen years.

The Current Debate on U.S. Global Primacy

Deductive logic suggests that much of the current debate on the importance of U.S. global primacy is heavily infected by foreign influence. We expect, in the months to come, that a growing body of evidence will arise that supports this assessment.

In 2017, Trump produced a U.S. National Security Strategy (the "2017 NSS"). In that document, President Trump advanced a "peace through strength" policy. Specifically, he recommitted the U.S. to:

- Developing "weapon systems that clearly overmatch" those of our adversaries, and "new capabilities that create clear advantages for our military while posing costly dilemmas for our adversaries."
- "Preeminence," a word often used interchangeably with "primacy."

Critics of President Trump's "peace through strength" policy belittle the strategic importance of U.S. primacy. Their actions are not done in good faith.

- Name calling: Recognizing that calling someone a "neoconservative" is now a slur, and invokes the horrors of twenty years of "muddling through" Iraq and Afghanistan with no net assessment-informed U.S. national security strategies, they now conflate "neoconservatives" with what they call "primacists." This is their new slur for anyone supporting America's "pre-eminence" or "overmatch" vis a vis America's adversaries.
- Logical fallacy: Those ridiculing the type of American primacy that permits the U.S. military to fly B-2s from CONUS to strike Iran and fly back again claim that any U.S. involvement in the Middle East means that, 1) "boots on the ground" will be necessary to accomplish America's objectives, and 2) a "forever war," like our failed Iraq and Afghanistan wars, is inevitable. Not only are such claims logical fallacies, but both Trump45 and Trump47 upheld U.S. primacy in the Middle East, and none of the horrors promised by the President's detractors arose.
- Operational neglect: Forfeiting U.S. primacy without even "trying" to uphold it is the epitome of "bad faith." America's adversaries and their allies on the progressive left (and right) claim that America is in inexorable decline. They do so, 1) out of naiveté, 2) to create a self-fulfilling prophecy to legitimize their ideological preferences, and/or 3) because they are paid by anti-American clients, including authoritarian governments.

Just as "defeat" in war is a psychological phenomenon, decline is a choice. America will only decline if leaders of our government, institutions, and agencies follow enemy prescriptions for our demise. Obama and Biden did precisely that. By contrast, Trump has done the opposite, succeeding where foreign policy elites have previously failed, repeatedly.

There is strong evidence that detractors of U.S. primacy are acting in bad faith. Perhaps the strongest is that the Pentagon's highest level strategy office (the Office of Net Assessment or "ONA") has not produced a single net assessment, its one and only annual statutory requirement under U.S. law, in over twenty years. Think about that for a minute.

Net assessments are the precursors of national security strategies. If the Pentagon is not even trying to produce real national security strategies, ones that assist in the success of U.S. war plans, then that means there is no analytical effort being expended to uphold U.S. primacy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

How to Revitalize Primacy Through Analysis and Resilience:
Before abandoning U.S. primacy, shouldn't we at least try to expend some analytical effort to see if we can do better? Perhaps, just perhaps, if the Pentagon completed a net assessment, our leaders might learn that:

1. America's primacy is much more assured than U.S. leaders originally assumed it to be (having not done the analysis).
2. America could expend some limited resources here or there and recast our long-term strategic competition with our adversaries in ways that fuel U.S. comparative advantages long-term and weaken those of our adversaries.

But we will not know the answer to that question unless the Pentagon, once again, gets serious about producing net assessment-informed national security strategies.

To deter our adversaries and prevail in the long-term strategic competition, America must authorize and supply our national security, intelligence, homeland security, and law enforcement federal agencies with the necessary tools, authorities, and resources, to:

1. Craft government-wide, comprehensive, and interlocking, functional and regional competitive strategies attuned to the most complex, challenging, and high stakes future security, economic, and energy environment for the purpose of:
    a. Competing ideologically against our enemies.
    b. Ending high-technology sharing and commerce with China.
    c. Rooting out foreign adversary funding and subversion of U.S., 1) government officials and agencies, and 2) institutions, to include all levels of education.
    d. Sustaining American "primacy," "preeminence," and "overmatch" long-term.

III. INJECTING STRATEGIC LOGIC INTO U.S. ALLIANCES AND PARTNERSHIPS

Chancellor von Bismarck is credited with observing that "God has a special providence for fools, drunkards, and the United States of America." The Iron Chancellor's quip resonates today because America seems to have almost magical powers to succeed where others fail. Why is that?

The *City of God* provides an answer to that question. In that 5th Century treatise, St. Augustine of Hippo looked through the state to the underlying civil society, which he viewed as a congregation, united by common loves. What he found was that states thrive when their people love the right things. Those common loves create culture, which shapes the strategic character of the state, and which in turn governs the functioning of its government and institutions.

America First Does Not Mean America Alone

America enjoys God's "special providence" because Americans have an unwavering love for our "Blessings of Liberty." Our allies and partners know that makes America an exceptional nation with a winning model for success. It also makes America:

- A generous and supportive ally and partner. After WWII, the U.S. extended itself to rebuild not just our wartime allies, but our adversaries as well. That was historically unprecedented. But it was also the right thing to do. By rebuilding Germany and Japan, the U.S. earned those nations' gratitude, which became some of our greatest trading and strategic partners.
- A predictable ally. For those allies who know America well, they understand that, 1) at a micro level, America since its founding has been beset by seemingly wild gyrations of political and social upheaval, 2) such gyrations are the sign of a robust democracy at work, 3) at a macro level, our system of government is more stable and predictable than most, and 4) our constitutional order provides both guardrails, pressure valves, and an Enlightenment machinery to direct competing, even clashing, individual interests to America's strategic well-being.

By contrast, China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea are led by supreme leaders and strongmen who:

- Are not subject to checks and balances.
- Respect no law but the "law of the jungle."
- Make unstable and unpredictable allies. When these leaders fall, often their entire regime (and even country) falls with them.

Transforming a Common Threat Into a Strategic Opportunity

The collaboration between America's internal and external subversive threats is unprecedented. During the Cold War, the U.S. was infiltrated and subverted almost solely by Soviet agents and their fellow travelers. But the USSR's power to inflict strategic damage on America from within was limited by its losing political and economic model back in Moscow, which led to internal rot and collapse.

By contrast, Moscow's Cold War era "active measures" are now shared and operationalized against America by comparatively wealthy authoritarian regimes. Just in China alone, while America's nominal GDP still surpasses that of China, the latter leads the U.S. in GDP based on purchasing power parity. That wealth provides our authoritarian adversaries opportunities to employ U.S. government officials, media, think tanks, universities, and a host of other organizations and groups to slowly but systematically transform America into an authoritarian regime.

Like with the United States, our authoritarian adversaries actively infiltrate and subvert most other countries that share America's democratic values. This has generated a strategic opportunity for America and our closest allies and partners.

United by these cultural and civilizational bonds, we now face a growing, common, internal strategic threat. Given the historically unprecedented magnitude of this strategic threat, we can no longer:

- Afford to relegate the hard work of alliance management to the mindless shoals of institutional and bureaucratic inertia.
- Fail to periodically reassess the changing circumstances impacting the overall strategic logic of our alliances and partnerships.
- Eschew the innovative thinking and hard work that goes into updating and modernizing alliances for present and future challenges and contingencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

How to Build Resilient Alliances for Strategic Victory:
It is incumbent on Washington to seize this opportunity to professionalize the crafting and execution of alliance strategy. Going forward, the U.S. must:

1. Conduct collaborative net assessments with our closest allies and partners. We must authorize and supply all relevant agencies responsible for U.S. national security, intelligence, and economic policy the necessary tools, authorities, and resources, to this purpose. Those net assessments must identify:

    a. Each party's strengths and weaknesses.
    b. Complementary comparative advantages.
    c. How to achieve alliance efficiencies. This could include each ally performing a complementary versus redundant purpose.
    d. Areas for collaboration in:

    - Technology.
    - Weapons systems.
    - Basing.

2. Employ such collaborative net assessments to inform integrated alliance strategies, to govern both the internal workings of our alliances, as well as competitive alliance strategies directed against common threats and foes. Such strategies must:

    a. Be tethered to a correct assessment of U.S. and allied comparative advantages and weaknesses.
    b. Define with an appropriate level of specificity what "victory looks like." This would include:

    - Severing and denying sources of funding, energy, technology, and raw materials to authoritarian regimes, terrorists, WMD proliferators, etc.
    - Deterring, 1) internal subversion of the U.S. and our allies/partners, 2) military, economic, and energy predations, 3) threats to the rules-based open commons (air, maritime, space, and cyberspace), and 4) military and economic coercion of third parties.

    c. Institutionalize our alliance strategy capacity in flexible, innovative, lean, non-hierarchical arrangements for the purpose of continuously re-visiting, challenging, and updating our collaborative net assessments and competitive strategies based on changing circumstances, especially as they relate to technological and organizational advances in computing, autonomy, and manufacturing.

Regional Priorities

Western Hemisphere: *Expose and roll back authoritarian coercion, defend democratic governance, and secure strategic infrastructure.*

We must collaborate with friends and partners in the region to:

- End the schemes by America's authoritarian adversaries to generate the conditions for failure that spurs mass migration to our southern border. This would include:

    1. *Publicizing the role of state sponsored or supported criminal cartels in fueling mass migration.*
    2. *Containing, with regional partners, the fallout of Russian, Chinese, and Iranian schemes to advance authoritarian models of government in Venezuela and Cuba, which prop up corrupt dictators while eroding the freedom of human rights of ordinary citizens in those states.*

- Help Panama regain control of the Panama Canal from the malign influence of the PRC.
- Achieve a framework for "First and Free" passage for U.S. warships and auxiliary ships, as well as increasing the presence of U.S. troops on both sides of the canal to provide reassurance, peace, and stability.

Europe: *Revive European self-reliance by encouraging Europe to reclaim its resolve to defend itself and uphold its core democratic values, thereby halting inevitable strategic decline caused by ongoing dependency.*

America must wield our collaborative competitive strategies to strengthen Western Civilization, which is a shrinking component of the globe. To this end, we must:

- Rebalance NATO for the good of Europe and the United States. The U.S. remains committed to NATO. Yet, like with all long-term relations, NATO must adjust to the times and changing circumstances, or weaken and become irrelevant. Like relationships between close friends and family, it is in the best interests of our allies to ensure that our alliances are characterized by:

    1. *Fairness and burden sharing.*
    2. *Shared degree of commitment.*
    3. *Mutual benefit.*

- Since the end of WWII, America has shouldered a disproportionate share of Europe's defense burden. During the early Cold War that was wise because it deterred the USSR and defused the security dilemma by obviating German rearmament. But today,

    1. *America is spread throughout the world to ensure that our shared global commons are safe and secure.*
    2. *Americans from all walks of life want to balance the burden of regional defense. We cannot see the logic in U.S. taxpayers paying for a rich Europe to defend itself. Why can't Europe, at the very least, secure its own backyard? This is not finger pointing.*

As a first step, going forward, Europe must (at least) play the leading role in European land defense, including in the current Russia-Ukraine war.

Confronting an unforeseen plague that cripples Europe requires addressing its root causes, as Europe's long-term dependence on the U.S. for defense has fostered and sustained a political culture disconnected from the inherent cost-benefit considerations of national defense. The mechanisms and implications of this dynamic remain underappreciated.

When European leaders are exempt from the sobering necessity of self-reliance, it is not surprising that in looking to others to defend their homelands, they lose track of what they are defending (their national cultures and Western Civilization) and why.

This unbalanced and unnatural situation has contributed to a vast range of consequences for the alliance:

- Choosing civilizational suicide over defense. Myriad polls show alarming numbers of young Europeans unwilling to serve in their country's armed forces, even if facing an imminent threat. Pan-European below-replacement fertility levels are another metric of European indifference to preserve and perpetuate a sacred culture and civilization.
- Anti-Western immigration policies. There is an elephant in the room that we ignore at our peril. It is a truism that some cultures are more productive, peace-loving, and innovative than others. With a few notable exceptions, such as Hungary and Poland, European countries have welcomed large numbers of migrants from cultures that are historically hostile to liberal western values, including the equality of women. Refusing to recognize that strategically significant reality ensures long-term social unrest by undermining, 1) national unity, 2) cultural bonds that are the foundation for the European social welfare state, and 3) economic prosperity.
- Erosion of deterrence. Weakness is provocative. Knowing that European countries are unwilling or incapable of self-defense, Russia (even in a weakened state since the collapse of the Soviet Union) has focused its sights on fracturing NATO, including by using energy as a weapon against Europe.

A civilizationally confident Europe and NATO provide Europe with strategically significant moral authority. For instance, if it believed in itself, Europe could more convincingly:

- Recast the Russian–Ukraine war as an unnecessary, tragic "civil war" within Western Civilization.
- Convince or compel Moscow to end its war and return to building Russian prosperity at home.

Indo-Pacific: *Counter the People's Republic of China's (PRC) regional dominance strategy by strengthening U.S. alliances, enhancing forward military posture, and promoting a shared democratic vision across the Indo-Pacific, recognized as the central front in the 21st-century struggle between liberty and authoritarianism. To prevail, the U.S. must serve as a civilizational anchor, building alliances rooted in shared values, deterring coercive actions, and presenting a compelling alternative to China's authoritarian expansion.*

The People's Republic of China (PRC) is currently undertaking a massive, historic military buildup, for the purpose of:

- Dominating the Indo-Pacific.
- Encircling and strangling our good friend and strategic partner India.
- Holding the region's sea lines of communication at risk.
- Seizing Taiwan and islands in the South China Sea as a steppingstone to projecting the PLA into the Western Hemisphere on a larger and more sustained basis.
- Mounting a rapid military modernization campaign designed to limit U.S. access to the region and provide China a freer hand there.

America must prioritize our strategic alliances and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region, which represents the most populous and economically dynamic part of the world. This should include:

- Broadening and deepening our alliances and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific to include:

    1. *Supporting the formation of strategic triads among key allies and former non-allies (including, but not limited to, India-Israel-Iran or I3 – after the demise of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) and that great nation's return to the Hindu-Hebrew-Persian family of ancient and brilliant civilizations from which all citizens of the world benefit).*
    2. *Encouraging the region's freedom-loving nations to envision an alternative to the PRC's, 1) Belt-and-Road infrastructure trade debt trap strategy in Central Asia, 2) sovereignty threatening and destabilizing economic inducements and penalties, influence operations, and implied military threats to persuade other states to heed its political and security agenda, and 3) deceitful propaganda that presents Beijing's ambitions as mutually beneficial, while in reality Chinese dominance risks diminishing the sovereignty of states in the Indo-Pacific.*
    3. *Sustaining a forward U.S. military presence in the region to deter threats posed by shared adversaries. Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore are newer security and economic partners, which share America's concerns over Beijing's designs for the region.*
    4. *Denying Chinese aggression in the First Island Chain.*
    5. *Strengthening our forward posture in the Western Pacific and working closely with our allies and partners to bolster our collective ability to deter or respond effectively to aggression.*

The Middle East: *Assert a pro-democratic strategy, leveraging strength, clarity, and principled alliances to foster peace and transformation, envisioning a post-theocratic Middle East led by U.S.-backed coalitions with a free Iran as a central partner. This approach transforms the region from a source of conflict into a center of stability, capitalizing on American leadership, the decline of Iran's regime, and the historic normalization of Arab-Israeli relations.*

Today the Middle East is one of the most hopeful places on earth. In the first month of Trump47, the U.S. reimposed our Maximum Pressure campaign against the Iranian regime. Working with Israel, we strategically eroded Iran's proxy terror threat, decimated its nuclear program, and sent the unmistakable lesson that God clearly does not favor the Mullahs in Tehran.

By contrast, a growing number of countries in the region recognize America's "special providence." With the right leadership in Washington, Washington can do what many said was impossible: Israel-Arab normalization. Today, the Abraham Accords is a shining strategic success in a region that only a few years ago was perhaps the most hopeless corner of the globe.

That success, undergirded by America's policy of "peace through strength," generates an internal strategic momentum of its own, leading to further success.

We expect now for the people of Iran to rise up and take hold of their destiny. Going forward, a free new Iran with sovereignty over its vast energy riches, outside the grasp of China, which currently consumes most Iranian oil, will work with the United States and our regional allies and partners to end Islamist terror and redirect the cradle of civilization on a path worthy of its great history.

Africa: *Counter Beijing's long-term strategy to strengthen and perpetuate authoritarian rule in Africa.*

There are few regions of the world with more promise for the future than the African continent. Unlike virtually every other region of the world, Africa's positive fertility and economic growth potential is a clear indicator that, with the right leadership (both at home and with allies and partners abroad), the continent's best days are ahead of it.

However, such a positive vision for Africa's future poses a strategic threat to Beijing. For the past quarter-century, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has pursued a pan-African divide-and-conquer strategy. As it has done in the United States, the PRC has:

- Widened divisions between ordinary Africans and their rulers.
- Made African regimes more authoritarian.
- Bought off certain African leaders in exchange for outsourcing their country's foreign and military policy to Beijing. For example, in exchange for:

    1. *Providing over 80% of Djibouti's GDP, that strategically located East African country ceded a permanent military base to the PLA.From that base, Chinese military forces hold sway over the, 1) vital Red Sea lines of communication to Europe and our Middle Eastern friends and allies, and 2) critical Suez Canal, through which much of Europe's energy resources pass.*
    2. *Payoffs to corrupt politicians and business leaders, Beijing secured a claim to the strategic Port of Mombasa should Kenya default on its sovereign debt to China. As it does in the United States, Beijing is carefully laying the conditions to trigger that default, viewing the short-term economic loss of loan repayment as an acceptable "cost of doing business" for long-term military/strategic gain.*

- Triangulated with African representatives of international organizations to:

    1. *Wage lawfare against Western Civilization. For example, the government of South Africa obscured and deflected attention from its patron Beijing's increasingly flagrant genocide of its Muslim Uyghur population, by weaponizing the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC) to set in motion a modern day "blood libel" against Israel's leaders.*
    2. *Wield the African Union's authority to proliferate PRC-controlled total information dominance of the continent (via Huawei and other PRC-controlled technology companies) for the purpose of:*
        - *Proliferating crowd-control and biometric technologies throughout Africa to, 1) deplatform, and "cancel" threats posed by ordinary Africans to Beijing's authoritarian rule strategy for their home countries, and 2) make African leaders, a) less dependent on the support of ordinary citizens for accountability and political power, and b) more dependent on Beijing for political survival.*
        - *Facilitating elite fraud, waste and abuse of authority at the expense of ordinary Africans.*
        - *Concealing the vastness and systemic character of China's Africa "debt trap" strategy.*
        - *Spying on and undermining U.S.-Africa relations.*

Because Beijing pursues a similar strategy to divide the U.S. from within for the purposes of making America a more authoritarian country, the U.S. and its African friends and allies confront a common threat. This presents an opportunity to:

- Conduct "collaborative net assessments" between the U.S. and individual, or groups of, African countries.
- Craft and execute U.S.-Africa cost imposing strategies on China.
- Take U.S.-Africa strategic relations to new heights.

CONCLUSION

Too often policy documents engage in hyperbole. They state that certain developments are "unprecedented" or "more so than at any time in history." In doing so, like the "boy who cried wolf," they lose legitimacy and their authors' credibility.

The authors of this National Security Strategy (NSS) recognize this problem. So, in crafting it, we have looked to history to ground our analysis contextually.

In 1776, our republican experiment began with "all men are created equal" and endowed with God-given rights. Next year, in 2026, Americans will celebrate our semiquincentennial. As we argue in this NSS, we have succeeded this long because 250 years ago the Framers bequeathed to us a practical, wise, and elegant constitutional order.

Respect for and adherence to the U.S. Constitution has kept Americans freer, for longer, than any other civilization in history. The same was also once said of the Roman Republic. But that was before the erosion of its republican principles and rule of law gave way to the law of the jungle. Hopelessly corrupt, weak, and despotic, Rome, by then a rump of a once great power, was overrun by barbarian hordes and collapsed. But what put the final nail in the coffin was when Rome's unprincipled leaders normalized the commission of treason. Writing over 2000 years ago, Marcus Tullius Cicero explained why:

"A nation can survive its fools, and even the ambitious. But it cannot survive treason from within. An enemy at the gates is less formidable, for he is known and carries his banner openly. But the traitor moves amongst those within the gate freely, his sly whispers rustling through all the alleys, heard in the very halls of government itself."

Soon after penning those words, Cicero, the pre-eminent whistleblower of his time, was beheaded in a coup. The parallels between Cicero's Rome and America today are both self-evident and worse for the U.S. Unlike in Cicero's time, if there are any "gates" left at all in America, our authoritarian adversaries are not just inside and outside but walking through the open gates of our governments and institutions with impunity. The continued flourishing of our constitutional republic is not assured.

We do not claim to have all the solutions to this problem. To begin that process, the U.S. national security bureaucracy must be purged of enemy agents and "fellow travelers." Step two is that U.S. national security leaders must begin again to craft net assessments, including with our allies and partners, focused on all aspects of the U.S. long-term strategic competition against our adversaries.

From those net assessments, as our Founders did before us 250 years ago, we must craft national security strategies that marshal all the tools of our national power to prevail against the strategic threats to America, so ten generations from now our descendants, as we do to our forebears today, will look back on us with pride and gratitude.

GLOSSARY OF DEFINED ACRONYMS

AI: Artificial Intelligence – Technologies that simulate human intelligence, such as learning and problem-solving.

AUKUS: Australia, United Kingdom, United States Security Partnership – A trilateral security pact focused on Indo-Pacific defense cooperation.

BRI: Belt and Road Initiative – China's global infrastructure and investment strategy to expand its economic and political influence.

CCP: Chinese Communist Party – The ruling political party of the People's Republic of China.

CIA: Central Intelligence Agency – The U.S. agency responsible for foreign intelligence gathering and covert operations.

CONUS: Continental United States – The 48 adjoining U.S. states plus the District of Columbia, excluding Alaska and Hawaii.

DEI: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – A program promoting Marxist agendas presented as framework for organizing fair treatment and full participation of all people.

DOD: Department of Defense – The U.S. federal agency responsible for national security and the armed forces.

EDCA: Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement – A bilateral defense agreement between the U.S. and the Philippines to strengthen military alliance.

EU: European Union – A political and economic union of 27 European countries that operate collectively on trade, law, and policy.

FBI: Federal Bureau of Investigation – The U.S. domestic intelligence and security service, and its principal federal law enforcement agency.

FONOP: Freedom of Navigation Operation – U.S. Navy missions challenging excessive maritime claims to uphold international law.

FTO: Foreign Terrorist Organization – A designation by the U.S. Secretary of State for foreign organizations that engage in terrorist activity (or retain the capability and intent to do so) and threaten the security of U.S. nationals or national security, making it unlawful to provide them material support and imposing other restrictions like financial asset freezes and travel bans.

GDP: Gross Domestic Product – A measure of a country's total economic output and performance.

ICC: International Criminal Court – A permanent international tribunal established in 2002 by the Rome Statute to investigate, prosecute, and try individuals accused of committing the most serious crimes of international concern, including genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the crime of aggression.

GLOSSARY OF DEFINED ACRONYMS

ICJ: International Court of Justice – The principal judicial organ of the United Nations, established in 1945 by the UN Charter, that settles legal disputes between states (contentious cases) and provides advisory opinions on international legal issues referred to it by authorized UN organs and specialized agencies.

IG: Inspector General – An official responsible for oversight, auditing, and investigations within a government agency.

IRI: Islamic Republic of Iran – The official name of Iran's government, a theocratic regime with strong regional influence.

ISIS: Islamic State of Iraq and Syria – A jihadist militant group that controlled territory in Iraq and Syria.

ISR: Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance – Military activities to gather and process information for decision-making.

IT: Information Technology – The use of computers and telecommunications to store, retrieve, and transmit data.

JCPOA: Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action – The 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers that supported Iran's nuclear program.

KGB: Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti – The former Soviet Union's main security agency for intelligence and secret police.

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization – A military alliance of Western nations for mutual defense.

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization – A non-profit group that operates independently of government, often in humanitarian or advocacy roles.

NSS: National Security Strategy – A document outlining U.S. national security goals and how to achieve them.

NSA: National Security Agency – A U.S. agency specializing in signals intelligence and cybersecurity.

ONA: Office of Net Assessment – A Pentagon office that conducts long-term strategic analysis.

OSC: Office of Special Counsel – A U.S. agency that protects whistleblowers and enforces the Hatch Act.

PLA: People's Liberation Army – The armed forces of the Chinese Communist Party.

GLOSSARY OF DEFINED ACRONYMS

PRC: People's Republic of China – The official name of China's one-party state led by the CCP.

PSYOP: Psychological Operations – Military operations intended to influence the emotions, motives, and behavior of specific audiences.

QUAD: Quadrilateral Security Dialogue – A strategic alliance between the U.S., Japan, Australia, and India for Indo-Pacific cooperation.

SIGINT: Signals Intelligence – Intelligence gathered by intercepting communications and electronic signals.

SOCOM: Special Operations Command – The U.S. unified command for elite military units conducting special missions.

TCO: Transnational Criminal Organization – A criminal group that operates across national borders. Some of these TCOs are designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO).

UK: United Kingdom – A sovereign country consisting of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

UN: United Nations – An international organization founded to promote peace, security, and cooperation.

US: United States – A federal republic and world power headquartered in North America.

USA: United States of America – The full formal name of the U.S.

USG: United States Government – The federal government of the United States.

USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics – A former communist state that existed from 1922 to 1991. The Russian Federation is currently considered the primary legal and political successor to the USSR.

WMD: Weapons of Mass Destruction – Weapons capable of causing large-scale death and destruction.

WWII: World War II – A global war fought from 1939 to 1945 involving most of the world's nations.

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APPENDIX A: UNDERSTANDING ACTIVE SUBVERSION STRATEGIES IN THE UNITED STATES – How All Americans Can Counter the Insider Threat

Subversion is the act of overthrowing, destroying, or undermining an established system, government, or institution, often through covert means or internal manipulation, with the aim of altering its structure or control.

The United States is facing increasing signs of ideological, societal, and political subversion, driven in part by foreign entities such as Russia and China. These indicators signal vulnerabilities within U.S. society and governance that are being exploited by both domestic and foreign subversive actors. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort to strengthen societal cohesion, restore trust in democratic institutions, and protect the integrity of political processes.

The terms ideological subversion, societal subversion, and political subversion refer to strategies or processes aimed at undermining or destabilizing a system, but they differ in their focus and scope. Understanding the following definitions, indicators and intent offer critical insights into the ongoing challenges that threaten our national stability.

Ideological subversion involves efforts to undermine core societal values, beliefs, and institutions, often through covert or gradual means. Key indicators of this subversion include rising political polarization, manipulation of information ecosystems, and growing distrust in essential institutions like government, media, and education. These trends weaken social cohesion, erode shared national identity, reduce national will and create fertile ground for radical ideologies to take root.

Societal subversion further exacerbates corruption within U.S. institutions. The erosion of trust in government, media, and the judiciary has created vulnerabilities that foreign actors, particularly Russia and China, have exploited. These state actors use disinformation campaigns, social media manipulation, and economic influence to amplify divisions within the U.S. and weaken national unity. Domestically, corruption and politicization within key institutions have further undermined the nation's ability to respond effectively to these threats. This internal corruption provides a convenient pathway for subversive foreign influence to destabilize the political landscape.

Political subversion is marked by declining confidence in the electoral process, increasing partisan hostility, and the weaponization of institutions for partisan ends. High levels of disinformation, foreign election interference, and rising political violence contribute to the breakdown of civil discourse and the weakening of rule of law. Together, these trends signal a country under strain, vulnerable to subversive forces both from within and abroad. To protect the integrity of the American way of life, the U.S. must address these internal vulnerabilities by strengthening institutional accountability, restoring public trust, and fortifying resilience against foreign interference.

Understanding the Intent and Indicators of Ideological, Societal, and Political Subversion

Subversion aims to destabilize societies by undermining their ideological, societal, and political foundations, introducing rival beliefs or eroding trust in core systems. It targets the intellectual, cultural, and governance structures shaping collective identity.

This process is deliberate, using covert methods to weaken values, social bonds, and institutions. Detecting subversion in the U.S. requires analyzing shifts in cultural norms, political discourse, and societal cohesion, often masked as progressive change.

Subversion unfolds gradually, employing propaganda, compromised institutions, and foreign influence to shift ideologies and fragment unity. For example, significant funding from authoritarian regimes to universities can promote ideas that challenge democratic values, weakening the ideological, societal, and political principles essential for American resilience and cohesion.

Below, we define these terms, describe their intent, and outline verifiable indicators, drawing on credible sources to provide critical insights into threats to national stability.

Ideological Subversion - Intent: To reshape the ideological foundation of the United States, making society more receptive to alternative systems of government or vulnerable to collapse.

Ideological subversion involves undermining the core beliefs, values, or worldview of a society, often through covert or gradual means, targeting the intellectual and moral framework that shapes how people perceive reality. It is systematic, using propaganda and malign influence to weaken foundational principles like religious, moral, or philosophical beliefs.

Indicators of Ideological Subversion

1. Polarization and Erosion of Shared Values

- ***Key Observation:*** *Increasing political and cultural polarization replaces compromise and shared national identity with deep ideological divides.*
- ***Supporting Data:*** *Pew Research Center (2020) reports that 80% of Americans view the opposing political party as a "threat to the nation's well-being."*
- ***Implications:*** *This fracturing of consensus threatens social cohesion and opens the door for subversive ideologies.*
- ***Source:*** *Pew Research Center, "America Is Exceptional in Its Political Divide," 2020.*

2. Foreign Influence Operations

- ***Key Observation:*** *External actors actively promote divisive ideologies to weaken national cohesion.*
- **Supporting Data:** The U.S. Intelligence Community (2021) documents how state actors like Russia and China amplify polarizing issues, such as race and immigration, to destabilize democratic unity.
- **Implications:** These operations erode trust in democratic processes and exacerbate divisions.
- **Source:** Office of the Director of National Intelligence, "Annual Threat Assessment," 2021.

3. Erosion of Civic Norms

- ***Key Observation:*** *Declining participation in civic institutions, such as religious organizations and community groups, alongside rising ideological tribalism.*
- ***Supporting Data:*** *Robert Putnam's Bowling Alone (updated 2020) notes a 50% drop in civic engagement since the 1960s.*
- ***Implications:*** *Weakened social bonds increase susceptibility to radical or subversive ideologies.*
- ***Source:*** *Robert Putnam, Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community, 2020.*

Societal Subversion - Intent: To weaken the social cohesion that stabilizes society, making it easier to manipulate or control.

Societal Subversion involves undermining the social fabric, norms, institutions, or cohesion of a community or nation. It targets social structures like family, education, religion, or community bonds to create division or dysfunction.

Societal subversion focuses on disrupting social unity and undermining trust in institutions. This process includes fostering division through class, race, or cultural conflicts, creating fractures within society. While it often overlaps with ideological subversion, societal subversion emphasizes practical social disruption over abstract beliefs. An example of this would be encouraging distrust in institutions such as schools or religious organizations or amplifying social tensions to create unrest. These actions erode the cohesion that holds society together and destabilize its social fabric.

Societal subversion involves the gradual disintegration of social cohesion, norms, and cultural foundations. Through both deliberate and emergent processes, the weakening of societal structures creates fertile ground for subversive ideologies to take root.

Indicators of Societal Subversion

1. Fragmentation of Social Cohesion

- **Key Observation:** Increasing division along racial, political, and socioeconomic lines weakens the shared sense of community.
- **Supporting Data:** Pew Research Center (2020) shows that 78% of Americans believe the country is more divided than during their parents' generation.
- **Implications:** These divisions reduce national unity and foster environments where subversive ideologies can exploit societal fault lines.
- **Source:** Pew Research Center, *"America Is Exceptional in Its Political Divide," 2020.*

2. Polarization and Tribalism

- **Key Observation:** Growing ideological and cultural tribalism prioritizes group identity over national unity.
- **Supporting Data:** American National Election Studies (2020) show that 80% of partisans view the opposing side as "immoral" or "dangerous."
- **Implications:** This polarization erodes political and social stability, increasing vulnerability to subversive tactics.
- **Source:** American National Election Studies, 2020.

3. Erosion of Civic Engagement

- **Key Observation:** Declining participation in community organizations and local governance weakens social bonds.
- **Supporting Data:** Robert Putnam's *The Upswing (2020)* shows a 60% decline in membership in civic groups since the 1970s.
- **Implications:** Reduced civic engagement fosters isolation and susceptibility to divisive ideologies.
- **Source:** Robert Putnam, "*The Upswing: How America Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can Do It Again," 2020*.

4. Economic Dislocation and Inequality

- **Key Observation:** Growing economic disparities fuel alienation and distrust in the social contract.
- **Supporting Data:** U.S. Census Bureau (2022) shows the top 1% controlling 31.8% of the nation's wealth, with real wages for the bottom 50% stagnating since 1980.
- **Implications:** Economic inequality breeds perceptions of systemic unfairness, exploited by subversive movements.
- ***Source:*** *U.S. Census Bureau, "Income and Wealth Inequality," 2022*.

Political Subversion - Intent: To destabilize or replace the political system or leadership with an alternative.

Political Subversion is the act of undermining or destabilizing a political system, government, or authority, to weaken or overthrow it. It targets political institutions, leadership, and governance structures.

Political subversion focuses on political power, governance, and state legitimacy. It involves tactics such as espionage, disinformation, supporting opposition groups, and manipulating elections to undermine the authority of a government. Political subversion is often more immediate and tactical compared to ideological or societal subversion, with the goal of creating short-term disruptions to the political system. An example of this includes spreading disinformation to discredit a government, funding rebel groups, or infiltrating political organizations to influence policy decisions. These actions are designed to weaken the stability of the state and its ability to function effectively.

Political subversion involves actions or trends that undermine the stability, integrity, or functioning of the political system. These subversive efforts, often foreign covert operations, are gradually targeted at exploiting vulnerabilities within the political landscape.

Indicators of Political Subversion

1. Polarization and Partisan Hostility

- **Key Observation:** Deepening partisan divides frame political opponents as existential threats.
- **Supporting Data:** Pew Research Center (2020) reports that 80% of Americans view the opposing party as a "danger to the nation."
- **Implications:** Such polarization destabilizes governance and makes the political system susceptible to subversive tactics.
- **Source:** Pew Research Center, *"America Is Exceptional in Its Political Divide,"* 2020.

2. Foreign Influence Campaigns

- **Key Observation:** External actors attempt to manipulate U.S. public opinion or sow political discord.
- **Supporting Data:** U.S. Intelligence Community (2021) documents Russian and Chinese influence operations through social media platforms.
- **Implications:** These operations undermine domestic political cohesion and threaten national security.
- **Source:** Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *"Annual Threat Assessment,"* 2021.

Defending the Republic from Subversion

The United States stands at a critical juncture. The growing evidence of ideological, societal, and political subversion reflects not only deliberate foreign interference by adversaries like China and Russia, but also the slow corrosion of internal cohesion, institutional trust, and national unity. Subversive actors have skillfully targeted the American mind, community, and political system, eroding shared values, manipulating discourse, and weakening the very institutions designed to safeguard liberty. This is not merely a geopolitical competition; it is a struggle over the soul and survival of the American republic.

The intent behind each of these forms of subversion is clear: to make America weak from within, more vulnerable to external control, and more likely to accept an alternative system that mirrors the authoritarian regimes behind these campaigns.

But this is not inevitable. Subversion only succeeds in a complacent society. American citizens, ordinary people, still possess the power to resist, expose, and reverse these trends. The defense of the nation is no longer the sole duty of the military or government. It is a civic obligation, rooted in vigilance, education, and moral courage. The authors refer to this as “local action” enabling a “national impact.”

What American Citizens Can Do

Reaffirm and Share American Values
Study and teach the principles of the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and foundational civic virtues. Discuss them in your home, schools, churches, and local communities. Support education that emphasizes critical thinking, civil debate, and respect for national ideals.

Engage in Civic Life
Join community organizations, attend school board meetings, volunteer for local causes, and vote in every election. Civic disengagement is one of the most fertile grounds for societal decay. Rebuilding a culture of participation helps immunize society against manipulation and division.

Defend Free Speech and Civil Discourse
Reject censorship and ideological conformity. Encourage viewpoint diversity in education, media, and the workplace. Debate honorably. Listen to those with different opinions. A healthy republic depends on open dialogue, not intimidation or suppression.

Strengthen Local Institutions
Support religious congregations, parent-teacher associations, veterans’ groups, and civic clubs. These “little platoons” of American life form the backbone of national unity. As Robert Putnam warned, their decline makes the country vulnerable to ideological drift and manipulation.

Recognize and Expose Foreign Influence
Be critical of the media you consume. Verify sources, question narratives that seem engineered to divide, and identify foreign propaganda, especially online. Report suspected disinformation campaigns and demand greater transparency from tech companies and elected officials.

Hold Institutions Accountable
Demand ethical conduct and transparency from government, media, academia, and corporations. Support legislation that restricts foreign funding of U.S. institutions and requires disclosure of conflicts of interest. Corrupt institutions cannot defend liberty; they must be reformed or replaced.

Reject Extremism and Political Tribalism
Resist framing fellow Americans as enemies. Do not allow political or ideological labels to justify hatred. Extremism, whether on the right or left, is often seeded by subversive actors. Unity does not require uniformity, but it demands loyalty to the republic over party or personality.

Support Strategic Countermeasures
Advocate for national policies that limit foreign ownership of media, tech, and academic platforms. Encourage reforms in cyber defense, election integrity, and media literacy. A population equipped with the tools to detect and resist manipulation is a strategic asset.

Rebuild Trust Through Integrity
Lead by example in your family, workplace, and community. Tell the truth. Keep your word. Live according to the values you believe in. Restoring trust at the national level begins with a thousand small acts of honesty and courage at the local level.

Pray, Reflect, and Persevere
Subversion is not defeated by policy alone. It is defeated by conviction, sacrifice, and the enduring belief that freedom is worth defending. As generations before have done, Americans must be willing to stand for the truth even when it is unpopular, and act with resolve even when the odds appear long.

Never Forget ... America cannot be conquered by armies, but it can be lost through apathy, distraction, and internal decay. The good news is that it can also be renewed from the ground up. The task is not easy, but it is ours. The time to act is now. Our freedom, our children's future, and the integrity of our nation depend on what we do next.

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