Global migration
Middle East
Nuclear negotiations
Nationalism in Europe
Trade with China
India and its neighbors
Cyber conflict
U.S. and Mexico
State of Diplomacy
Foreign policy strategy in the current domestic and international environment:

- The return of great power confrontation.
- The choices of foreign policy instruments in the U.S.’s grand strategy.
- The state of the liberal international order.
- The process of making American foreign policy.
According to the current US National Defense Strategy:

The central challenge to U.S. prosperity and security is the reemergence of long-term, strategic competition with the would-be great powers of Russia and China.
• China seeks to achieve “Indo-Pacific regional hegemony in the near-term” and to replace the U.S. as the guarantor of the international order in the future.

• China seeks to increase its conventional power around the Pacific Rim.

• China has moved aggressively into the South China Sea.

• Chinese “One Belt One Road” program.
• Russia wishes to restore the regional hegemony it achieved during the Cold War (1947–91) days within its former empire.

• Russia attempts to do this by weakening the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and

• By using social media and propaganda to discredit and subvert democratic processes in Georgia, Crimea, eastern Ukraine, and any western democracy that can be penetrated.

• These goals are buttressed by irregular warfare troops and tactics on the ground, and underwritten by an expanding nuclear force and doctrine.
Russia and China employ “political warfare”—the coercive use of mainly non-military instruments to alter adversary behavior.

• In 2018 the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, wrote that Russia and China see political warfare as a “standard instrument of statecraft,” having spent years refining this instrument:
  – To preserve domestic control but also
  – To challenge their foreign rivals.
Political warfare is attractive to Russia and China from several perspectives:

- It is cheaper and less likely to escalate;
- it is only moderately ambitious in that its methods involve sowing doubt, creating confusion, undermining trust and imposing costs; and
- it leverages the digital revolution to flood audiences, foreign and domestic, with false information.
What should the U.S.’ “grand strategy” be?

Since the closure of the Cold War, the choices appear to have narrowed to three:

• Maintaining leadership of the liberal international order, coupled with cooperative security, is defined as **primacy**;

• Neo-isolationism, combined with offshore balancing, is characterized as **restraint**; and

• **Selective engagement** occupies a middle ground between these two, allowing its practitioners to be more flexible and pragmatic in exercising U.S. power.
Primacy - as practiced by the sole superpower

- Concerned with great power rivalries
- Uses military power as primary determinant
- Also employs other instruments of foreign policy:
  - Economic sanctions
  - Information warfare
  - Confrontational diplomacy
Restraint – the new isolationism

• The U.S. can no longer afford to maintain world order, and instead should devote its attention and scarce resources to nation-building at home.

• American foreign policy has become too militarized.

• We cannot afford the blood and treasure to continue as the world’s policeman.

• We need to focus on our deteriorating infrastructure, unequal education outcomes, and equitable economic opportunity for our own people.

• (Some say this is the current EU behavior)
Selective Engagement

- Calls for military engagement abroad, but only when that military power can be useful in deterring great power conflict.
- Thus, selective engagement seeks a middle course between an isolated, retrenching U.S. and one with the power and motivation to act as the world’s sheriff.
Selective Engagement

- Selectively engagement preserves the status quo,
- Withdraws U.S. military commitments from regions likely to spiral out of control and,
- Emphasizes diplomatic overtures, economic benefits and information campaigns to encourage U.S. allies to bear a greater share of the burden in areas of non-vital interest.
- (As practiced before the current administration)
Challenges to the post-WWII international order

The demands of state sovereignty.

- Tension is between a global system with international obligations and a state system that emphasizes only national interests.

- China challenges U.S. power along the Pacific Rim, and its “One Belt One Road” program moves with massive Chinese financial investment.
The demands of state sovereignty.

• Russia’s foreign policy of confrontation and expansion is aggressive and unchallenged, as it shores up dictators, expands Russian influence in the Middle East, and seeks alliances with the U.S.’ friends and foes.
Challenges to the post-WWII international order

The resurgence of nationalism.

- The rebirth of nationalism threatens the international consensus needed for collective action.
- In Europe, the UK, Italy, Poland and Hungary have evidenced their distrust of the European Union (EU).
- The UK’s decision to withdraw from the bloc (“Brexit”) is the most dramatic example of this new nationalism.
The pull of populism.

- The populist wave undermines faith in international institutions (Ex: NATO, WTO, UN) that support the international order, and
- Sees these institutions as interfering with the will of a homogeneous majority.
- At the same time, it opposes the elite-led government which aids and supports ethnic and religious minorities.
The pull of populism.

• These populist movements are stoked by concerns that migration threatens national culture, and by anti-Muslim attitudes that are shaped by fears about terrorism.

• Across Europe, recent elections saw:
  ✓ the rise of the far-right Alternative for Germany party,
  ✓ the increasing popularity of Austria’s Freedom Party,
  ✓ the anti-internationalist views being expressed by political parties in Italy, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.
Challenges to the post-WWII international order

The fraying of alliances.

• Two key European institutions, NATO and the EU, are under political and economic strain;

• including growing trade disputes between the U.S. and its European allies;
The fraying of alliances.

- Accusations by the U.S. that its NATO allies are “free riding” rather than shouldering a fair share of the financial burden for collective defense.

- Both NATO and the EU are labeled troubled partnerships and further opposition might prompt what some describe as a “new world disorder.”
Trump’s Foreign Policy Is No Longer Unpredictable

Gone Are the Days of a Divided Administration

By Thomas Wright
Now past the 2-year mark, it is possible to identify a singular Trump Administration foreign policy methodology:

1. A narrow transactional relationship with other countries.
2. A preference for authoritarian governments over other democracies.
3. a mercantilist approach to international economic policy,

4. a general disregard for human rights and the rule of law, and

5. the promotion of nationalism and unilateralism at the expense of multilateralism.
What Set Trump Apart?

• He is the only president ever elected on a platform that explicitly rejected all of the pillars of U.S. grand strategy.

• He has long rejected the United States’ security alliances as unfair to the taxpayer and accused allies of conning Washington into defending them for free.

• He has long seen trade deficits as a threat to U.S. interests and has rejected virtually all trade deals that the United States has negotiated since World War II.
He has a history of expressing admiration for strongmen around the world.

• Throughout his campaign, Trump relied on his own instincts and added a few new issues, particularly strong opposition to illegal immigration and criticism of trade with China.
Trump pushes back on intelligence assessment of North Korea

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump lashed out at his intelligence chiefs on Wednesday after they told Congress that North Korea is unlikely to dismantle its nuclear arsenal and that the Iran nuclear deal is working.
A Unified Foreign Policy

The administration has embraced nationalism and disdained multilateralism as part of its overarching philosophical framework—something evident in speeches by Trump, Bolton, and Pompeo.

- The administration also has little regard for democracy and human rights, except in the cases of Cuba, Iran, and Venezuela.
- This worldview is manifest in Washington’s opposition to the European Union, support for authoritarian leaders who defy international norms, and withdrawal from international organizations and treaties.
Selective Engagement: A Bipartisan U.S. Foreign Policy Approach?

At the start of 2019, are we seeing the first green shoots of what might emerge as the mid-21st century iteration of a U.S. bipartisan foreign policy consensus? From Nikki Haley’s conceptualization and defense of her interpretation of Donald Trump’s “America First” approach to the first forays by Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren to define what a progressive foreign policy might encompass, American political figures are beginning to wrestle with the task, as Sanders himself put it, of engaging in a “vigorou
Before the 2016 election, national leaders had begun to question America’s role as the sole superpower.

The grinding expense of the long wars in the Middle East has convinced many Americans that the effort is unjustified.

The first two years of Donald Trump’s administration have altered both the structure of international politics and the domestic discussion about the U.S. role in the world.

A growing number of U.S. political figures now accept that there is no resetting to any sort of pre-2016 approach.
Selective Engagement

• The end of the unipolar moment and the return of great power competition have changed the calculations for U.S. engagement.

• A Carnegie Council report notes that Americans “want to renegotiate some of the terms of US involvement in terms of costs and burden-sharing.”

• As Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has noted, part of the agenda of advancing U.S. foreign policy goals is creating opportunities for U.S. companies and generating jobs at home.
Selective Engagement

• In other words, American foreign policy actions must be directly connected to some aspect of Americans’ domestic well-being.

• The Trump administration’s rejects offering preferential access to America’s domestic market—even if American workers or companies will suffer in the short run.

• Instead, Trump has been very blunt in demanding what some call “entrance fees” from other states seeking to benefit from U.S. protection and leadership.
Even though the Trump administration’s effort has been criticized from both left and right, it is from those terms of reference that future discussions about American national security policy will take place.

• Prospective 2020 presidential candidates will differ in some details of their foreign policy prescriptions, but none of the hopefuls — so far — advocates a return to the status quo before Trump.
Another assumption—that security follows trade—is changing.

- The current model is not sustainable: close U.S. allies who depend on Washington for protection have allowed markets to develop trade relationships with Russia and China, which seek to revise the current international system. (Nord 2 pipeline)

- For years, Australian politicians have warned that their growing economic dependence on Chinese markets would threaten their willingness to join with the United States in responding to Beijing’s efforts to revise the existing order in the Pacific rim.
The trend lines are pointing towards a future where the U.S. reduces its global activity to a more manageable number of partners around the world, and

- The administration expects a clearer bargain which links US security guarantees to greater investment in and purchase of goods and services from the U.S. economy.
In turn, the U.S. will more likely deny access to American markets, technology, or financing until a country has met a series of conditions in terms of how it is governed and what commitments it is willing to undertake to share burdens with the United States.

- “The United States will become more selective in where and when it chooses to act.”
- On this, all sides of the U.S. political spectrum are moving to agreement.
Trump's Strategic Vision Is More Coherent Than His Critics Imagine

Loren Thompson  Contributor
Aerospace & Defense
I write about national security, especially its business dimensions.

News coverage of President Donald J. Trump in national media is so reflexively negative that many observers think he has no ideological core. His actions are often depicted as uninformed, impulsive and ego-driven.

However, even a cursory review of the Trump record before and during his presidency reveals a stable foundation of beliefs—beliefs that earlier generations of Republicans and even Democrats would have had little trouble embracing.
News coverage of President Donald J. Trump is so reflexively negative that many observers think he has no ideological core.

- His actions are often depicted as uninformed, impulsive and ego-driven.
- However, a review of the Trump record going back for decades reveals a consistent pattern of beliefs.
- Most people can’t separate Trump’s style from the substance of his beliefs. His style is so unusual for a public figure that the “how” of his actions often obscures the “what.” And his popularity suffers for it.

Trump's Strategic Vision Is More Coherent Than His Critics Imagine
This is not a new development in American history.

- Abraham Lincoln, arguably the greatest president ever, was widely derided during his faltering early years as chief executive, with one newspaper referring to him as “Honest Ape.”
- Oliver Wendell Holmes described Franklin Roosevelt as “a second-rate intellect.”
- Washington sage (and former defense secretary) Clark Clifford characterized Ronald Reagan as “an amiable dunce.”
In later years, all three of these presidents were remembered fondly as leaders who changed the course of history for the better.

• The same might someday prove true of Trump too, no matter how improbable that may seem to his critics today.

• After all, what is so strange about wanting to build a wall on a border?

• But that is where our political discourse currently stands.
Every country is out for itself.

- President Trump is a realist, not an idealist.
- Half a century in the New York real-estate market has convinced him humans are motivated mainly by self-interest, and he presumes the same is true of nation-states.
- Power alignments may change, but the struggle for dominance is ceaseless.
- Countries that are our friends today may be our enemies tomorrow, and vice-versa.
- Trump believes his most important role as president is to keep America on top—even if that means dealing ruthlessly with friends who have become a burden. (NATO, WTO)
Peace is sustained by strength.

“Peace through strength” wasn’t just a favorite phrase of Ronald Reagan, it was a sentiment expressed by the Roman emperor Hadrian, and later embraced by George Washington in his first state-of-the-union address.

Trump raised defense spending by an amount greater than the entire military budget of Germany.

The president believes that the most reliable way to prevent wars is by making them too horrible for enemies to contemplate.

Or as Teddy Roosevelt might have put it, “Speak softly and carry a big stick.”
Strength arises first and foremost from a robust economy.

- Trump’s security views are inseparable from his economic views, and he sees U.S. industry in the same light that FDR did – as an “arsenal of democracy.”
- Allowing our economy to decay through globalization or unfair trade treaties endangers both peace and prosperity.
- Trump believes the decline of America’s share of global GDP from 31% in 2000 to 23% in 2008 was an ominous trend that needed to be reversed.
- He blames China’s mercantilist trade policies for much of the erosion, and he therefore has little compunction about responding in kind.
Every overseas commitment is an investment.

- Given that the U.S. is pursuing its self-interest in global affairs, Trump believes foreign interventions should be weighed in terms of their likely returns.
- The commitment of nearly a billion dollars per week to nation-building in Afghanistan is clearly an underperforming commitment.
- Syria looks to be a nearly worthless piece of real estate.
Every overseas commitment is an investment.

- Trump strongly disapproved the misguided decision to invade Iraq, which destabilized the region and ultimately cost the U.S. trillions of dollars.

- Trump will intervene where there are obvious benefits for America, but his inclination is to spend taxpayer funds over here rather than “over there.”
Allies aren’t worth having if they’re a burden.

• When Al-Qaeda carried out the 9-11 attacks, its main complaint was that U.S. forces were in the Islamic holy land.

• When North Korea threatened the U.S. with missile attack, its main complaint was that U.S. troops were in South Korea.

• Trump looks at the potential fallout from such commitments and questions whether they serve national interests.

• That is why during the campaign he suggested that maybe Japan and South Korea needed their own nuclear deterrents.
You don’t have to agree with Trump’s policies to see that there is an underlying coherence to his thought process.

- After Trump spoke to Erdogan on the telephone, he announced the pullout of US military forces out of Syria.
- Even Trump critics concede that it is time to reevaluate our military missions in Syria and Afghanistan.
- And as David Lynch observed in the Washington Post on December 14, “Despite his reputation as a global loner, Trump’s views on China are becoming the conventional wisdom.”
President Trump is asking questions about national security that should have been raised long ago, and trying to reverse trends in trade that have led to the decline of our industrial economy.

• So don’t be surprised if 50 years from now, historians remember Trump in much the same way that we now recall that “amiable dunce,” Ronald Reagan.

• Incidentally, Reagan’s popularity at this point in his presidency was nearly identical to what Trump’s is today.
What Can We Expect in Foreign Policy Decisions?

- A narrow transactional relationship with other countries.
- A preference for authoritarian governments over other democracies.
- A mercantilist approach to international economic policy,
- A general disregard for human rights and the rule of law, and
- The promotion of nationalism and unilateralism at the expense of traditional allies.
United Nations General Assembly (UNGA 74)

September 17 - September 30

74th Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA 74)

September 17 – 30, 2019

New York, NY

The 74th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA 74) will open on September 17, 2019. The first day of the high-level General Debate will be September 24, 2019.

During the week of the debate, several other high-level events also will convene (as of November 27, 2018):

- **September 23:** UN Secretary-General will convene a Climate Summit and the UNGA will hold a one-day high-level meeting on Universal Health Coverage (UHC);

- **September 24:** following the opening of the 74th General Debate, the UNGA will convene a meeting of the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), which will take place on the afternoon of September 24 and all day on September 25.

- **September 26:** the UNGA will hold a high-level dialogue on financing for development (FID), as well as a high-level meeting on the elimination of nuclear weapons.

- **September 27:** the UNGA will hold the high-level meeting to review progress made in addressing the priorities of small island developing States (SIDS) through the implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway.
Strongmen to Kick Off the UN General Assembly Session in September

August 14, 2019 by Stéphanie Fillion

President Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil with President Donald Trump of the United States, March 19, 2019, in the White House. Both men are scheduled to attend the annual opening session of the UN General Assembly, which will feature not only the parade of leaders but also a climate-change conference. ALAN SANTOS/FR

Donald Trump will shake hands with Emmanuel Macron, Jair Bolsonaro and Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. But will Benjamin Netanyahu, Boris Johnson and Angela Merkel be there, too?

The 74th opening debate of the United Nations General Assembly, which lasts a few weeks, starts on Sept. 17; the general debate begins on Sept. 24. With most member states signed up right now, the Assembly gives world leaders and their representatives a chance to make their points in front of the international community. Nigeria’s ambassador to the UN, Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, will preside over the 74th session.