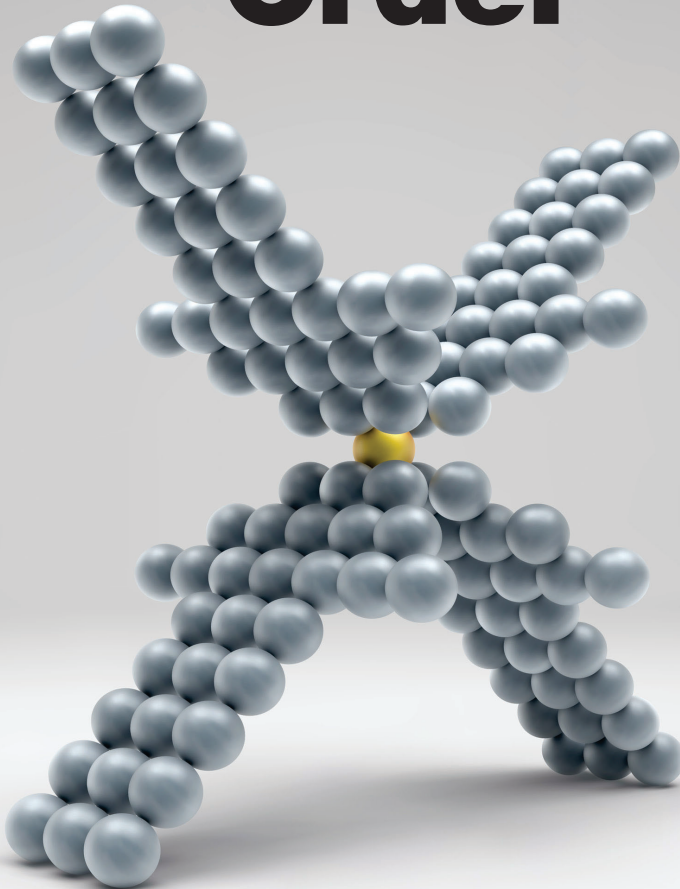




BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE INTERNATIONAL ORDER

A RAND Project to Explore U.S. Strategy in a Changing World

# **Alternative Options** FOR U.S. POLICY TOWARD THE **International Order**



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## Preface

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Since 1945, the United States has pursued its interests through the creation and maintenance of international economic institutions, bilateral and regional security arrangements and organizations, and liberal political norms that are often referred to as the “international order.” In recent years, rising powers have begun to challenge aspects of this order. This report is part of a larger RAND Corporation study, entitled “Building a Sustainable International Order,” that aims to understand the existing international order, assess current challenges to the order, and recommend future U.S. policies with respect to the order. (For more information on the project, visit [www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/international-order](http://www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/international-order).)

The study has produced multiple reports and essays. Three are central to the study’s assessment of the international order: one that defines and scopes the order;<sup>1</sup> one that examines its status, attempting to create measurable indexes of the health of the order;<sup>2</sup> and this one, which defines and explains the significance of alternative visions for the future of the international order. The overall study describes and evaluates how U.S. decisionmakers have described and used the international order in conducting foreign policy, as well as how aca-

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<sup>1</sup> Michael J. Mazarr, Miranda Priebe, Andrew Radin, and Astrid Stuth Cevallos, *Understanding the Current International Order*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1598-OSD, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Michael J. Mazarr, Astrid Stuth Cevallos, Miranda Priebe, Andrew Radin, Kathleen Reedy, Alexander D. Rothenberg, Julia A. Thompson, and Jordan Willcox, *Measuring the Health of the Liberal International Order*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1994-OSD, 2017.

demics have assessed the mechanisms by which the international order changes state behavior.

This research was sponsored by the Office of Net Assessment in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and conducted within the International Security and Defense Policy Center of the RAND National Defense Research Institute, a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the Unified Combatant Commands, the Navy, the Marine Corps, the defense agencies, and the defense Intelligence Community.

For more information on the RAND International Security and Defense Policy Center, see [www.rand.org/nsrd/ndri/centers/isdp](http://www.rand.org/nsrd/ndri/centers/isdp) or contact the director (contact information is provided on the web page).

# Contents

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**Preface** ..... iii

**Tables** ..... vii

**Summary** ..... ix

**Abbreviations** ..... xiii

**CHAPTER ONE**

**Introduction** ..... 1

**CHAPTER TWO**

**Key Choices About the Rules of the International Order** ..... 5

What Are U.S. Goals for the International Order? ..... 7

Who Makes the Rules? ..... 8

How Binding Are the Rules—and on Whom? ..... 13

**CHAPTER THREE**

**Alternative Visions of International Order** ..... 17

Coalition Against Revisionism ..... 19

Democratic Order ..... 24

Great-Power Concert 2.0 ..... 29

Global Constitutional Order ..... 34

Policy Implications Under Each Vision of Order ..... 37

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**U.S. Policies for Alternative Visions of Order: International**

**Economic Policies** ..... 41

Economic Policies Consistent with All Visions of Order ..... 42

Coalition Against Revisionism ..... 46

Democratic Order..... 49

Great-Power Concert 2.0..... 51

Global Constitutional Order ..... 53

Potential for Disruption in the Economic Order..... 54

CHAPTER FIVE

**U.S. Policies for Alternative Visions of Order: Great-Power Relations .... 57**

Coalition Against Revisionism ..... 58

Democratic Order..... 61

Great-Power Concert 2.0..... 64

Global Constitutional Order ..... 67

Example: Russia and NATO Open Door..... 71

Example: China and Offshore Island Disputes..... 73

CHAPTER SIX

**U.S. Policies for Alternative Visions of Order: Defense Strategy ..... 75**

Coalition Against Revisionism ..... 77

Democratic Order..... 83

Great-Power Concert 2.0..... 87

Global Constitutional Order ..... 90

Overall Findings: Cross-Cutting Priorities and Lessons ..... 93

CHAPTER SEVEN

**Lessons and Implications ..... 99**

Lesson One: An Order’s Character Will Likely Flow from Its Strategy  
for Achieving Great-Power Peace..... 100

Lesson Two: No Single Order Offers the United States the Ability to  
Place Equal Value on All Four Goals of Order ..... 104

Lesson Three: Preferences of Other States Will Affect the Viability of  
Each Vision ..... 104

Lesson Four: Coherent Views About the International Order Can  
Strengthen U.S. Policy—but Only So Long as Different Strands of  
U.S. Foreign Policy Are Consistent with the Desired Vision of Order ... 105

APPENDIX

**Origin Stories for Visions of Order..... 107**

**References ..... 113**

Tables

---

S.1. Alternative Visions of Order..... ix

S.2. Defining Alternative Visions of Order ..... x

2.1. Assumptions Behind Alternative Approaches to Rulemaking ... 11

3.1. Alternative Visions of Order..... 17

3.2. Defining Alternative Visions of Order ..... 18

3.3. Alternative Visions of Order: Distinctions from Current Approach..... 20

3.4. Mechanisms for Achieving Major Goals of Order—Coalition Against Revisionism..... 23

3.5. Mechanisms for Achieving Major Goals of Order—Democratic Order ..... 28

3.6. Mechanisms for Achieving Major Goals of Order—Great-Power Concert 2.0 .....33

3.7. Mechanisms for Achieving Major Goals of Order—Global Constitutional Order..... 36

3.8. Summary of General Implications for U.S. Policy Under Alternative Visions of Order..... 38

4.1. Economic Policies Under Alternative Visions of Order ..... 43

5.1. Approaches to Great-Power Relations Under Alternative Visions of Order.....69

6.1. Defense Strategy and Visions of Order—Theoretical Foundations .....78

6.2. Defense Strategy Choices—Coalition Against Revisionism ... 81

6.3. Defense Strategy Choices—Democratic Order..... 84

6.4. Defense Strategy Choices—Great-Power Concert 2.0 ..... 90

6.5. Defense Strategy Choices—Global Constitutional Order.....93

6.6. Defense Strategy and Visions of Order—Defense Planning Implications..... 94

7.1. Visions of Order and Key National Security Choices..... 101

7.2. Benefits and Risks of Alternative Visions of Order ..... 102





# Summary

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In recent years, the collection of rules, norms, and institutions that collectively came to be understood as the liberal order after World War II has come under increasing strain. Both geopolitical and ideological pressures are calling into question the sustainability of this postwar order as currently conceived. Yet little systematic analysis has been conducted of what alternatives exist—what form of international order could succeed the postwar liberal form as we have known it.

This report offers such an analysis, defining and evaluating four alternative international orders that could respond to changes in international politics and the role that the United States could play in each. To generate a coherent set of such alternatives, the study defined two axes around which to define such a set: *who sets the rules* of an order and *how binding those rules are* on all the members. As Table S.1 shows, these criteria lead to four alternative visions of order: an order of states aligned to counteract revisionism; a coalition of leading democracies; a new concert of great powers; and a highly institutionalized global constitutional order. Table S.2 outlines their basic elements and assumptions.

**Table S.1**  
**Alternative Visions of Order**

Rulemaking Authority	Are Rules Binding on All Members of an Order?	
	No	Yes
United States and its partners	Coalition Against Revisionism	Democratic Order
All great powers	Great-Power Concert 2.0	Global Constitutional Order

**Table S.2**  
**Defining Alternative Visions of Order**

Vision of Order	Key Elements	Key Assumptions
Coalition Against Revisionism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Defend an order that privileges U.S. interests against aggressive challengers</li><li>• Cooperate with states opposed to revisionism but prioritize U.S. autonomy</li><li>• Source of legitimacy: Shared threat perception and U.S. provision of protection and public goods</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fundamental conflicts of interest exist between the U.S. and revisionist states</li><li>• U.S. predominance is enduring and necessary for peace</li><li>• Restraining U.S. power within rules can prevent decisive action that is needed to deter revisionists</li></ul>
Democratic Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Defend a global order that privileges U.S. interests</li><li>• Commit to restraining U.S. power within institutions with democratic allies</li><li>• Integrate revisionists into binding economic institutions</li><li>• Source of legitimacy: Shared values, decisionmaking, and threat perceptions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Deep conflicts of interest between liberal and illiberal states</li><li>• The combined strength of the United States and its allies can endure</li><li>• Participation in institutions can slowly transform illiberal states</li></ul>
Great-Power Concert 2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintain weakly binding international institutions that facilitate great-power cooperation</li><li>• Source of legitimacy: Respect for legitimate security interests of all great powers, shared interests in peace and predominance</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conflicts among great powers are not fundamental</li><li>• U.S. preponderance is waning, so some compromise is necessary for peace</li><li>• Institutions can facilitate cooperation, but power will often determine outcomes</li></ul>
Global Constitutional Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accept revisions to the governance of the existing order to reflect the changing distribution of power</li><li>• Great powers commit to restrain their power within institutions among all states</li><li>• Source of legitimacy: Consistency of rules</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conflicts among great powers are not fundamental</li><li>• U.S. preponderance is waning, so some compromise is necessary for peace</li><li>• Voluntary restraint on power within rules and institutions can facilitate cooperation</li></ul>

This report focuses only on these four visions of order that reflect possible evolutions from today's world. It does not evaluate a comprehensive range of theoretical orders, and it excludes a number of potential alternatives that have been proposed. For example, the United States could, in theory, withdraw from or abandon all existing international institutions. Alternatively, the United States could promote orders purely at the regional level, or through non-state networks rather than state-based institutions.

Importantly, these four visions of order should be understood as “ideal types.” They represent concepts that reflect distinct approaches but are unlikely to be realized in the pure form described here. In practice, the United States is likely to consider options that fall between these stylized options or to apply different approaches in different regions or issue areas. These visions of order should be seen as a starting point for discussion—both about the right direction for U.S. policy toward order and about the prospects for mixing and matching different approaches in a complex international environment.

We also do not presume that the United States will have the power to “choose” the shape of the international order as a whole. It will not simply be able to decide to put any of these orders into place. Rather, these visions of order reflect aspirations that U.S. policy may aim toward based on current constraints.

We evaluate the policies that these four options would suggest in three issue areas: economics, great-power relations, and defense. The analysis focuses on the potential of each option to achieve four enduring U.S. goals for order:

1. Prevent major-power conflict and manage competition.
2. Promote economic stability and development.
3. Facilitate collective action on common challenges.
4. Promote liberal values and democracy.

This report does not recommend a single future order; rather, it aggregates and distills academic and policy debates about the U.S. role in the world as a way of identifying a range of strategic options for the

United States. In the process, it outlines the assumptions and logic that might drive the choice between these alternatives.

Finally, there are some lessons that should inform the choice of order. First, U.S. grand strategy—and especially a clear vision of how the United States hopes to promote great-power peace—should drive the choice of order. Preventing great-power war is the single most consequential purpose an order can serve, so U.S. leaders should focus on how to achieve that aim. Second, there is no obvious approach to order that will allow the United States to avoid trade-offs among its national security goals. In selecting an approach to order, U.S. leaders will need to make decisions about how to prioritize these goals. Third, the preferences of all states—from potential adversaries to potential partners—will determine whether a vision of order can, in fact, promote U.S. objectives. Finally, for a vision of order to be a useful framing concept for the United States, leaders need to commit to using that framework to guide all elements of U.S. foreign policy.

## Abbreviations

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AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
COIN	counterinsurgency operations
CT	counterterrorism
EU	European Union
G-7	Group of Seven (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
SOCOM	U.S. Special Operations Command
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
TTIP	Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership
U.N.	United Nations
UNCLOS	UN Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNSC	U.N. Security Council
WTO	World Trade Organization



## Introduction

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At the end of World War II, the United States, anxious to avoid the geopolitical and economic instabilities that had produced the conflict, seized the opportunity to shape the international order: the fundamental rules, norms, and institutions that would govern relations among states. However, the United States had to do so within the constraints of the postwar international environment. Soviet ideology and behavior made an integrated global order unlikely, and European weakness demanded U.S. leadership to bind these states together. To promote U.S. interests within this postwar context, U.S. policymakers settled on a *vision* of order—a coherent concept that specified how the elements of the order would work together to achieve U.S. objectives.<sup>1</sup>

U.S. grand strategy since 1945 has pursued this vision of order—a liberal, rules-based system led by the United States. This vision represents the marriage of two sometimes conflicting ideas. First, sovereign states should agree to respect each other's territorial integrity in exchange for cooperation and benefit. Second, the spread of liberal values—open economies, democratic political systems, and human rights—could bring prosperity and peace. This vision offered any state that was willing to follow most of its rules and norms the opportunity to join and benefit from its extensive economic, political, and cultural

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<sup>1</sup> G. John Ikenberry discusses two orders that existed simultaneously during the Cold War (the U.S.-led hegemonic Western order and the more multilateral constitutional order), as well as the constraints that prevented the adoption of alternative approaches to order in this period. G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001, pp. 170–214.

networks. During the Cold War, this vision of order took hold among the United States and its allies. After the Cold War, the United States took steps to expand this vision of order globally.

Today, however, the existing order and the U.S. vision for the future order appear to be under strain.<sup>2</sup> This strain comes partly from illiberal great powers, which resist U.S. leadership of the order and the order's emphasis on liberal values. But it is also a product of growing domestic concerns in the United States and other western countries with the central policies of the order, such as free and open trade. Observing these growing strains in the existing order, Henry Kissinger has argued that "the world is in chaos" and contends that the United States faces the problem of "how to create a coherent world order based on agreed-upon principles that are necessary for the operation of the entire system."<sup>3</sup> More than one type of order could offer such principles, and U.S. leaders must determine which vision of order is most feasible, given domestic and international constraints and U.S. interests.

This report identifies four visions for order that the United States could pursue, as well as specific policies that would support each approach to order. It does not recommend any particular approach; rather, it seeks to identify the range of strategic options the United States faces, as well as the assumptions and logic that might drive choices among these alternatives.

The next chapter identifies two key choices the United States needs to make as it defines its vision for the future international order:

1. Which states should make the rules?
2. How binding should rules be on the rulemakers?

Chapter Two also discusses the key assumptions about the future international environment and great-power politics that would drive different answers to those questions, including assumptions about the future

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<sup>2</sup> Michael J. Mazarr, Miranda Priebe, Andrew Radin, and Astrid Stuth Cevallos, *Understanding the Current International Order*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1598-OSD, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey Goldberg, "World Chaos and World Order: Conversations with Henry Kissinger," *The Atlantic*, November 10, 2016.



of great-power politics and the extent to which international organizations and rules can transform state behavior.

Chapter Three presents four alternative strategic options for order, including key components and the logic behind them. Chapters Four, Five, and Six discuss U.S. policies that would support each of the four visions of order in three major policy areas—economics, great-power relations, and defense. Chapter Seven concludes with lessons of this analysis for U.S. policy.



## Key Choices About the Rules of the International Order

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As with any foreign policy choice, U.S. policies toward the order should be driven by its grand strategy: a set of national goals and logic for how to achieve them. In broad terms, U.S. grand strategy in the post–World War II period has been driven by a desire to ensure the security and prosperity of the United States and its allies. As discussed in an earlier document in this series, historically, the United States has seen international order as a way to serve these national goals. As in the past, today’s grand strategy debates include differences of opinion about the priority that the United States should place on the various goals it pursues given the fiscal, strategic, and domestic political constraints the United States will face in the coming decades.<sup>1</sup> However, the most divergent aspects of the debate surround the means of achieving these goals.

An *international order* is defined as the rules that govern state behavior.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, alternative visions of order differ in the characteristics of those rules. Our method for identifying alternative visions of order was to aggregate existing arguments about what the future order’s rules could or should be. We drew from the existing academic and policy literature on international order, as well as historical analysis of past international orders. However, we did not limit ourselves to this literature. Rather, we

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<sup>1</sup> There has been significant divergence over which subsidiary goals the United States should pursue. Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” *International Security*, Winter 1996/1997.

<sup>2</sup> This document refers to *rules* broadly, including everything from the order’s informal norms to its formal decisionmaking and dispute-resolution processes.

drew from other academic and policy debates about the U.S. role in the world, including those surrounding U.S. grand strategy and U.S. policies in specific regions, which often have explicit or implicit arguments about variations in the rules for order.<sup>3</sup>

Our analysis of the existing literature revealed that debates about the rules of order center on two questions: Who should make the rules? And how binding should these rules be on those who make them? We distilled the existing literature to develop the logic and assumptions behind four ideal alternative visions of order that vary in their answers to these two questions.

Ultimately, the answers depend on assumptions about both the future of great-power politics and the role of institutions in managing state relations. The next section presents a more detailed discussion of the order's goals that helps explain the criteria against which future visions of order can be judged. The remainder of the chapter discusses two characteristics of international rules and the key assumptions that would motivate the vision of order the United States should pursue to achieve these goals.

An earlier report in this series details the evolution of the post-war order and the order as it exists today.<sup>4</sup> In brief, U.S. policymakers have often referred to aspirations for a rules-based international order in which all states have influence over the rules and are expected to follow them all of the time. However, in practice, the United States and its democratic allies have had more influence on rulemaking than other states. Moreover, the United States has generally expected most states to follow the rules most of the time, often enforcing those rules with U.S. power. However, the United States has seen itself as having a special status within the order, reserving the right to break the rules when it has believed decisive action was needed to defend the order or fundamental U.S. interests.

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<sup>3</sup> In this methodology, we follow earlier work that sought to identify the key schools of thought about the future of U.S. grand strategy from ongoing academic and policy debates. Posen and Ross, 1996/1997.

<sup>4</sup> Mazarr et al., 2016.

Each of the alternative orders sketched out here would presumably unfold over time (although each is an ideal type of order, and we do not assume that any of these models would come into being precisely as described). Over that same period, the character of leading states, the relations among them, the status of the international economy, or many other variables could also change. Were Russia to come under new leadership that stopped its aggressive behavior and sought a much closer relationship with the West, many aspects of each alternative—the pros and cons, elements of feasibility—would change. We could not account for dozens of intersecting and shifting variables. Therefore, even though these alternative orders speak to the future, we assume that most current aspects of the international environment, such as the basic character and preference set of China and Russia, remain constant.

## What Are U.S. Goals for the International Order?

The architects of a future order, whether a version of the current approach or something entirely new, should be explicit about the goals they are seeking. Our evaluation of postwar U.S. strategy documents suggests that U.S. policymakers have hoped that the order would achieve the following four objectives:<sup>5</sup>

1. **Prevent major-power conflict and manage competition.** Great-power peace has been a major goal of U.S. strategy in the modern era. As the world becomes multipolar, managing the tensions and conflicting interests among leading powers will pose a greater challenge. The order must provide a mechanism either to manage disputes among major powers or to deter aggression.
2. **Promote economic stability and development.** The order's geopolitical components, especially its economic institutions, have been designed to encourage the prosperity of participat-

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<sup>5</sup> Mazarr et al., 2016.

ing states by fostering trade integration and stabilizing financial markets. The goal of economic stability is an end unto itself but also a way to serve the first goal by reducing the sources of conflict between states.

3. **Facilitate collective action on common challenges.** The United States has seen institutions as a way to help states solve common challenges. The postwar order has helped catalyze action in a number of ways: providing institutions that reduce the transaction costs of cooperation, encouraging the rise of nongovernmental networks of action, and providing overarching normative support for collective action.
4. **Promote liberal values and democracy.** Although U.S. emphasis on this goal of order has varied, the United States has consistently shown a bias toward promotion of liberal values either as an end in itself or as a way to support other goals, such as peace and prosperity. Treaties and conventions on human rights, support for democratic institutions, and humanitarian intervention are examples of the postwar order's liberal character.

Any future order promoted by the United States is likely to continue pursuing each of these four fundamental goals. Debates over alternative visions revolve around their relative priority, as well as the means for achieving them. The debate about means has many dimensions, but the aforementioned two basic questions about the nature of the rules—who should make them and how binding they should be—drive many of the divisions over which type of order the United States should pursue.

## Who Makes the Rules?

As discussed above, rules are the collection of agreements, norms, and processes that govern state behavior. Many of these rules are made through formal institutions. These include the agreements made through the United Nations (U.N.), international trade organizations, the World Bank, issue-specific organizations in such areas as labor and telecommunications, and trade associations that set standards in specific techno-

logical or professional areas. Rules can also be established by individual treaties covering specific forms of activity, such as environmental regulations. Other rules are informal, reflecting tacit agreements or norms of behavior that nevertheless affect how states interact with one another.

After World War II, the United States built institutions that reflected its own interests and values and those of its closest allies, and it led the creation of institutions that gave it a disproportionate influence through such mechanisms as larger voting shares. Although formal and informal U.S. influence over rulemaking varies by institution, it is widely accepted that the United States has been the dominant rulemaker of the postwar order.<sup>6</sup>

At the end of the Cold War, more states entered these institutions, but the fundamental rules and decisionmaking processes remained largely the same.<sup>7</sup> As membership has expanded and the balance of power has changed, some states have called for governance reforms to ensure that the organization's rules and decisions reflect the interests of a wider range of states. U.S. policymakers are divided over how to respond to calls for such governance reforms. Beginning in 2010, for example, the Barack Obama administration supported International Monetary Fund (IMF) governance reform proposals that would give greater voting shares to emerging economies. Although it eventually approved them, the U.S. Congress resisted such reforms for years because they implied the end of a U.S. veto over IMF decisions.<sup>8</sup> In another example, part of the U.S. motivation for pursuing the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) was to maintain U.S. influence over the rules of international trade. As former President Obama famously argued, "America should write the rules. America should call the shots. Other

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<sup>6</sup> No quantitative measures exist to capture the precise degree of U.S. predominance in rulemaking in the order. However, many qualitative studies have described the U.S. influence in detail. See, for example, Keohane's analysis of the early postwar U.S. role in international financial and energy regimes. Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Mazarr et al., 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Jacob J. Lew, "America and the Global Economy: The Case for U.S. Leadership," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2016a; Andrew Mayeda, "Congress Approves IMF Change in Favor of Emerging Markets," *Bloomberg*, December 18, 2015.

countries should play by the rules that America and our partners set, and not the other way around.”<sup>9</sup>

As these examples reveal, one of the important questions about the order is: Who should make the rules? Put another way, whose interests should the rules reflect? Rules could primarily reflect the interests of the United States and its allies, or they could reflect the interests of a wider range of countries, including other great powers. Whether the United States can or should continue to defend a privileged position in the current order or give greater influence to other states depends, in part, on a policymaker’s assumptions about great-power politics. These assumptions fall into two categories: one focused on the future distribution of power and one on the sources of conflict and peace among great powers.

Arguments that the United States can best achieve its goals for order by maintaining predominant influence on rulemaking rests on optimistic assumptions about its standing in the future distribution of power and pessimistic assumptions about its relations with other great powers. In this view, U.S. power is enduring while other powers, such as Russia and China, face internal problems that will limit their growth.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, to the extent that other powers gain more military capacity, the United States can afford to spend more on defense

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<sup>9</sup> Barack Obama, “The TPP Would Let America, Not China, Lead the Way on Global Trade,” *Washington Post*, May 2, 2016. The U.S. insistence on retaining as much rule-setting power as possible has been evident in dozens of other issues and events. One prominent example from 2010 was the hostile, and eventually punitive, U.S. response to the initiative on Iranian nuclear nonproliferation by Brazil and Turkey. The terms were not dissimilar to those being sought in the U.S. negotiating proposals, but the message Washington sent was broader: It would control the shape of any final settlement. A more recent example was the U.S. effort to undermine China’s proposed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, strongly discouraging friends and allies from joining out of a concern that it would dilute the U.S.-influenced World Bank’s control over regional development programs. David E. Sanger and Michael Slackman, “U.S. Skeptical on Iranian Deal for Nuclear Fuel,” *New York Times*, May 17, 2010. See, also, Jillian Macnaughton and Paul Sotero, “A Reflection on the May 2010 Brazil-Turkey Nuclear Initiative Toward Iran,” Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars, webcast and recap, February 22, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Michael Beckley, “China’s Century? Why America’s Edge Will Endure,” *International Security*, Vol. 36, No. 3, Winter 2011/2012.



to maintain its military preponderance.<sup>11</sup> These views about the future structure of the international system also tend to be associated with theoretical assumptions about the sources of conflict and peace among great powers. In particular, those holding this view tend to believe that the United States has fundamental conflicts of interest with rising powers and that U.S. military predominance and demonstrations of U.S. resolve are the foundation of peace with these powers (Table 2.1).<sup>12</sup>

Arguments in favor of ceding more influence over rulemaking to other great powers rest on a different set of assumptions. First, although the United States will remain the world's most powerful country in the medium term, other countries are rising and spending more on defense. Many powers have grown unhappy with key aspects of the existing order, including dominant U.S. military power and outsized U.S. influence in rulemaking and enforcement. At the same time, economic growth and defense spending of other great powers give some a greater capability to push back against perceived U.S. domi-

**Table 2.1**  
**Assumptions Behind Alternative Approaches to Rulemaking**

<b>Approach</b>	<b>The United States and Its Allies Should Continue to Make the Rules</b>	<b>The United States Should Give Other Powers More Influence over Rulemaking</b>
Future distribution of power	The United States can afford to spend enough on defense to remain world's dominant military power.	Other powers are rising and the United States cannot afford to maintain military predominance.
Prospects for great-power peace	Fundamental conflicts of interest exist between the United States and rising states.	Conflicts of interest exist but are not fundamental; other great powers' goals remain limited.
Foundation for peace among great powers	U.S. military preponderance and shows of resolve are assumed sufficient to maintain stability.	Judicious use of power and political compromise with other great powers are assumed to create greater stability.

<sup>11</sup> Hal Brands, "The Pretty Successful Superpower," *American Interest*, November 14, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, "Don't Come Home, America: The Case Against Retrenchment," *International Security*, Vol. 37, No. 3, Winter 2012/2013.

nance.<sup>13</sup> The United States, in this view, faces fiscal constraints that make higher levels of defense spending and maintaining military predominance unaffordable in the long term. Although this school agrees that the United States has conflicts of interests with other powers, it sees them as less fundamental. In this view, U.S. policies for maintaining dominance and defending status quo institutional arrangements are often a source of conflict with other powers, and some amount of compromise with those powers is likely to promote peace.<sup>14</sup>

Different assumptions about great-power politics produce different views about which states should be making the rules and whose values the rules should reflect. If continued U.S. predominance is likely and is a source of great-power peace, then the United States can and must continue to make rules that promote U.S. values and interests. If U.S. predominance is ending and is a source of great-power conflict, then the United States can and must share responsibility for making the rules with other great powers.

Whatever the objective truth on such issues, major powers increasingly view the rule-setting functions of an order as critical benchmarks of national power, status, and prestige, and many of them are determined to have a growing say moving forward. From the U.S. perspective, the value to be gained from increasingly shared rulemaking is not necessarily in a more effective or even more efficient order, but rather in an order that preserves significant support from its major powers. The theory of power-sharing is that states brought into the order's operations will be more likely to compromise, invest, and, in some cases, fight for its rules and norms. This analysis, however, does not offer conclusions about the value of a more shared order. It merely identifies rulemaking as a central variable that helps to define alternative orders and tests the implications of different assumptions about the future pattern of such rulemaking.

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<sup>13</sup> Charles L. Glaser, "A U.S.-China Grand Bargain? The Hard Choice Between Military Competition and Accommodation," *International Security*, Vol. 39, No. 4, Spring 2015.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for U.S. Grand Strategy*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2014.

## How Binding Are the Rules—and on Whom?

The second important question about the order asks how binding the rules are and to whom they apply—most importantly, whether they apply to the rulemakers themselves. A key assumption of more-ambitious versions of institutionalist theory is that rules are binding even—perhaps especially—on those who make the rules. Yet rulemakers are typically powerful states, making it difficult for weaker states to enforce rules against them. Still, rulemakers will often voluntarily submit to rules and established decisionmaking processes on nonvital interests. These rules, after all, reflect their interests. Moreover, doing so may have the benefit of enhancing the domestic and international legitimacy of the rules. Still, as will be discussed, it is an open question whether U.S. goals would be served by an order in which the rulemakers restrain their behavior even when it would prevent decisive action on one of their key interests.<sup>15</sup>

In an order in which the rulemakers intend to abide by the rules, they would write very precise and formal rules that make each state's commitments unambiguous. Although states with more power may continue to have more influence in setting the rules of such a system, these rules and processes would apply to all states, both weak and strong, even when they do not serve a state's immediate self-interest.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, in an order in which the rulemakers do not intend to restrain themselves, they are more likely to make ambiguous and informal commitments to core principles. Such an order may still include formal institutions and highly technical rules in some areas. However, on key issues, especially relating to security, powerful states would not commit to restraining themselves within the rules and institutions. At the same time, weaker states may be more frequently punished for acting counter to accepted norms.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ikenberry, 2001, p. 41.

<sup>16</sup> This discussion draws on both Ikenberry's concept of a constitutional order and mechanisms for restraining the use of power; Ikenberry, 2001, p. 41.

<sup>17</sup> Ikenberry, 2001, p. 41.

Today's order falls within these extremes and includes variation in the extent to which powerful states follow current rules across different parts of the order. For example, the United States and other powerful states have developed a precise system of rules in the areas of trade and international economic policy, making clear what constitutes a violation. Moreover, these states have voluntarily submitted to the World Trade Organization's (WTO's) rules and a formal dispute-resolution process. However, in the security realm, powerful states have been less consistent in restraining their actions within rules and institutions. For example, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) includes formalized institutions for military coordination and processes for consultation among its allies, but the United States has never committed to unqualified restraint in its foreign policy, and all member states retain a veto on collective NATO decisionmaking.<sup>18</sup> At the global level, the U.N. Security Council (UNSC) offers a decisionmaking venue, but powerful states frequently choose to operate unilaterally or through other international organizations.<sup>19</sup> Russia, for example, argued that the 2003 U.S.-led war against Iraq, which took place without UNSC approval, showed disregard for the order's rules and institutions. The United States, in turn, has argued that Russia's annexation of Crimea and activities in Ukraine are violations.

Those who are skeptical about the desirability or feasibility of an order in which the rulemakers develop strong rules and consistently restrain their behavior within them also tend to share certain assumptions about the role of institutions.<sup>20</sup> First, these skeptics claim that when state interests are in deep conflict, U.S. adversaries are unlikely to restrain themselves within these rules. Instead, they are likely to rely on their own military capabilities to pursue their interests. Second,

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<sup>18</sup> Ikenberry, 2001, pp. 6, 29–31, 37–43.

<sup>19</sup> G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011a, pp. 22–27.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, John J. Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 3, Winter 1994–1995; and Randall Schweller, "The Problem of International Order Revisited: A Review Essay," *International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 1, Summer 2001.

these skeptics believe that institutions are unlikely to socialize adversary states, so there is limited value in working to restrict U.S. freedom of action with the hope of influencing adversary behavior. In fact, allowing such institutions to restrict the exercise of U.S. power tends to have a high cost: It prevents the kind of decisive action that is needed to respond to threats from revisionist states, as well as non-state actors.<sup>21</sup>

As a result, those who do not believe the rulemakers should be (or, in practical terms, will be) restrained tend to see institutions and rules as primarily instrumental tools with very limited independent power. Institutions, for example, can be used to share information, reduce transaction costs, and coordinate responses on issues of shared interest. Moreover, rules can clarify a powerful state's interests, encourage greater compliance by weaker states, and set standards by which state behavior is assessed. However, in this view, voluntary restraint by the rulemakers within these rules is neither likely nor desirable when key interests are at stake.<sup>22</sup>

Those who contend that the United States can achieve its goals through an order that relies on voluntary restraint by the rulemakers have different assumptions about rules and institutions. When the United States and other powerful states demonstrate that they are willing to restrain themselves within the rules of the system, weaker states will accept those institutions as legitimate, even if they privilege the interests of the powerful. In other words, restraint of power within rules provides strong incentives for other states to accept those rules, even if they have had less influence in making them. Rules that are consistently followed by both powerful and weak states can also shape state behavior and interests going forward.<sup>23</sup>

Overall, different assumptions about institutions suggest different views about whether the United States should pursue an order in which

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<sup>21</sup> On this view in the George W. Bush administration, see, Robert Jervis, "Understanding the Bush Doctrine," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 118, No. 3, 2003, pp. 369–373.

<sup>22</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, "Imperial by Design," *National Interest*, No. 111, 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Robert O. Keohane, "The Demand for International Regimes," *International Organization*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 1982; Arthur A. Stein, "Coordination and Collaboration: Regimes in an Anarchic World," *International Organization*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 1982.

the rulemakers create binding rules and voluntarily restrain themselves within them. If institutions are only instrumental or functional, then establishing a binding order is improbable and unwise. If institutions and rules can transform state preferences and shape behavior, establishing a binding order is possible and may promote peace.

These two criteria—who makes the rules and how binding they are on the rulemakers—provide useful categories for defining possible alternatives to the existing international order. The next chapter discusses how these and the assumptions about great-power politics already described lead to four alternative visions of order.

# Alternative Visions of International Order

Chapter Two outlined the key choices the United States faces in selecting its vision of order. Table 3.1 outlines four visions of order that would result from different answers to the questions about which states should make the rules and how binding those rules should be.

This chapter does not focus on the full range of theoretical orders. Rather, it presents four visions of order that reflect possible evolutions from today’s order. There are a number of orders we do not treat in this section. For example, the United States could, in theory, withdraw from or abandon all existing international institutions. Alternatively, the United States could promote orders purely at the regional level or through non-state networks rather than state-based institutions. In the final section of this chapter, we discuss ways that ideas from some of these visions of order can be helpful in formulating options for U.S. policy, even though policy options are not the focus of this study.

Table 3.2 lists the key elements of and assumptions behind the four visions of order that will be discussed in greater detail in the remainder of this chapter. Each vision of order reflects a different view

**Table 3.1**  
**Alternative Visions of Order**

Rulemaking Authority	Are Rules Binding on All Members of an Order?	
	No	Yes
United States and its partners	Coalition Against Revisionism	Democratic Order
All great powers	Great-Power Concert 2.0	Global Constitutional Order

**Table 3.2**  
**Defining Alternative Visions of Order**

Vision of Order	Key Elements	Key Assumptions
Coalition Against Revisionism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defend an order that privileges U.S. interests against aggressive challengers</li> <li>• Cooperate with states opposed to revisionism but prioritize U.S. autonomy</li> <li>• Source of legitimacy: Shared threat perception and U.S. provision of protection and public goods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fundamental conflicts of interest exist between the United States and revisionist great powers</li> <li>• U.S. predominance is enduring and necessary for peace</li> <li>• Restraining U.S. power within rules can prevent decisive action that is needed to deter revisionists</li> </ul>
Democratic Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defend a global order that privileges U.S. interests</li> <li>• Commit to restraining U.S. power within institutions with democratic allies</li> <li>• Integrate nondemocracies into binding economic institutions</li> <li>• Source of legitimacy: Shared values, decisionmaking, and threat perceptions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deep conflicts of interest between liberal and illiberal states</li> <li>• The combined strength of the United States and its allies can endure</li> <li>• Participation in institutions can slowly transform illiberal states</li> </ul>
Great-Power Concert 2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain weakly binding international institutions that facilitate great-power cooperation</li> <li>• Source of legitimacy: Respect for legitimate security interests of all great powers; shared interests in peace and predominance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflicts among great powers are not fundamental</li> <li>• U.S. preponderance is waning, so some compromise is necessary for peace</li> <li>• Institutions can facilitate cooperation, but power will often determine outcomes</li> </ul>
Global Constitutional Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept revisions to the governance of the existing order to reflect the changing distribution of power</li> <li>• Great powers commit to restrain their power within institutions among all states</li> <li>• Source of legitimacy: Consistency of rules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflicts among great powers are not fundamental</li> <li>• U.S. preponderance is waning, so some compromise is necessary for peace</li> <li>• Voluntary restraint on power within rules and institutions can facilitate cooperation</li> </ul>



about how the United States can achieve its goals for order. The United States may consider options that fall between these stylized options or apply different approaches in different regions or issue areas. Therefore, these visions of order should be seen as a starting point for discussion about both the right direction for U.S. policy toward order and the prospects for mixing and matching different approaches in a complex international environment.

We do not presume that the United States will have the power to “choose” the shape of the international order as a whole. It will not be able simply to decide to put any of these orders into place. Rather, these visions of order reflect aspirations that U.S. policy may aim toward, given current constraints. In these visions of order, we assume that the United States will continue to have a leading role in the world and thus that U.S. policies can affect the direction of the order. They are “ideal types”—that is, forms of order that reflect distinct approaches to achieving the four objectives laid out in Chapter Two but that are unlikely to be realized in the pure form described here.

For each vision of order noted, we offer a hypothetical scenario illustrating how it might come about. These “origin stories” appear in the appendix. Table 3.3 outlines how each order would differ from the current order. As the following sections discuss, the current order shares some limited components in common with each of the four options presented here. However, it has the most in common with the Coalition Against Revisionism and Democratic Order visions.

## Coalition Against Revisionism

This vision of order is primarily designed to deter revisionist great powers—that is, challengers to the current, U.S.-led set of international rules and norms.<sup>1</sup> The United States would seek to maintain and create new rules that reflect its own interests and the interests of its allies

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<sup>1</sup> The term *revisionism* is used in many different contexts. States may be revisionist in one area and status quo in others. They can also vary in the extent of their ambition to change the status quo. For the purposes of this study, a *revisionist state* is any state that seeks to alter current institutional arrangements or erode U.S. leadership substantially.

**Table 3.3**  
**Alternative Visions of Order: Distinctions from Current Approach**

Order	Who Makes the Rules	How Binding Are the Rules
Existing Order		
U.S.-led, postwar liberal international order	On major issues, the United States leads and often dominates the process of rule-setting. Sometimes other coalitions can generate secondary rules without U.S. support or, rarely, in opposition to U.S. preferences.	The United States generally follows the rules but does not restrain itself when key interests are at stake. Many states follow the rules out of self-interest, and the United States enforces many others through coercion or military force.
Alternative Orders: Changes to Current Pattern		
Coalition Against Revisionism	The United States makes rules similar to the current order to a degree, but <i>only</i> for those in the coalition; states with revisionist intent are increasingly outside the scope of U.S. rule-setting.	The United States would not restrain itself within the rules.
Democratic Order	The United States works in close cooperation with democratic allies; there is less U.S. dominance than in the current system.	Among democracies, the United States is more willing to restrain itself than under the current order; on issues other than trade, the United States would not submit to further constraints among other states.
Great-Power Concert 2.0	Great powers make rules collectively; this process is likely facilitated by the United States but shared far more equally than in the current order.	Rules are less binding than under the current order; processes are more informal and more exceptions are permitted.
Global Constitutional Order	A broad collection of influential states makes rules, acting through consensus or accepted decisionmaking processes.	Great powers restrain themselves within the rules more than they do under the current order; no state is an exception to rules or their enforcement.

rather than ceding more influence over rulemaking to other powers. Although the United States would likely follow the rules most of the time—after all, they would largely reflect U.S. interests—it would promote more-ambiguous rules and would not restrain its behavior within them if they prevented decisive U.S. action on key interests.

## Assumptions

An argument in favor of this type of order would begin from the assumption that the United States can remain the world's preeminent power (either alone or with its partners). To the extent that other states may be rising, proponents of this vision of order would contend that the United States can afford to expand military budgets to maintain its position.<sup>2</sup>

The argument for this vision of order also rests on various beliefs about great-power politics that grow out of hegemonic stability theory, power-maximizing versions of realism, and liberalism.<sup>3</sup> This vision assumes that global peace and prosperity require U.S. leadership. Pre-dominance allows the United States to provide public goods, facilitate collective action, set rules to govern state behavior, and enforce those rules. Moreover, this vision assumes that great powers have deep conflicts of interest and are in a constant struggle for dominance of the international system.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the primary threat to the international system comes from revisionist acts, especially by other powerful states. If left unchecked, such acts could cast doubt on U.S. leadership and embolden the other powers to pursue more ambitious aims, such as overturning the current system of rules.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ikenberry, 2001, p. 41. Jervis (2003) discusses the presence of such views in the George W. Bush administration; see also William C. Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World," *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 1, Summer 1999.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the marriage of these viewpoints in U.S. grand strategy, see Jervis, 2003, pp. 376–377.

<sup>4</sup> Posen, 2014, pp. 1–16.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983; John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York: Norton, 2001. For a more general view of stability in hegemonic orders, see Charles P. Kindleberger, *The World in Depression, 1929–1939*, Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1986; and Wohlforth, 1999. Brands outlines some of these views in an approach to order that he calls "retaking the offensive" (Hal Brands, *American Grand Strategy and the Liberal Order: Continuity, Change, and Options for the Future*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, PE-209-OSD, 2016; also see Ikenberry, 2001, pp. 45–46. Posen and Ross argue that a grand strategy of primacy shares many of these assumptions; for a description of views on the need for preventive war and the frequent use of force to address threats among George W. Bush administration officials, see Posen and Ross, 1996/1997.

Finally, support for this approach to order also rests on pessimistic assumptions about the value of voluntarily restraining U.S. power within rules, as outlined in Chapter Two. At most, global institutions such as the United Nations can facilitate communication or, when they support U.S. goals, provide some degree of domestic and international legitimacy for the exercise of U.S. power.

### **Content**

Under this vision of order, the United States would seek to maintain institutions that privilege its own values, interests, and status and those of its traditional international partners. The United States would see little value and even danger in committing to restrain itself within institutions that include potentially revisionist states, such as China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia. The United States might consult or even seek compromise in the UNSC, but it would not see UNSC approval as a precondition for U.S. action. Rhetoric within this order may highlight the value of rules and norms that revisionists violate as a means of justifying action against them and may seek to use institutions to punish states for revisionist acts.

The focus of U.S. policy toward the order would be enhancing the military strength and prosperity of states willing to help confront revisionism. In this sense, it would look a great deal like the order built during the Cold War to deter the Soviet Union.<sup>6</sup> From an institutional standpoint, this vision of order would privilege formal alliances and informal partnerships as the foundation of a broad-based policy of deterring revisionism by other great powers. The United States would focus on NATO, alliances with South Korea and Japan, and perhaps other states perceived to be threatened by great-power territorial revisionism, such as Taiwan and Ukraine.

However, even among like-minded states, the United States would prioritize autonomy, which would allow decisive action against revisionist behavior. Therefore, if consensus could not be reached within alliance structures or other organizations incorporating part-

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<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the two orders operating during the Cold War, see Jervis, 2003, pp. 375–376.

ners' views, the United States would still consider unilateral action and coalitions of the willing to defend the status quo and prevent the emergence of regional hegemons.

Although the United States would seek to promote liberal values in this vision of order, democracy promotion and enforcement of liberal norms might be uneven depending on the states involved. Because this vision of order is based primarily on shared threat perceptions, not shared values, states with weaker commitments to democracy could also be included in U.S.-led military and economic institutions. As long as states shared similar views about which other states constituted threats to the international status quo, the United States would likely tread lightly on issues relating to their domestic politics.

Each of the visions of order laid out in this chapter takes a different approach to prioritizing and achieving the four basic goals for international order described in the previous chapter. Each vision can claim some method of pursuing all of the goals, but each does it in different ways, and some visions take one of the goals as dominant. Table 3.4 lays out the manner in which the Coalition Against Revisionism order approaches the goals.

**Table 3.4**  
**Mechanisms for Achieving Major Goals of Order—Coalition Against Revisionism**

Goal	Method of Achieving It
Prevent major-power conflict and manage competition	This is a dominant goal, achieved by assembling a predominant coalition of status quo states that deter revisions to the current international order.
Promote economic stability and development	The coalition would promote trade relations among members while preserving a global trading system that includes all states.
Facilitate collective action on common challenges	Where interests align and no key security issues are at stake, informal or formal institutions could be used to facilitate information-sharing or coordinate policy.
Promote liberal values and democracy	The coalition would defend democracies against illiberal revisionist states and would employ limited liberal value promotion programs, as long as they do not undermine the coalition.

Different versions of this order may be premised on varying levels of U.S. predominance and burden-sharing. This vision of order could also vary in how aggressively the United States challenges states acting in revisionist ways. In the most aggressive version, the United States could pursue a “rollback” strategy that would seek—through political or military means—to achieve regime change in states challenging the order’s rules. In some cases, this would be matched with extensive U.S. military presence right up to the borders of the states engaging in revisionism. A less aggressive approach would seek to contain—limit the growth of—rather than roll back states seeking changes to the international order, which might entail a less forward military presence.

### **Sources of Legitimacy and Resistance**

The source of legitimacy in this vision of order—the reason why states would join this U.S.-led coalition—is a desire for U.S. protection and a shared fear of the effects of changes to the international order. U.S. provision of other public goods, such as combating terrorism, may be an additional source of legitimacy. This type of order might also have a positive narrative to further legitimize U.S. dominance—for example, as during the Cold War, with rhetoric in favor of protecting democracy in the short run and transforming illiberal states in the long run.

Primary opposition to such a vision of order would naturally come from the states targeted for deterrence or punishment because of their revisionism. They are likely to view their actions as responsive, not aggressive; as justified; and as no different from similar U.S. actions that contravened rules of the international order. Some opposition is also likely to come, whether in general or on specific issues, from allies of the United States who worry that the approach is too confrontational.

### **Democratic Order**

As with the previous vision of order, Democratic Order seeks to maintain the United States as system leader and primary rulemaker. It differs in that it places greater priority on promoting deeper collaboration among democratic states that meet high standards of governance and

human rights protections. Within institutions and groups composed largely of these trusted states, the United States would agree to restrain itself within agreed-upon rules and decisionmaking processes. In this order, greater collaboration and shared decisionmaking among trusted democracies promotes ever-closer cooperation, greater prosperity, and improved mutual defense.

This vision is not focused narrowly on countering revisionism and is inherently agnostic about the degree of revisionism the democratic coalition would confront. Indeed, compared with the previous vision of order, it makes more-optimistic assumptions about the power of institutions. In the long term, the United States and its democratic allies would seek to transform revisionist and illiberal states and bring them into this liberal order.

### Assumptions

From a geopolitical standpoint, this order is premised on the existence of what might be termed a “liberal overmatch”—the ability of democratic countries to achieve predominant power over any potential challenger. This order does not presume unilateral U.S. primacy, but rather the primacy of a closely bound, value-sharing global coalition of democracies. Together they have the ability to establish a degree of power too strong for any illiberal power to directly challenge.<sup>7</sup>

Proponents of this vision of order believe that differences in regime type are a fundamental cause of war: Liberal and illiberal states have fundamentally conflicting interests and little basis for trust and cooperation.<sup>8</sup> In this vision of order, the combination of power and authoritarianism makes illiberal great powers particularly threatening. In the short term, peace with illiberal revisionists requires deterrence:

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<sup>7</sup> Aaron L. Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Ikenberry, 2001, pp. 170–214. For discussion of these views in the George W. Bush administration, see Michael W. Doyle, “Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 1983; and Andrew Moravcsik, “Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics,” *International Organization*, Vol. 51, No. 4, October 1997. For a discussion of domestic sources of conflict between the United States and China, see, Jervis, 2003, pp. 366–369.

The United States and its partners must maintain military capability and unity of effort to deter these states. In the long term, however, peace will come from regime change either passively through the power of attraction to the success of the liberal coalition or more actively through democratization programs or the use of force.

This vision of order assumes that U.S. restraint within institutions with democratic states is possible because of the character of democracies and desirable because it increases the cohesion of the allies. Democracies, in line with the arguments of the democratic peace theory, tend to form closer alliances and share values that also lead to shared interests. Therefore, the United States faces fewer risks when restraining itself within rules and decisions made with these trusted states. Moreover, by restraining itself within rules and formal decisionmaking processes with its partners and allies, the United States can gain greater legitimacy for a system that still privileges its interests.<sup>9</sup>

In line with its belief in the power of rules and institutions, this vision of order sees more-inclusive international institutions as a way to transform the domestic institutions of illiberal states. Although the United States would not cede as much autonomy or cooperate as deeply with organizations that have a broader membership, they could still have powerful effects in the long term. For example, in this view, by meeting the standards to join and participate in liberal international economic institutions, states will liberalize their domestic economy. This, in turn, will lead to political liberalization in the long term.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, promotion of economic liberalization would not simply be a goal of U.S. policy but a means for achieving the basis of global peace in the long term.<sup>11</sup> Maintaining illiberal states' participation in rules-based economic institutions, such as the WTO or new regional free-

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<sup>9</sup> Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth, 2012/2013 ; G. John Ikenberry, "Illusion of Geopolitics: The Enduring Power of the Liberal Order," *Foreign Affairs*, April 17, 2014; Ikenberry, 2001.

<sup>10</sup> For a statement of this view from an Obama administration official, see Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth, 2012/2013, p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> These assumptions are similar to those underlying a grand strategy of cooperative security; Jacob J. Lew, "Jack Lew: Why U.S. Economic Leadership Matters," video, Sage Worldwide, April 11, 2016b.



trade agreements, is therefore a priority of this vision of order. Shared political institutions, such as the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe are also desirable, even if weak.

### **Content**

As in the Coalition Against Revisionism, the United States would seek to maintain and strengthen rules that privilege its own interests and those of its democratic allies within global institutions. But it would also be willing to respect those rules and restrain U.S. actions. For example, if this type of order had existed in 2003, with NATO at its center, objections from allies might have prevented the United States from invading Iraq.

Unlike in the Coalition Against Revisionism, the United States would make a greater effort to work within noneconomic international institutions that include states engaging in revisionist actions, including illiberal states, whenever possible. The United States would continue to operate within and strengthen global institutions with the hope that consultation and coordination through these institutions and processes would socialize illiberal states to liberal ideas and bind all states within agreed-upon rules. However, given the priority of building liberal institutions and the concern that revisionists or adversaries may block these institutions from functioning in line with liberal values, the United States would act outside of established rules and norms—for example, intervening somewhere without a U.N. mandate—but only if the group of democracies arrived at a decision to do so.

Table 3.5 lays out how Democratic Order approaches the four goals for the order. Like the other visions, Democratic Order sees the promotion of great-power peace as a key goal. However, this vision of order places greater emphasis on the other goals of order, in part, because they are seen to promote peace in the long term.

This order would build heavily on existing alliances with European countries, Japan, South Korea, and Australia, but it would also build a more formal and comprehensive set of global democratic friends and partners, perhaps including such countries as India, Brazil, and Indonesia. When military collaboration proved infeasible, this order would promote political and economic links among democracies.

**Table 3.5**  
**Mechanisms for Achieving Major Goals of Order—Democratic Order**

Goal	Method of Achieving It
Prevent major-power conflict and manage competition	This could be achieved by (1) knitting together democracies into a predominant balancing coalition to deter aggression and, (2) in the long term, engaging nondemocratic great powers through political and economic institutions.
Promote economic stability and development	Trade relations would be promoted among all states, with particular emphasis on trade among the coalition of democracies.
Facilitate collective action on common challenges	States would deepen cooperation on common issues among democracies, drawing others in on an instrumental, interest-based basis.
Promote liberal values and democracy	Democracies would work together to defend democratic systems and invest in liberal value promotion outside the core.

Different versions of this order would have different models for how liberal states approach relations with nondemocracies. Some approaches might envision the group of democracies undertaking aggressive steps to deter and transform nondemocracies. Other versions could adopt a more patient, live-and-let-live approach that builds cooperative connections with them where possible while aspiring for democratic transformation in the future. Either way, the primary focus of the Democratic Order vision would be on networks of collaboration and exchange among democracies.

**Sources of Legitimacy and Resistance**

The sources of legitimacy in this vision of order include a shared fear of aggressive practices of illiberal states, a desire for U.S. protection, and voluntary restraints on the exercise of U.S. power. More so than in a Coalition Against Revisionism, a Democratic Order could appeal to the promotion and defense of liberal values as additional sources of legitimacy.

As with the Coalition Against Revisionism order, opposition to a Democratic Order would come primarily from illiberal powers that fear meddling in their internal politics and a militarily powerful countervailing coalition of democratic states. Because the United States

would restrain its power within institutions with its allies, there would likely be less resistance from U.S. partners worried about overly confrontational policies toward other powers.

However, some U.S. partners, especially those most threatened by other great powers, may be a source of resistance in this order. Joint decisionmaking in a Democratic Order vision is likely to prevent decisive U.S. action in some cases. For example, if an illiberal great power began to assert territorial claims against a U.S. partner, the United States would take militarized actions only if all democratic partners agreed. As a result, some frontline U.S. partners may prefer a Coalition Against Revisionism to a Democratic Order.

## Great-Power Concert 2.0

Unlike the previous two visions of order, the basis for this order would be shared leadership with other great powers.<sup>12</sup> It would give other great powers greater influence over the rules of the order. Although this order would include avenues for cooperation among the powers and even formalized global institutions, great powers would not voluntarily commit to restraint within rules when their key interests were threatened.

### Assumptions

This vision of order rests on defensive realist assumptions about great-power relations<sup>13</sup>—that some amount of security and economic competition is inevitable among states and that a strong U.S. military is important for defending U.S. interests. However, this outlook contends that U.S. predominance and U.S. attempts to maintain the status quo are key sources of security competition with other great

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<sup>12</sup> The best recent reflection of such a proposal can be found in 21st Century Concert Study Group, *A Twenty-First Century Concert of Powers—Promoting Great Power Multilateralism for the Post-Transatlantic Era*, Frankfurt, Germany: Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Posen and Ross, 1996/1997, pp. 21–30.

powers.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, this vision assumes that underlying conflicts of interest between current powers are limited. For some, the geographic separation between the United States and other powers reduces the depth of the conflict. Others point to nuclear deterrence, the benefits of economic interdependence, or the high costs of territorial conquest in the modern age. Regardless of the cause, this school of thought expects that political settlements among the great powers could be found and that competition could be reduced through greater accommodation.<sup>15</sup>

This vision of order is more pessimistic than the others about the prospects for U.S. and allied predominance. Peer competitors have become too strong to sustain power projection in key regions, for example. To maintain peace and preserve U.S. military power, in this view, the United States will need to share global leadership, working with other powers to provide common goods. More importantly, this would mean adapting institutions to reflect fundamental interests of other great powers rather than favoring those of the United States and its allies. For example, the United States may maintain many of its alliance commitments but would certainly not engage in further enlargement. Recognizing each power's interests in its respective region may also mean a lighter U.S. military footprint near other great powers and less willingness to stand with allies and partners on disputes with other great powers. It would not necessarily require dismantling the core existing U.S. alliances, but it would surely demand halting further expansion of those alliances and would very likely require constraints on the defense policies of the United States and its allies.

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<sup>14</sup> Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987; Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979. For an example of this argument in the context of Europe, see Posen, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> See 21st Century Concert Study Group, 2014, p. 9; John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 93, No. 5, September/October 2014. Monteiro points specifically to the need to avoid policies that threaten the economic growth of other great powers; Nuno P. Monteiro, *Theory of Unipolar Politics*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014. For an example of a political settlement in Asia, see Glaser, 2015.

This vision of order assumes that states are motivated primarily by their own interests and are not constrained or deeply shaped by institutions. At the same time, this vision of order presumes that the great powers share common interests and can agree on basic rules that should govern state relations. The original Concert of Europe, for example, was based on shared views on the value of regular consultation and respecting the basic security concerns of each power. A new concert design would need to find similar bedrock principles upon which to build.<sup>16</sup>

### Content

As in the 19th-century concert among European powers, a limited set of mutually agreed-upon norms and processes for consultation, such as norms of sovereignty and nonaggression, would prevail among the great powers. Formal venues and processes for consultation and decisionmaking would likely continue. Existing institutions, however, would be reformed to reflect the interests of all economic and military powers. For example, strong economies not currently on the UNSC—including Japan, Germany, and India—could receive permanent membership (though perhaps without a veto power). New institutions, including informal organizations, might also be created.<sup>17</sup> Ad hoc groupings of great powers to deal with specific issues, for example, would be consistent with this vision of order. Models for such issue-specific coalitions could include the P5+1 grouping on Iran or the Six Party Talks mechanism for Korea.

A critical question would be criteria for membership in the concert leadership group of nations. One recent study suggested several criteria. A country aspiring to be a leading member of a new concert should possess sufficient resources to “contribute to the production of international order” and the willpower to make such contributions. These contributions should have a “tangible impact globally, or at least in [the contributing country’s] region.”<sup>18</sup> At a minimum, a concert would need

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<sup>16</sup> 21st Century Concert Study Group, 2014, p. 30.

<sup>17</sup> 21st Century Concert Study Group, 2014, p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> 21st Century Concert Study Group, 2014, p. 36.

to include the United States, Russia, China, and some combination of European Union (EU) countries.<sup>19</sup>

Although there may be formal institutions and processes in which great-power interests align, this vision of order would not develop formalized rules on issues on which great-power interests diverge. Moreover, there would be no expectation that great powers would follow preexisting rules when their key interests were at stake. This vision of order would be less concerned about consistent enforcement of rules. Instead, powers may tacitly accept some limited forms of military coercion or use of force by other powers within their respective regions, contrary to the formal agreed-upon norms.

This order would be the most normatively shallow of all four visions. Its binding power would come from mutual interest among the great powers to stabilize world politics, creating the conditions for them to pursue power and prosperity. As a result, this vision assumes that the ambitions of the great powers are sufficiently constrained to allow for such cooperation, even in a limited sense, over the long term.

This order does not put short-term promotion of liberal values in the forefront, but it supports their long-term promotion in a specific way. This vision assumes that coordination among the great powers will reduce tensions and the defensiveness of great powers and thus create an environment conducive to greater domestic reform and the flourishing of civil society. Reduction of geopolitical tensions, it contends, is a *sine qua non* for greater U.S. influence over domestic events in other parts of the world. Supporters of this vision of order assume that outright democracy promotion against the interests of other great powers tends to generate blowback and may even undermine democracy promotion efforts.

Table 3.6 lays out how Great-Power Concert 2.0 pursues the four goals for the order as already outlined.

Like the other visions of order, a new concert of powers could take many forms. In particular, it could vary in the extent of U.S. coopera-

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<sup>19</sup> The set of ten members suggested in the study included Brazil, China, the EU (included as a bloc), India, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. 21st Century Concert Study Group, 2014, p. 41. Another recent analysis offers a list that includes the United States, China, Japan, Russia, Germany, India, Iran, and Israel; see Walter Russell Mead and Sean Keeley, "The Eight Great Powers of 2017," *American Interest*, January 24, 2017.

**Table 3.6**  
**Mechanisms for Achieving Major Goals of Order—Great-Power Concert 2.0**

Goal	Method of Achieving It
Prevent major-power conflict and manage competition	This would be the dominant goal, achieved by promoting good relations among great powers and creating mechanisms for ongoing consultation and mutual accommodation of interests.
Promote economic stability and development	States would allow for great-power coordination on trade and other policies and would continue to pursue global trade arrangements.
Facilitate collective action on common challenges	State action would be more limited and interest-based, but space for addressing common problems would be created by great-power relations.
Promote liberal values and democracy	A reduction of great-power tensions would be a precondition for the spread of liberal values; states would focus on the preconditions of democracy, such as economic growth.

tion with other great powers. In its most minimal form, the United States might gradually give up some leadership and allow some minor revisions to the status quo while maintaining a strong military deterrent to defend existing international arrangements. A more ambitious version of this order might seek to settle fundamental conflicts of interest. One version of this order could be a global great-power condominium; others could have a more regional flavor, with different patterns of great-power relations in different areas.

### **Sources of Legitimacy and Resistance**

Great-Power Concert 2.0 would gain legitimacy with other great powers by sharing influence over the rules of the system. The number of states included in the rulemaking decisions—in other words, how the order sets the definition of a great power—could affect the extent of the order's legitimacy. States left out of the vision's core rule- and decisionmaking bodies would oppose a concert. States, peoples, or movements that suffer from the concert's decisions would also oppose this type of order. To soften such objections and strengthen its legitimacy, a concert might seek compromise and be inclusive where possible. Effective delivery of global public goods could be another source of legitimacy in this order.

## Global Constitutional Order

As in the Great-Power Concert 2.0, the United States would cede more influence to other great powers in setting rules in a Global Constitutional Order. A key difference from the Great-Power Concert 2.0 is that the rules apply equally to all states, including the great powers. This is a vision of an order that is even more shared, rule-bound, and thickly institutionalized than the current one. It is an order in which all the major powers have agreed to substantially binding rules and their arbitration by independent bodies. It represents the ultimate manifestation of the institutionalist logic, focused on common threats and interests rather than competitive dynamics.

Although great powers might continue to have disproportionate influence in setting the rules in this order, they would develop formalized rules and restrain themselves within those rules. In other words, it would be an order in which rules, not power, became the primary means of settling disputes.

### Assumptions

This vision of order would be based on the assumption that maintaining the status quo is unlikely to be affordable or peaceful and not on idealistic assumptions about the potential for permanently overcoming conflict. But it does make more-limited yet still-optimistic assumptions: The aims of each of the great powers are constrained enough to allow for deeply institutionalized, rule-based cooperation, and most conflict among them could be avoided by respecting the legitimate security interests of the others.

However, unlike the concert, this vision of order is built on the expectation that managing these conflicts through agreed-upon rules is both desirable and possible. It is possible, in part, because of the limited aims of each state but also because states could build trust by restraining themselves within the rules. This might begin initially from the bottom up on specific shared interests. This vision is predicated on the belief that such opportunities are extensive and that they can create a wide-ranging order. Moreover, the goal of this vision would be to build on these opportunities to get to a point where great powers could agree



on rules and processes for settling even deeper conflicts. Proponents of this vision, therefore, assume that institutions have socialization effects—developing taken-for-granted norms of behavior that become self-enforcing—beyond such functional cooperation.

This order is also based on the assumption that states view a context of binding rules as preferable to one of informal cooperation and coordination, that they accept the logic of institutionalist theory, and that they find both functional value and long-term socializing benefits in strong rules, norms, and institutions. As a result, there is also an assumption that states ultimately support a vision of a more integrated global community.

### **Content**

As in the Great-Power Concert 2.0 vision, this type of order would be based on building global institutions that could be agreed upon among the great powers and reforming existing institutions to reflect the changing distribution of power.

Although both the Great-Power Concert 2.0 order and constitutional order may involve formal institutions and rules, they diverge significantly in how much the great powers should restrain themselves within those rules. In this order, the United States and other powers would sacrifice autonomy by establishing binding rules and processes to resolve disputes even on the most fundamental issues among them. By agreeing to restrain themselves according to the order's rules, the powers would strengthen the legitimacy of the rules and processes, making other states more willing to submit to a system of rules as well.<sup>20</sup>

Many who support this view argue that such states as China and Russia already derive tremendous benefits from the free-trade system and from their privileged position within decisionmaking bodies, such as the UNSC. In the view of those who support this vision, these states are willing to work within existing institutions but simply desire a greater say in decisionmaking.<sup>21</sup> By changing rules and institutions to better reflect these states' interests, the institutions would become more

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<sup>20</sup> Posen and Ross, 1996/1997, pp. 7–14.

<sup>21</sup> Ikenberry, 2001, p. 38.

legitimate. Over time, this legitimacy would lead more states to buy in, leading to a world in which accepted rules and procedures, rather than power alone, determine key international outcomes.

An important component of a Global Constitutional Order is its promise of fair application of the rules. As noted, great powers will have some degree of disproportionate influence in any order. But this order attempts to create the most egalitarian system of rules of any of the four visions, in that rulemakers commit to bind themselves within the rules they make in this order.

Table 3.7 lays out the manner in which the Global Constitutional Order approaches the four basic goals for international order.

Although this vision of order would seek binding rules, as in Democratic Order, it has essential differences. Importantly, this would be an institutionalized order based on areas of shared agreement among powers, not one that would privilege U.S. and Western values. From an institutional standpoint, this vision of order would build on the essential structures already in place in the postwar order and would extend some of the rules-based aspects of the economic order to the security sphere. For example, courts of arbitration might decide territorial disputes in the same way that trade disputes are resolved through

**Table 3.7**  
**Mechanisms for Achieving Major Goals of Order—Global Constitutional Order**

Goal	Method of Achieving It
Prevent major-power conflict and manage competition	States would create an open, easy-to-join global system that welcomes all great powers and offers a route to national prosperity; formalized rules and processes would manage even deep conflicts of interest.
Promote economic stability and development	Stability would be achieved by a deeply institutionalized global trade and finance order, as well as extensive interdependence.
Facilitate collective action on common challenges	States would build extensive global institutions and rules.
Promote liberal values and democracy	This vision of order is based on the assumption that liberal values will spread over time and creates a context in which that is more likely.

WTO arbitration processes today. Although there may be more-formal rules and institutions, the content of that order may change substantially from today's. For example, global institutions would be much less likely to promote liberal political values to the extent that states with illiberal values gained greater influence in this order.

This vision of order, too, could be pursued in different forms. One version would be very elaborate, aiming to knit countries together in binding institutions that cover all aspects of state relations. Such an order could evolve into a type of world government. A reduced form of this order might seek to gradually move toward that vision by adopting more-formalized rules and decisionmaking processes on a subset of political or security issues.

### **Sources of Legitimacy and Resistance**

As with the Great-Power Concert 2.0 order, shared influence over rule-making would make this order legitimate among the great powers. As with the Democratic Order, a significant source of legitimacy would come from the great powers' willingness to restrain their power within rules and institutions. Additional legitimacy would come from the nondiscriminatory application of the rules and the willingness of the most-powerful states to be bound by them most of the time.

If great powers develop more-ambitious aims, such an order would not be possible. Second-tier powers that want greater freedom to take unilateral action could be a source of resistance within a concert system.

### **Policy Implications Under Each Vision of Order**

Table 3.8 summarizes the overall implications of the various visions of order. Subsequent chapters will discuss these in more detail.

Three additional considerations may play an important role in how the United States may implement policies associated with the visions of order. The first is regionalism. The postwar order has settled into a complex mixture of regional and global orders, with powerful regional economic and political organizations alongside—and some-

**Table 3.8**  
**Summary of General Implications for U.S. Policy Under Alternative Visions of Order**

Vision of Order	General Implications for U.S. Policy
Coalition Against Revisionism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Resist reforms to existing global institutions.</li><li>• Build a strong military and use force as necessary to enforce rules and show resolve to remain system leader.</li><li>• Alliances and other military relationships are valuable but should not bind U.S. behavior.</li><li>• Economic policies should be aimed at promoting the peace and prosperity of the U.S.-led coalition and balancing against revisionists.</li></ul>
Democratic Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Build a binding order among liberal states.</li><li>• Build a strong U.S. military and demonstrate U.S. resolve to defend the existing order.</li><li>• Only limited cooperation with illiberal states is possible.</li><li>• Long-term peace will come from promotion of liberal values, in part, by integrating illiberal states into economic institutions.</li></ul>
Great-Power Concert 2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pursue political settlements with other great powers; may include accepting spheres of influence.</li><li>• Maintain a strong U.S. military but use it more judiciously with a lighter presence near other great powers.</li><li>• Pursue economic policies in coordination with other great powers.</li></ul>
Global Constitutional Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enact governance reforms to allow other powers to have greater influence in making rules.</li><li>• Accept restraints on U.S. power by complying with mutually agreed-upon rules and processes.</li><li>• Pursue economic policies in coordination with other great powers.</li></ul>

times explicitly nested within—global rules, norms, and institutions. Now, with the rising threat to the existing global order, some have argued that the United States and others should explicitly embrace a more regional emphasis, working through regional organizations to achieve largely region-specific orders. We do not include regionalism as a formal vision of order, however, because we view it as a means rather than a strategic concept. Unlike our four outlined options, regionalism does not reflect an inherent logic of the relationships among power,

institutions, and the goals of order. Rather, it reflects a possible way of implementing any particular vision of order. The regional-global balance, we contend, does not reflect one of the fundamental decisions the United States must make about the character of order. It is more of an implementation question, a question of effectiveness: Which form of one of the larger visions will work best?

More specifically, we assess that any of the four visions outlined in this chapter will reflect a significant regional flavor. Importantly, any of them could be pursued in largely regional ways or largely global ones. If the architects of a future order are persuaded of the value or necessity of regionalism, for example, they could pursue a coalition of democracies largely in that form—through regional institutions in Asia, Europe, and Africa.

We do not include a concept of non-state networks as a distinct vision of order for the same reason. Non-state networks can offer important advantages in addressing specific policy challenges, and some argue that such networks may play a greater role in global governance in the future. Like regional organizations, however, non-state networks represent a means rather than a fundamental vision of order. Any of the four visions could be approached through a non-state lens in a way designed to capture the benefits of that concept of global action.

Others have suggested the idea of engaging so-called linchpin countries as a basic strategy for U.S. grand strategy and order-building. This argument suggests that such states as Brazil, Turkey, Mexico, Indonesia, and India will become increasingly important and have a critical influence on the direction of world politics. U.S. strategy, therefore, ought to focus on these states. This argument holds some merit—but, again, we assess that it represents more of a means than a comprehensive vision of order. Any of the four options we have described could be undertaken with a strong emphasis on linchpin countries. Indeed, given their growing importance in the international order, all of them are likely to have a significant flavor of such an emphasis. But we have not included that concept as its own distinct strategy for order.



## **U.S. Policies for Alternative Visions of Order: International Economic Policies**

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This chapter considers measures that the United States could adopt to pursue each of the visions of order outlined in Chapter Three and examines the risks, benefits, and costs of each vision in relation to a specific issue area—international economic policy. The following chapters examine two other issue areas: great-power relations and defense strategy.

One goal of our analysis has been to distinguish between policies that would be appropriate under any of the visions of order and policies that are specific to one particular vision or more. There are many policies that the United States might reasonably adopt regardless of its vision for the future order. For example, support for the World Health Organization, which helps to manage global pandemics, and technical standard-setting organizations would be consistent across all four approaches. The balance between the universal and particular elements of policy may differ across policy issues. In the area of international economic policy, for example, the United States may continue to support existing multilateral institutions and agreements under any vision of order. In security matters, on the other hand, the United States may make different alliance commitments under each vision of order.

Unlike other issue areas, such as great-power management, there are many international economic policies that are consistent with all four visions of order. For many decades, academics and policymakers have generally shared a neoliberal view about international economic policies that promote U.S. prosperity, such as free trade. As a result, dis-

putes have tended to be more at the margins than over central features of the economic order. Political movements are beginning to challenge this orthodoxy, including in the United States. However, because these debates are just beginning to take hold, it is too soon to say how an alternative, less liberal economic approach might apply to each of the four visions.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, this section focuses on how alternative visions of order might approach economic policies starting from the neoliberal baseline that has driven the U.S. approach to order since the end of World War II.

Table 4.1 lists some international economic policies that the United States might pursue under different visions of order. These policies are divided into two main categories: those that would be consistent with any of the four visions of order and those areas in which the visions of order may prescribe different policies. The remainder of this chapter discusses the logic of these policies in more detail.

## **Economic Policies Consistent with All Visions of Order**

Since the end of World War II, the United States has sought to build a free-trade order to promote both U.S. prosperity and, indirectly, U.S. security interests. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has supported the gradual integration of more states, including China and Russia, into the WTO, making the center of the trading order a nearly global institution. The current trade order also includes a complex array of bilateral and multilateral trade agreements. The following sections detail some of the divergences in economic policies in the alternative visions of order. This section argues, however, that the basic institutions of the existing liberal economic order could be consistent with all visions of order.

First, the current institutions can support the orders' shared goal of promoting national economic prosperity. Some might argue that

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<sup>1</sup> For one early statement of a potential Donald Trump administration approach to international economic issues, see Peter Navarro and Wilbur Ross, "Scoring the Trump Economic Plan: Trade, Regulatory, and Energy Policy Impacts," September 29, 2016.



**Table 4.1**  
**Economic Policies Under Alternative Visions of Order**

Policy	Coalition Against Revisionism	Democratic Order	Great-Power Concert 2.0	Global Constitutional Order
Existing multilateral trade and financial institutions	Rebuild domestic support for free trade.			
	Support for the WTO, but some specific policies vary.			
	Support Basel Committee on Banking Standards, Financial Action Task Force, Financial Stability Board.			
Trade and financial sanctions	Frequent use of sanctions to punish violations and weaken revisionists.	Balance use of sanctions with risks of revisionists exiting the free-trade and financial order.	Use sparingly unless key interests are threatened or other major powers agree.	Use only with approval of major great powers.
New trade agreements	Actively negotiate regional and plurilateral trade agreements with high liberal standards among coalitions of the willing.	Actively negotiate regional and plurilateral trade agreements that embed liberal values, but have pathways for illiberal states.	Momentum on liberalization is less of a priority. Negotiate regional or WTO plurilateral trade agreements along with other great powers.	
WTO dispute-resolution process	Use WTO dispute-resolution process to punish revisionists.	Support a depoliticized WTO dispute-resolution process.		
IMF and multilateral development bank governance reforms	Support IMF and World Bank but resist efforts to elect non-U.S. citizen as president of the World Bank and non-European as managing director of the IMF. Discourage friends from joining Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and other alternative regional institutions.		Take steps to enhance the legitimacy of the IMF and World Bank—for example, by supporting citizens from outside the United States and Europe as top leaders. Accept alternative development banks such as AIIB, acknowledging that other great powers tend to lead in their own region.	

Table 4.1—Continued

Policy	Coalition Against Revisionism	Democratic Order	Great-Power Concert 2.0	Global Constitutional Order
Regional economic organizations that do not include the United States	Support if they seek to counter great-power adversaries.	Support if they have high liberal standards.	Support all kinds.	Prioritize global over regional organizations when possible.
IMF and World Bank lending practices	Favor lending to members of the coalition.	Lend widely with strong conditionality based on liberal consensus.	Lend based on financial need with approval of great powers.	Lend based on need; minimal conditions agreed upon by great powers.

the Coalition Against Revisionism would advocate an economic order built around only U.S. partners. However, compared with the Cold War, when the West engaged in minimal trade with the Soviet Union, the current economic order is both dramatically more integrated and beneficial to U.S. prosperity. Moreover, there is a more widely shared view across recent U.S. administrations that economic ties with such countries as China and Russia can promote peace. Therefore, we assess that it is unlikely—even in the more competitive security environment envisioned in the Coalition Against Revisionism—that U.S. leaders would abandon the key institutions of the current economic order.

Second, although some populist leaders in the West are calling for a less open economic order, today’s open economic order retains the support of many countries, including China. If this assumption were to be challenged—if the basic consensus behind an open economy collapsed—then the common elements of international economic policy would be more limited, and policies distinct to different orders (built around national support for more self-sufficient economies and protectionist conflict) could grow.

A shared baseline of international economic policies would be designed to continue to support the essential neoliberal vision of the postwar economic order. The objective would be to preserve a functioning global economy with the potential for benefits—through trade,

global supply chains, access to capital and investment, and more—that could prevent a new trade war and beggar-thy-neighbor forms of mercantilism.

The first component of the baseline is to preserve as robust an international trading system as possible. This would involve continued support for the WTO and efforts, both unilateral and multilateral, to defend trade against rising domestic opposition. Admitting the declining public support for free trade, this baseline does not presume the passage of any new trade accords, such as the TPP or Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), or other means of further liberalizing trade. But defending existing trading relations would be the first component of the baseline policy.

The second component is to build institutions and rules that help stabilize international capital flows. In the wake of a series of recent financial crises, it is apparent that U.S. interests are at risk in unstable financial markets. This component of the baseline policy would involve continued support for the IMF and regional monetary funds, for the Basel III process and other regulations designed to stabilize financial markets, and for international coordination among central banks and financial agencies. The United States would seek to preserve—and, where possible, enhance—this set of backstops against financial crises.

Third, the baseline policy would continue to support foreign aid and development assistance, funneled through the World Bank, regional development banks, and national programs of foreign development assistance. While their effectiveness in promoting economic growth is sometimes questioned, such programs can alleviate poverty, encourage long-term development, and generate a sense of rich-country responsibility for helping poorer nations. These objectives support U.S. interests, given the U.S. role as the perceived sponsor of globalization and development. Continued development aid, along with purely humanitarian assistance (such as health programs), should remain part of the baseline U.S. approach to the international economy under any vision of order. Where the aid is targeted and its degree of conditionality, however, will differ based on the vision of order.

Finally, in all visions of order, to support existing institutions, the United States will also need to rebuild domestic support for free trade.

New programs aimed at redistribution to compensate those affected by trade, for example, would be consistent with all visions of order. Such policies would be very high priority in the Coalition Against Revisionism and Democratic Order visions, given the strategic importance of advancing trade agreements.

These fundamental activities would constitute the baseline U.S. international economic policy under any vision of order. Above and beyond those elements, each vision would be characterized by unique international economic approaches. The following sections spell these out.

## Coalition Against Revisionism

This vision builds an order of states (democracies and others alike) to deter revisionist states, including great powers. To build a Coalition Against Revisionism, U.S. trade policy would be motivated by the need to demonstrate continued U.S. power and leadership, as well as balance against U.S. adversaries. In this view of order, as in the Democratic Order, the United States must consistently show capability and resolve to remain the leader of the order. Successfully pursuing further trade liberalization through regional trade agreements with like-minded states, would, in this view, be an essential demonstration of U.S. leadership.<sup>2</sup>

This international economic order would be more U.S.-led than those in other visions of order. The United States would take steps to shape these institutions in its own favor. As President Obama argued in support of the TPP, the United States “can’t let countries like China write the rules of the global economy. We should write those rules.”<sup>3</sup> Within the WTO, the United States would see little downside to such policies as blocking reappointment of judges who have ruled against

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<sup>2</sup> Ikenberry, 2014; G. John Ikenberry, “The Future of the Liberal World Order,” *Foreign Affairs*, May 11, 2011b.

<sup>3</sup> Michael J. Green and Matthew P. Goodman, “After TPP: the Geopolitics of Asia and the Pacific,” *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 4, Winter 2016.

the United States, which could be perceived as politicizing the dispute-resolution process.<sup>4</sup>

In this vision of order, even under the umbrella of the common baseline policies, trade policy might also be used to balance against U.S. adversaries. The United States may, for example, seek exclusive trade agreements with its partners to further strengthen the prosperity and political integration of the United States and its partners. The United States might also use bilateral trade agreements as a way to offer inducements for states to join or maintain incentives for partners to stay within the U.S.-led coalition.

Trade with adversaries will still occur, but it would be more carefully scrutinized for how it influences U.S. relative power. As suggested earlier, even the Coalition Against Revisionism presumes the existence of an international economic order to which aggressive states have access. But it will be more conditional, more dominated by the United States, and more subject to occasional sanctions and other economic disputes than other orders. In this vision of order, the United States would expect great-power competition to pervade global institutions and would hold out less hope for a binding rules-based system to endure in the event of great-power crisis.

Under this order, the United States might pursue the following international economic policy options beyond the baseline set:

- Use sanctions when necessary to punish and shape the activities of states engaging in revisionist behavior.
- Defend U.S. and allied leadership of key economic institutions.
- Use the WTO dispute-resolution mechanism as a tool of statecraft to punish states that engage in unfair economic practices.
- Engage in expansive use of export controls to limit the spread of sensitive technologies.
- Limit Chinese and Russian stakes in firms that produce sensitive technology or critical infrastructure, such as energy production.

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<sup>4</sup> Shawn Donnan and Demetri Sevastopulo, "U.S., Japan and 10 Countries Strike Pacific Trade Deal," *Financial Times*, October 5, 2015.

- Enhance government subsidies to research and development of advanced technologies.
- Prevent the creation or limit the influence of new economic institutions that present an alternative to those led by the United States.

Such an approach could offer several advantages. Although it would work from a baseline of an open international economic system, this vision of order would be quick to use economic tools to address security concerns. In a world of accelerating great-power competition, it would offer tools to keep rivals—notably Russia and China—from gaining strategic or military advantage through international economic policies.

Yet the vision also has significant practical problems and potential drawbacks. For one thing, as already suggested, this vision does not abandon the idea of an open economic order, even with rivals—indeed, a central assumption of the vision is that it preserves such an order and does not divide the global economy into highly distinct blocs. But it is not at all clear that these two components of the vision—intense restrictions in the name of countering revisionism and continued trading with the targets of those policies—are compatible. Continued U.S. use of unilateral sanctions and refusal to share in the rulemaking of key economic institutions may eventually undermine efforts to sustain a global economic regime. This vision could easily lead to trade wars and division of the global economic system into competing blocs. The result could be to reduce U.S. influence in areas that come to be most closely aligned with China or other actors.

Finally, it is not clear if the restrictions and punishments assumed by this vision would even be possible. For a confrontational economic policy to work, the United States would have to gain support from dozens of leading economic powers. The United States has had success in coordinating sanctions against Russia for its 2014 annexation of Crimea. However, China's economy is big enough and globally integrated enough that isolating or punishing it would represent a challenge well beyond anything the United States encountered in the Cold War with the Soviet Union. Even with regard to issue-specific sanctions

and efforts to deny technology transfer, the United States may find that it simply cannot gather the necessary coalition to support this vision.

## Democratic Order

U.S. trade policy in a Democratic Order would also pursue deeper political and economic integration among liberal states through regional trade agreements. While skeptical of illiberal states' intentions, the Democratic Order is more optimistic about the possibility that international regimes can transform such illiberal states as China in the long term. This vision expects that trade and development can foster liberal values. Therefore, a Democratic Order would prioritize these regimes' integration into economic institutions as a path to eventual political liberalization. In this vision of order, for example, the United States could revive agreements like the TPP, which have embedded liberal norms (such as the free flow of information). For example, proponents of the TPP argued that once the benefits of the trade pact became clear, China would have had incentives to accept more-liberal rules in order to join.<sup>5</sup>

Unlike the Coalition Against Revisionism, the Democratic Order would therefore focus more on the long-term democratizing benefits of a shared economic order rather than short-term policies to counter revisionist acts. Because the Democratic Order has a long-term vision of transforming illiberal states through institutions, the United States would seek to maintain widespread participation in the WTO. For example, to keep illiberal states involved in the most rules-based aspect of the current order, the United States would also seek to avoid any policies that appeared to politicize the WTO dispute-resolution processes. This order would be less characterized by the use of sanctions or confrontational countermercantilist policies. Its emphasis would be on inclusion and long-term transformation while still creating distinct agreements and groups solely for democracies.

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<sup>5</sup> Manfred Elsig, Mark Pollack, and Gregory Shaffer, "The U.S. Is Causing a Major Controversy in the World Trade Organization. Here's What's Happening," Monkey Cage blog, *Washington Post*, June 6, 2016.

Under this order, the United States might pursue the following international economic policy options:

- Negotiate new trade agreements among democratic coalition members while leaving room for illiberal or even somewhat revisionist states to join.
- Maintain leadership of international economic institutions in the hands of the United States or democratic friends.
- Be judicious in the use of sanctions or other short-term economic policy levers.
- Allow the WTO dispute-resolution mechanism to remain objective and depoliticized.

A Democratic Order could have specific benefits in regard to international trade policy. Although there has been an upsurge in political resistance to an open-trading order, all things being equal, future trade deals will be easier to reach among a smaller set of value-sharing democracies. Although economic relations with all states would continue, the particularly deep economic integration among democracies would enhance the democratic core's prosperity and cohesion.

Yet this order, too, confronts challenges of sustainability. Its emphasis on the long-term benefits of economic integration may not survive growing short-term confrontations with states dissatisfied with the status quo. To the extent that the democratic coalition felt a need to engage in a growing set of punishments of such states, this order could easily collapse into the Coalition Against Revisionism.

Another challenge with the economic elements of this order is that democracies themselves disagree, often profoundly, on the norms or policies that ought to govern the world economic order. Such countries as India, Brazil, and South Africa would likely demand different standards and more-elaborate conditions on the neoliberal economic model than the United States would be inclined to grant. Significant differences remain over specific issues in trade, data protection, and environmental standards even between the United States and its closest allies in Europe, not to mention Japan and South Korea. In some cases,



the United States would likely have more in common with selected illiberal states than with other democracies.

## Great-Power Concert 2.0

The essential goal of this vision of order is to promote stable and productive great-power relations. International economic policy under a concert would be designed to avoid clashes and build meaningful ties among the great powers.

In this context, further trade liberalization would be less important than maintaining great-power cooperation. To the extent that the United States pursued further trade agreements, it would include other great powers from the outset. Given the difficulty in further lowering barriers to trade through large, consensus-based negotiations (such as the Doha Round), this would likely take place in the context of plurilateral WTO agreements or regional trade agreements instead.<sup>6</sup> The key difference here from the alternative approaches to order would be that the United States would include states dissatisfied with the status quo at the outset in order to reflect their interests rather than try to attract them to—or leave them out of—a regime that prioritizes U.S. interests.

This order shares the democratic coalition's assumption that economic relations can have long-term stabilizing and even transformative effects. It does not assume, however, that all illiberal states will become democracies, and it presumes a long-term need to continue managing great-power competition. But it views economic integration as an important means toward that end.

Under this order, the United States might pursue the following international economic policy options:

- Explore targeted, perhaps issue-specific, trade accords with buy-in among the great powers.

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<sup>6</sup> On stalled Doha Round talks, see Edward Alden, "U.S. in Position to Write Rules on Trade," *Financial Times*, October 5, 2015.

- Allow more shared great-power influence in international economic institutions.
- Employ sanctions against other great powers sparingly, if at all.
- Allow the WTO dispute-resolution mechanism to remain objective and depoliticized.

A new great-power concert could offer advantages in the realm of international economics. It would provide a helpful context for stabilizing the key economic relationship in the world—the United States and China—by encouraging the United States to seek areas of compromise in geopolitical terms. Beyond China, the world's great powers also tend to be its leading economic actors, from the countries of the EU (especially Germany) to Japan, India, Brazil, and Indonesia. Promoting strong ties among these states in strategic terms could avoid disputes that would undermine economic relations. Warm economic relations would support the main goal of this vision (i.e., discouraging great-power conflict).

Yet managing the relationship between great-power ties and international economic policy could be challenging in practice. For one thing, a number of the great powers diverge significantly in their ideology and economic policies from the assumptions of the baseline policies previously outlined. The tensions between Chinese industrial policy and its associated restrictions on U.S. investments, for example, and the demands of the global trade regime for openness and nondiscriminatory treatment have become quite significant. Either the United States would have to accept significant exceptions to the baseline neoliberal policies or such great powers as China would have to modify their behavior to bridge this gap.

Moreover, U.S. economic relations are strongest with countries other than the core great powers. Significant U.S. trading partners include Canada and Mexico, and the United States has strong trade and financial relationships with dozens of other countries. When the United States has such powerful economic interests elsewhere, building U.S. economic policies largely with other great powers in mind might prove difficult—and, on some issues, self-defeating.

## Global Constitutional Order

This order's universal and formalized rules-based approach would extend to international economic relations. As under a Democratic Order, this vision of order would seek to maintain or further formalize rules governing economic relations and ensure they apply to all states.

The United States would agree to further reforms of international economic institutions designed to provide a more powerful voice to a broader range of countries, and particularly to share decisionmaking authority with other leading states. Unlike the Democratic Order, which would seek to develop new agreements first among democracies, a Global Constitutional Order would seek buy-in from other great powers from the outset. For example, the United States would begin negotiations that included China from the outset rather than start with like-minded states in hopes of attracting China to a U.S.-designed trading regime. The critical factor would be shared leadership in rule-making and consistent application of rules and procedures.

Under this order, the United States might pursue the following international economic policy options:

- Seek to maintain or deepen global agreements on trade and financial integration involving all countries. These could include a new WTO round, as well as regional agreements that include all states in the region, not just a narrow subset.
- Reduce emphasis on sanctions and other uses of economic tools for punishment and exclusion, unless agreed upon with other global or regional powers.
- Accelerate reforms of the IMF, World Bank, and other institutions to broaden their representation and share authority in making and enforcing rules.
- Allow the WTO dispute-resolution mechanism to remain objective and depoliticized.

The benefit of this vision of order is that it would preserve and, when possible, deepen the global trading system and provide the institutional basis for powerful responses to economic crises. Its emphasis

on sharing rulemaking with other great powers would help promote the goals of the vision—namely, avoiding conflict among the major powers and underwriting a continued transition toward a more rule-bound international community.

Although greater shared leadership may be possible, the feasibility of further economic liberalization through global agreements is questionable. Nothing in the trend of public opinion or international economic relations today suggests that such a deeply institutionalized economic order is in the cards. Indeed, public opposition to more intrusive international economic treaties and regulations was evident during negotiations over TPP and TTIP.

## **Potential for Disruption in the Economic Order**

Our analysis of the advantages and risks of these specific visions focused on the traditional neoliberal approach to international economic relations. However, there are signs that this consensus, which has been the foundation of the current economic order, has been faltering in some Western countries.

As long as the prevailing neoliberal economic ideology of the United States (and, more broadly, the leading trading nations) remains unchanged, many international economic policies are likely to remain consistent across all visions. For example, even a Coalition Against Revisionism would view trade relations with states seeking change to the existing order as valuable. Likewise, a coalition of democracies would not abandon the hope for good relations with nondemocracies and would continue to seek trade relations with them.

There has been a long-held consensus, at least in the West, that economic liberalization enhances prosperity for all. However, a wave of populist movements in 2016 in Western countries, including the United States, United Kingdom, and France, suggests that support for globalization and further liberalization is fragile. The gains from neoliberal global economic policies—cheaper consumer goods, for example—are diffuse and have not been equally distributed across domestic populations, while domestic job losses have been concen-

trated in certain sectors. If these domestic political dynamics continue and lead states to enact protectionist barriers to trade, the neoliberal foundation of the economic order will be threatened. To the extent that policymakers want to reverse this trend, they will need to consider policies that rebuild support for free trade. These might include greater efforts at redistribution to those negatively affected by trade.

Changes in domestic politics surrounding economic policy—which may be under way today in the United States and other leading trading nations—can have profound implications for the future of the order. Some states may begin to pursue protectionism, mercantilism, and industrial policy. These policies, in turn, could unleash competitive dynamics that could spill over into the security sphere. The competitive economic dynamics of the early 19th century contributed to the collapse of order that led to two world wars. Significant changes in the international economic order would, therefore, likely affect the viability of each of the visions of order outlined earlier.

At the same time, the effects of these political movements may be more limited, perhaps even beneficial. Some have argued that the postwar order has become characterized by a significant degree of ambitious policy overreach.<sup>7</sup> In areas ranging from specific trade agreements (such as the draft TPP and TTIP treaties) to the social and economic regulations of the EU, the prevailing economic orthodoxy led the United States and others—empowered by international economic institutions built to serve that orthodoxy—to push elements of liberalization and globalization beyond what other states and peoples will tolerate. The global populist backlash is, in part, a result of the fact that individual states simply have not adequately buffered their peoples against neoliberal economics in general and a globally integrated version in particular.

To the extent that the United States wants to preserve an open economic order on which to construct a future order, it cannot merely reaffirm the orthodoxy. It needs to promote policies that address the

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<sup>7</sup> We are indebted to core study group member Tod Lindberg for the concept of overreach and its leading implications.

pressures the current order creates. In the wake of recent political trends, this is an obvious global imperative. Our analysis highlights how important it is for order-building in particular.

## **U.S. Policies for Alternative Visions of Order: Great-Power Relations**

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Great-power peace is usually the top priority of any order. Moreover, the views, preferences, and policies of the great powers are often the most influential variables determining the stability of an order. Today, relations among the great powers are more contested than at any time since 1989; thus, U.S. policies toward other great powers may be the most consequential for order. This chapter, therefore, considers the implications of alternative visions of order for a second issue area—great-power relations.

When assessing the implications of an order, an initial challenge arises: What do we mean by a “great” power? One traditional set was the original group of UNSC members—the United States, United Kingdom, France, China, and Russia—but few would see that set as reflecting the world’s great powers today. Based on global gross-domestic-product rankings, Japan, Germany, India, and Brazil could join the list. When considering great-power relations, therefore, it is challenging to determine the precise set of targets for these policies. Here, we focus on how to shape an international order to help manage relations among the United States, China, and Russia, and we assume that concepts or tools to achieve that goal could also embrace other major, rising, or leading states.

Great-power relations and the international order influence each other. U.S. policies are only one factor affecting the shape of the order. The ambitions, character, and relative military and economic strength of other great powers will affect the viability of these alternative visions

of order. Indeed, the most critical factor in shaping the future international order is the degree to which China and Russia support or oppose the order.

## **Coalition Against Revisionism**

This vision builds an order of states (democracies and others alike) to deter revisionist states, including great powers. It assumes that major states seek regional hegemony, which would violate key rules and norms of the order and threaten U.S. interests. To protect these interests, the United States must confront other major states behaving in ways that challenge the status quo. This vision of order can deter and contain any states behaving in revisionist ways—for example, North Korea and Iran. Here, we focus on how this vision of order would deal with two great powers that might engage in revisionism: Russia and China.

This vision assumes that Russia and China have a desire to revise territorial boundaries and the rules that form the foundation of the current order. The United States will respond to these challenges by using alliances and other institutions to deter conflict and manage competition with these states. That competition need not be violent, but it will be persistent and will rule out the United States restraining itself within institutions that include these states. The basic goals of this approach to order, then, would be to strengthen ties among states threatened by or concerned with the aggressive tendencies of those great powers.

Even this order would attempt to preserve minimal working relations with China and Russia. As during the Cold War, the United States would develop confidence-building measures and crisis management tools with both states. It would be willing to compromise in limited ways to avoid conflict. It reflects some balance between zero-sum and positive-sum relations, though its primary focus is on competition. A major area of continued engagement, as noted, would be the international economy.

This vision might imply the following specific policies to manage great-power relations:



- Maintain or expand U.S. forward presence in Europe and Asia to underwrite security.
- Expand the size of the U.S. military to fulfill enhanced regional roles.
- Resist governance reforms to key institutions, both economic and political.
- Institutionalize the G-7 (Group of Seven: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States) and promote it as the primary global political and security institution. Expand to include additional democracies.
- Increase outreach to “linchpin” states critical to the global balance of power—India, Indonesia, Brazil, Mexico, Turkey, Vietnam, and others.
- Increase demands for enhanced allied burden-sharing—both in scale (amount of military spending) and type (the systems and capabilities acquired)—to help meet the needs of a global military standoff. Boost military aid and technology transfer to partners.
- Enforce key norms of great-power behavior, such as nonaggression, including through the use of economic or military power, either unilaterally or with coalitions of willing partners.
- Reduce emphasis on human rights in partnerships with nondemocracies willing to support other elements of the order. Embrace military collaboration with illiberal countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Vietnam.
- Deny dual-use technology to revisionist powers.
- Undermine the industrial policy strategies of revisionist powers.
- Continue commitment to a strong “open door” policy in both Europe and Asia: Defend the freedom of states to pursue membership in international institutions as they wish, without interference from nearby great powers. Continue discussion of eventual NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia, and consider formal military alliances with more Asian states.
- Promote the rule of law in the South China Sea, including a demand that China abide by the 2016 Permanent Court of Arbitration decision on sovereignty claims. Maintain powerful mili-

tary forces in the region, respond decisively to military provocations, and conduct freedom of navigation operations.

- Increase emphasis on overt and covert democracy promotion efforts in China and Russia.

Such a vision could take different forms. The U.S. approach to regional deterrence could be more “offshore” than forward-deployed, as long as the essential commitment to its security guarantees remained the same. The specific operational concepts used to underpin regional U.S. strategies could vary widely. The role of trade and foreign assistance policies could vary as well; some variants of this approach might take a *laissez faire* approach to trade while seeking to compete in other areas.

This vision of order offers several advantages. It prioritizes deterring other great powers and maintenance of the territorial and institutional status quo. It offers a straightforward rationale for encouraging cooperation among states threatened by revisionism. Much of the desirability of this vision depends on whether its basic assumption is true: If other major powers, most notably China and Russia, are unalterably revisionist—meaning that their desire to challenge order cannot be addressed through giving them a stronger voice in setting the rules—then a counterrevisionist strategy may be the only appropriate response.

In spite of its potential advantages, this vision would support a high-cost and high-risk approach to dealing with the interests of other great powers that would lead to confrontation and possibly conflict. Pursuit of such an order would effectively rule out the possibility of a shared order among all great powers and institutionalize a very dangerous rivalry between the United States and both China and Russia. Russia views many elements of current U.S. policy as directed toward outright regime change, and any oppositional strategy would magnify this perception and undermine the possibility for cooperation on any issues. The United States could try to signal that it does not have such objectives, but Russia has not found these assurances credible. This order may even encourage these two states to set aside their differences and work together to counter U.S. hegemony. If the chance exists for

productive relations with these other great powers, this vision would create unnecessary risk. More broadly, such a strategy may be unaffordable. China may simply be too big, too essential to the global economy, and too regionally influential to isolate and contain as the United States did to the Soviet Union.

This order could also create a renewed free-rider problem with U.S. allies. If the United States committed itself to more-elaborate global deterrence, it is not clear what motive allies would have for boosting their own defense spending. Finally, this vision would create a dilemma in regard to liberal values, requiring (as during the Cold War) that they be overlooked when building key partnerships against revisionism while at the same time proclaiming them as a basis for the order.

## **Democratic Order**

This vision of order draws together democratic states into a tightly knit coalition. Relations with nondemocratic great powers could be business-like and stable, but there would be no pretense of a shared, value-based order between them. Assuming that shared values form a solid foundation for deep cooperation, the United States would work with democratic states to build rules, norms, and institutions based on liberal values.

This vision of order would include some elements that would welcome nondemocratic states in the hope of encouraging them to adopt liberal economic and political reforms. But that would be a secondary endeavor to the primary focus of the vision: erecting the strongest possible order among the community of democracies. In this vision, great-power peace comes from a coalition of democratic great powers aligned against illiberal revisionist states.

This vision might imply the following specific policies to manage great-power relations:

- Emphasize sustaining relations with established democratic allies in Europe and Asia. Conduct diplomacy, renew military cooperation, and consider U.S. concessions on occasional issues to sustain the strongest ties.

- Emphasize using the UNSC and cooperating with other great powers when possible, but rely on an expanded G-7 or other global institution of democracies as a key alternative management body of the order.
- Maintain powerful and forward-leaning U.S. military posture oriented toward defending existing democratic allies.
- Intensify outreach to linchpin democracies critical to the global balance of power—India, Indonesia, Brazil, Mexico, and others. Place a high premium on helping such countries develop specific military and technical skills to share the burden for specific elements of the global order, such as capacity-building programs, military assistance, disaster relief, and more.
- Expand foreign assistance programs for transitioning and at-risk democracies.
- Share the rule-setting responsibilities of international institutions and commit to those rules, but only among democracies.
- Continue support for existing alliance members and support to states that seek to meet standards for joining these organizations.
- Focus on the security of democratic allies in regions at risk of revisionism, such as those with territorial disputes with China or former Soviet bloc countries.

This order, too, could take different forms in its specific approach to great-power relations. Perhaps the most important decision would involve how aggressive to be in promoting human rights and other democratic values. A second critical choice would be how firmly to embrace the related concept of the “open door,” in which states have the freedom to seek membership in international institutions (i.e., whether the United States should confront Russia over Ukraine’s NATO membership). One variant of this order could forcefully assert such values, undertake armed humanitarian intervention, and promote reform on the periphery of nondemocratic great powers. That version would be very close to a Coalition Against Revisionism, but built among democracies. Another variant—we would argue the default and dominant form of this vision of order—would be more patient and less aggressive in pushing liberal values when they conflicted with great-power inter-

ests. Patience, in this view, may make sense if U.S. leaders believe that gradual engagement is an effective way to promote democracy.

We view the latter version as the default, in part, because of what we see as the basic causal mechanism embraced by this vision, which is to use the geopolitical effects of a tightly knit core of democratic friends and allies as the engine of long-term stability and eventual integration among great powers. Its fundamental assumption is that a well-functioning democratic core can defend the peace and also generate such a powerful economic gravitational pull that non-democratic great powers feel compelled to abide by as many of the rules of the order as possible.

A coalition of democracies has inherent advantages in the way that it approaches great-power relations. Of all the visions, this one takes most seriously the need to found an order on shared values. Unlike the Coalition Against Revisionism, this vision of order is also consistent in its commitment to liberal values. It builds outward from the best-functioning current relationships and works most closely with the democratic states that have been central to the functioning of the post-war order so far. It offers significant deterrent power vis-à-vis potential revisionists but strikes a less bellicose balance than a Coalition Against Revisionism and leaves room for limited accommodation with non-democratic great powers.

On the other hand, this vision also contains limitations and risks in its strategy for managing great-power ties. It could be perceived as a new bifurcation of world politics, and China and Russia could see it as a distinctly hostile step. The emphasis on liberal political values in the current order has already prompted Russia and China to found alternative organizations, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, based on the principle of sovereignty. Moreover, it is not clear that other democracies would support excluding China from the core of an order.

Nor is it clear that the preferences of global democracies are sufficiently aligned for this vision to work. India, Brazil, Indonesia, and South Africa, for example, have expressed views on a whole range of issues that differ significantly from the United States and some of its closest allies. The United States would find itself more constrained in

taking action when democracies cannot agree: This order presumes that some degree of consensus among democracies would be required to take action, and experience suggests that such a consensus is very difficult to build among countries with views as diverse as, for example, France, Brazil, and India. On the other hand, in cases when a coalition of democracies *did* act, it would be able to do so with significant military capabilities.

Finally, focusing on democracies would perhaps create unnecessary limits on dealing with important, evolving states that do not fit that label. This order would surely be viewed as threatening by nondemocracies, whether intended that way or not. It invites opposition from illiberal states and thus might end up looking more similar to a Coalition Against Revisionism in practice.

## Great-Power Concert 2.0

In a concert approach, the United States would accept that other great powers have legitimate security interests and work with them to establish minimal rules and institutions to preserve great-power peace and prosperity. This vision perhaps takes the most direct approach to great-power relations by prioritizing their stability over other issues, such as the enforcement of specific norms.

Such a vision of order would have to decide on the members of the proposed great-power concert. As noted, this would be difficult, and could significantly complicate the process of managing great-power relations if a potential great power found itself excluded from the core leadership club of the order.

This vision might imply the following specific policies to manage great-power relations:

- Promote the UNSC as the central governing institution for the order.
- Take a hands-off approach to clashes over claimed interests in areas adjacent to other great powers. End U.S. policies (such as further NATO expansion or pledges to defend certain allies' ter-

ritorial claims) that directly threaten the key interests of other powers.

- Accept the existence of nonaligned states between great powers, either formally or tacitly.
- Consider formal regional institutions that include other powers, such as a new compact on Euro-Atlantic security.
- Pursue new arms control agreements among the great powers that maintain or cut current forces.
- Reduce U.S. forward military presence. Retain an ability to respond to major aggression, because a concert would not necessarily guarantee peace. Restrain missile defense deployments of concern to Russia and China, whether in Eastern Europe or Korea.
- Maintain strong economic ties to linchpin states close to other great powers (including Ukraine, Turkey, Vietnam, and others), but restrain military partnerships to broad-based capacity development and military-to-military contacts.
- Promote democracy in the long term through economic development and technical assistance rather than outright democracy promotion, especially in areas near the periphery of other great powers.

This order could emerge in different forms as well, partly based on the degree of hostility among great powers connected by mutual interests. One version could be a minimally institutionalized great-power order, designed to coordinate on major policy issues. A more elaborate approach would have more-formalized institutions to manage areas of shared interest and structures for consultation on areas of discord.

This vision aims to reduce tensions among great powers. By avoiding conflicts over spheres of influence and liberal values, a concert could keep a balance among great powers. This assumes that accommodation is the route to peace: If the United States recognizes their status and interests, China and Russia will become less insecure and behave less aggressively. A concert could help avoid or reduce security dilemmas that might otherwise lead to conflict.

A great-power concert carries potential advantages in terms of managing relations among those powers. It would reduce the risk of the single most devastating outcome in world politics—war between nuclear-armed great powers. A significant benefit of this vision could be coordinated action among leading states on such issues as terrorism, nonproliferation, climate change, and global pandemics. It might also allow for effective compromises on emerging trade disputes.

The risk of this vision is that its central assumption—that accommodating great powers' security interests will satisfy them—may be wrong. If the great powers' ambitions are unlimited, accommodation may whet rather than satisfy their appetite for additional economic and geopolitical advantage. This would make conflict more likely, not less. If this is the case and the United States has contracted its global presence in the meantime, the world may face another moment like the 1930s, when leading powers were unprepared for conflict with a deeply revisionist power. In addition, because the share of global power among the great powers will never be static, adapting the concert's rules and institutions to reflect the changing power distribution will be difficult.

This vision also has practical problems. One is the membership challenge already mentioned: Deciding who counts as a formal member of the great-power club will be difficult. The role of the EU in such a scheme might be especially problematic: Individual member states might not be equivalent to China or the United States in overall power, but the EU—especially a weak and fragmented one, riven by internal economic problems—would be difficult to integrate as a collective body. Finally, many global priorities, from counterterrorism (CT) to infectious disease control, now demand the engagement of many states beyond the great powers, suggesting that a concert-style order might be anachronistic. Second-level powers, not part of the great-power ranks but critical to the solution of many challenges, have an unclear role in this vision of order. Although the great powers could likely persuade these states to join and cooperate, these states may still be a source of occasional resistance to this form of order.



## Global Constitutional Order

In a Global Constitutional Order, the great powers would sustain a universal order of rules and institutions based on areas of mutual interest. This vision does not make idealistic assumptions about great powers' willingness to give up a privileged position. Rather, in this vision, the great powers would have outsized influence in writing the rules. However, the rules would apply equally to all states. Because this is a more shared order, U.S. influence in writing the rules and setting the norms would wane, meaning some elements of the current order would change.

This vision might imply the following specific policies to manage great-power relations:

- Work primarily through current global institutions, especially the U.N.
- Create new dispute-resolution processes with great powers that would be binding for existing and future disputes.
- Expand voting rights and membership to a wider set of countries in global institutions to reflect the current balance of power.
- Pursue economic agreements with other great powers.
- Demonstrate the benefits of liberal values through repeated interactions in international institutions instead of outright democracy promotion or military intervention.
- Sustain global U.S. military presence, but shift more toward an offshore posture.
- Call for negotiating new dispute-resolution processes with great powers that would be binding for existing and future disputes.

The basic causal mechanism embodied in this vision is the concept of self-interested cooperation. A Global Constitutional Order represents a set of institutions that can facilitate shared action on issues on which interests converge—which, in a globalizing international context, is a long and significant list. Its causal force stems, in part, from classic arguments made by Robert Keohane and others about the power

of institutions to allow and even encourage functional cooperation.<sup>1</sup> It also takes seriously the insight of constructivist theories that continual engagement in institutions over the long term can shape habits and expectations in ways that encourage deeper cooperation. It does not assume that great-power interests always align. Importantly, however, it does assume that great powers would be willing to settle even deep conflicts of interest through agreed-upon rules and processes, rather than force.

This vision comes with advantages and risks. It could gain strength and legitimacy from its inclusiveness and its relatively low barriers to entry. This order could spark necessary cooperation on a host of global issues. It allows room for compromise on issues of vital interest to great powers while still adhering to the long-term assertion of rules and norms. In some ways, it takes the least risk because it endorses an approach of building the maximum possible cooperation from the bottom up—seeking the largest number of win-win solutions in which interests align and using the order to institutionalize and facilitate that process.

The result, though, is that this vision of order assumes that many interests are aligned and that great powers are willing to collaborate in a period of growing suspicion and hostility. If those assumptions turn out to be wrong, this vision of order may leave the United States least prepared for what comes next: Unlike the Coalition Against Revisionism or Democratic Order visions, it does not emphasize strengthening sources of deterrent power in the international system. Moreover, this vision would seem to assume that the incentives for cooperation will actually grow, because the international community has been hard-pressed to generate effective collaboration on such key issues as further trade agreements, cybersecurity, or climate change over the past several years.

Table 5.1 summarizes the essential elements of each vision's approach to managing great-power relations on some core issues.

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<sup>1</sup> Keohane, 2005.

**Table 5.1**  
**Approaches to Great-Power Relations Under Alternative Visions of Order**

Element	Coalition Against Revisionism	Democratic Order	Great-Power Concert 2.0	Global Constitutional Order
General approach and concept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coalition including status quo states deters revisionist great powers while building means for crisis avoidance on margins</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coalition of democracies maintains strength through cooperation; deters threats and sets stage for transformation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Close coordination among great powers builds cooperation on selected issues; avoids large-scale conflicts of interest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Universal order that integrates great powers into rules that apply to all</li> </ul>
Leading assumptions relative to great-power management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chinese and Russian ambitions irreconcilable with a meaningfully shared order</li> <li>Confrontation and deterrence the best route to great-power peace</li> <li>Other states will join counter-revisionist program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Democracies share sufficient values to cooperate deeply</li> <li>Economic attraction to democratic core is inevitable</li> <li>Can be patient on short-term rules and norms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chinese and Russian ambitions reconcilable with a set of rules and institutions</li> <li>Accommodation is best route to great-power peace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Differences among great powers will not undermine chance of universal order</li> <li>Attractive power of such an order is best route to great-power peace</li> </ul>
Primary governance structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>U.S. alliance structure</li> <li>Other U.S. military partnerships</li> <li>G-7 and other ad hoc groupings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>U.S. alliance structure</li> <li>Partnerships and ad hoc groupings of democracies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNSC G-20 for great powers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reformed U.N. and related structures that include more-binding rules and processes</li> </ul>

Table 5.1—Continued

Element	Coalition Against Revisionism	Democratic Order	Great-Power Concert 2.0	Global Constitutional Order
Policy on NATO “open door”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strongly supportive; welcome new aspirants and allies; may lower standards to expand the coalition against Russia</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strongly supportive, but maintain high standards; use NATO partnership programs as a way to support liberalization in other states</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negotiate spheres of influence with Russia and cease NATO expansion; end partnership programs with states on Russia’s periphery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negotiate pan-European security organization that does not include requirements for democratic values</li> </ul>
Policy on South China Sea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Willingness to confront China militarily, conduct foreign operations, highlight rights and defense of allies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rigorous support for rule of law, UNCLOS judgment, non-aggression backed by military deterrence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage allies to negotiate bilaterally with China if international legal channels fail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negotiate new dispute-resolution process with China to adjudicate these and future claims</li> </ul>
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Best deterrent posture, hedge against negative trajectory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Builds on shared values, strongest coordination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoids unnecessary wars, allows great-power cooperation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cooperation under shared norms</li> </ul>
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increases risk of conflict with other powers and construction of alternative orders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increases risk of conflict and construction of alternative orders; democracies not sufficiently aligned</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>U.S. loses influence, especially on other great powers’ peripheries; less emphasis on liberal values</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not hedge against negative trends; less emphasis on liberal values</li> </ul>

NOTE: G-20=Group of 20; UNCLOS=U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Because of their importance for managing great-power relations, we have highlighted two specific issues: the “open door” to further NATO members and Chinese sovereignty claims in the South China Sea. The four visions of order offer distinct ways of handling each.

### **Example: Russia and NATO Open Door**

Both the Coalition Against Revisionism and Democratic Order would emphasize the sovereignty of non–great powers and seek to enlarge the group of states opposed to illiberal powers seeking to change the status quo. These orders would therefore prioritize the enlargement of Euro-Atlantic institutions over respecting Russia’s interests in the region. Both orders would seek to ensure that such countries as Ukraine and Georgia have the freedom to align themselves with the West, including by seeking membership in the EU and NATO. Both orders also prescribe direct support to these countries in order to strengthen democratic government, build military capacity to deter Russia, and encourage economic development. The specific form that these aid programs could take may vary from more-aggressive policies of direct U.S. support to the military forces of these countries, to provision of training and advice, to limiting U.S. assistance to the economic or political realms.

Both orders would also seek to encourage greater democratization in the former Soviet Union, including within Russia itself. A Coalition Against Revisionism would still be willing to work with nondemocratic states that were willing to counter Russia. A Democratic Order would envision a wide range of political, economic, and military institutions to develop relationships exclusively with democratic countries; it would also suggest closer association with the EU and collaboration with NATO. Ensuring the free flow of information, the rights of non-governmental organizations to be active in these countries, and the protection of human rights would also be priorities. This is not to say that the Democratic Order necessarily seeks immediate regime change in these countries but that it sets out a clear vision of how the Euro-

pean continent will evolve to become whole, free, and at peace through development and the spread of liberal institutions.

Finally, both orders would consider the use of force in response to Russian attempts to change the status quo. For example, Russian moves to establish a sphere of influence could provoke military intervention to uphold the order's norms of sovereignty or protect the interests of the United States and its partners. The two orders would differ, however, in terms of the conditions under which the United States would use force. Under the Coalition Against Revisionism vision of order, the United States could act unilaterally or with a coalition of the willing to reestablish the status quo. However, in a Democratic Order, the United States would only do so if approved by NATO allies under Article 5.

There are other notable differences among the two orders. First, a Coalition Against Revisionism would welcome any small states, regardless of regime type, willing to align themselves with the United States and its partners. Second, in a Democratic Order, the United States would be restrained by its democratic allies. Thus, the United States might pursue less-aggressive democratization efforts if other allies sought less-aggressive variants of the order. Moreover, because the United States would be willing to restrain itself in this way, it would seek high standards for membership in such institutions as NATO or any other binding institutions of democratic states.

Both a Great-Power Concert 2.0 and Global Constitutional Order expect that such policies as the open door and outright democracy promotion will provoke Russia, making great-power peace more difficult and costly for the United States to maintain. Russia sees Ukraine's and Georgia's accession to NATO as fundamental threats to Russia's security and its economy.<sup>2</sup> Greater respect for Russia's interests in these two forms of order would, therefore, involve either a statement against NATO expansion on Russia's periphery or the pursuit of a wider-ranging political settlement with Russia on European security. In these visions of order, the United States may also downgrade the importance

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<sup>2</sup> Shawn Donnan, "World Trade Organisation Moves on from Stalled Doha Round," *Financial Times*, December 19, 2015.

of NATO as the key decisionmaking body and, instead, promote dialogues that include Russia.

The logic of a Global Constitutional Order would go further, supporting past Russian proposals for a European security organization with Russia as a member. The United States, in this view, would promote the development of rule- and decisionmaking processes that would be binding on all states, including the United States and Russia.<sup>3</sup>

### Example: China and Offshore Island Disputes

Both the Coalition Against Revisionism and the Democratic Order would seek a strategy of deterring China from expansion in East and Southeast Asia. In these views of order, the United States, to preserve the status quo, needs to defend existing rules and norms, including the law of the sea and the norm of territorial sovereignty. Both orders would endorse continued freedom of navigation operations and oppose further reclamation and militarization of land features in the South China Sea. While a Coalition Against Revisionism would be more willing to embrace small illiberal states that wanted to align with the United States and against China—Vietnam is a possible example—a Democratic Order would emphasize working with democratic U.S. allies, such as Japan and South Korea, to uphold the status quo in the region.

These visions of order would also oppose giving China greater influence in most international institutions or committing the United States to binding itself within political and security institutions that include China. While China may espouse peaceful intentions, these visions of order are skeptical that a rising China can be trusted to abide by these rules under the current Communist regime. Compared with the Coalition Against Revisionism, under a Democratic Order,

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<sup>3</sup> Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2013, pp. 358–359. For earlier arguments in favor of including Russia in NATO, see Richard Weitz, *The Rise and Fall of Medvedev's European Security Treaty*, Washington, D.C.: The German Marshall Fund of the United States, May 29, 2012.

the United States would see greater value in trying to solve problems within existing institutions that include China wherever possible. In doing so, the United States would hope to promote further regional liberalization by socializing China to democratic and liberal practices.

In a Great-Power Concert 2.0 order, the United States would be more selective about its role in disputes so close to the Chinese homeland. To protect its own interests in free trade in Asia, the United States would reject China's expansive claims to entire areas of the South China Sea—or at least insist upon and enforce freedom of navigation in the region. This vision of order does not expect that the United States needs to or has the capability to consistently apply formal rules and norms all of the time. Rather, on issues with little direct relevance to U.S. interests, this vision calls for privileging the concerns of other great powers. In other words, the United States would accept, to some degree, a Chinese sphere of privileged influence. Therefore, the United States might encourage partners to settle these disputes with China bilaterally. Alternatively, the United States might pursue a larger political settlement with China that would include an agreement on mechanisms for settling these disputes.

U.S. policies to support a Global Constitutional Order would include calls for all sides to settle disputes through accepted dispute-resolution mechanisms. China has rejected the Permanent Court of Arbitration's authority under the provisions of the UNCLOS to rule on a territorial dispute with the Philippines. Therefore, this version of order would call for more-extensive U.S. efforts to help create mutually agreed-upon rules and procedures for arbitrating such disputes. This might include, for example, U.S. willingness to ratify UNCLOS and similarly be bound by international legal rulings on possible disputes.



## **U.S. Policies for Alternative Visions of Order: Defense Strategy**

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A final policy area we examined involved the implications of alternative concepts of order for U.S. defense strategy. By defense strategy, we mean three connected elements: the tasks, contingencies, and wars that the military is expected to fight and undertake; the operating principles these forces will adopt, including where forces are postured and what forms of allied military contributions are expected; and, finally, the force structure that is necessary to undertake these operations and fulfill the expected tasks. Where possible, we attempt to shed light on additional questions, including:

- What are the primary threats and routes to war that the policy is concerned with? What kinds of wars should the United States assume it might have to fight? How do these translate into specific planning scenarios?
- What role does U.S. military power play in sustaining global order?
- What are the implications for U.S. investment and modernization choices?

In some cases, the visions of the international order offer specific implications for defense strategy. The Democratic Order, for example, suggests a far greater degree of integration with other democratic countries' militaries, above and beyond U.S. integration with NATO. In general, however, specific defense strategies do not map neatly onto the different international orders for three reasons. First, some deci-

sions about defense strategy are uncertain or controversial but have little to do with the choice of order, such as decisions about acquisition and modernization that stem from the changing nature of warfare and technology. Second, there are elements of U.S. defense strategy for which each of the different orders we propose make similar suggestions, such as the need to undertake global CT activities. Finally, a particular vision of order may be associated with multiple defense strategies. The United States could support a Coalition Against Revisionism, for example, by threatening long-range strikes and delayed counteroffensives rather than through forward-deployed forces.

This section tackles these challenges in two primary ways. First, drawing in part from the writings of advocates who recommend particular orders, we make certain assumptions about the way the United States is likely to perceive the defense strategy requirements of each order. In theory, for example, the United States could counter revisionism with a long-range, stand-off defense strategy. But in practice, those supporting a Coalition Against Revisionism tend to emphasize the need for a forward-leaning posture. Such a posture is one way to demonstrate U.S. credibility, which is essential to the logic of the Coalition Against Revisionism. In making these arguments, we build where possible on the growing literature on grand strategy, especially in cases in which these works offer specific military force sizes and operating concepts that are associated with their recommended grand strategies. Second, recognizing that identification of the international order cannot necessarily directly specify a complete and unique defense strategy, we use the incomplete defense strategy priorities implied by the different visions to build a set of common defense strategy priorities. For example, the defense strategy for each vision includes an element focused on defending the homeland and on countering global terrorist movements. These represent issues that the U.S. military must accomplish no matter what the vision of order.

In fact, an important lesson of this analysis was that the broad requirements for U.S. defense strategy derive much more from the default U.S. grand strategy of deep engagement than they do from

any specific variant of an international order.<sup>1</sup> It is the grand strategy that creates the essential demands on U.S. defense strategy: to be globally engaged and, to some degree, forward deployed (rotationally if not permanently); to be able to project power to key regions; to be able to fight and win at least one major conflict against a major regional or near-peer adversary; to conduct an extensive set of training, advisory, and exercising missions; and to be ready to respond to massive societal collapse in fragile states. Under different conceptions of order, the United States would presumably prioritize those missions in different ways. But in none of them can it abandon at least a residual capability for the whole range, unless the broader U.S. approach to its role in the world—and the prevailing order—were to change significantly.

Table 6.1 outlines the theoretical basis for our analysis of each order's defense policy implications. The following sections discuss these in more detail.

## Coalition Against Revisionism

The goal of this order is to build a dominant coalition of states to deter revisions to the U.S.-led order. This implies that the key tasks for the U.S. military will be to defend the homeland; provide the deterrent and, if necessary, fighting capabilities wherever around the world the territorial status quo may be threatened; support allies that face military challenges; and take necessary actions to counter revisionist movements, such as global radical networks supporting terrorism. As it did during the Cold War, the United States would likely feel forced to defend even secondary interests to avoid questions about its credibility. The prominence of the credibility doctrine in this defense strategy would tend to exaggerate even further the level of military capacity required, as well as the willingness to use it. However, all things being equal, this vision would place a lower priority on long-term counterinsurgency (COIN)

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<sup>1</sup> The term *grand strategy* generally refers to ways of aligning all national instruments of power (means) to accomplish national objectives (ends). The distinction between grand strategy and more-specific defense or national security strategies is their level of application: Grand strategies are dealing with the whole national effort.

**Table 6.1**  
**Defense Strategy and Visions of Order—Theoretical Foundations**

Issue	Coalition Against Revisionism	Democratic Coalition	Great-Power Concert 2.0	Global Constitutional Order
What assumptions does this order make about the international environment over the next decade?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• U.S.-dominated order essential to U.S. interests</li> <li>• U.S. power can remain dominant</li> <li>• Power vacuums magnify danger of rising, revisionist powers</li> <li>• Balancing peer competitors a priority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• United States and democratic allies combined can remain dominant</li> <li>• Orders among value-sharing democracies are stronger</li> <li>• Expansion of liberal democracies and institutions a priority</li> <li>• Allies agree to more burden-sharing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• United States remains world's dominant power but relative power is waning</li> <li>• Conflicts of interest with other great powers not vital</li> <li>• Risk of war can be reduced through accommodation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared interests allow global order even for Russia, China</li> <li>• United States allows itself to be bound by rules</li> <li>• Some degree of rules-based system rather than U.S. dominance can serve U.S. interests</li> <li>• Institutions can shape state behavior</li> </ul>
What interests are worth fighting for?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attacks on homeland</li> <li>• Preventing rise of regional hegemon</li> <li>• Territorial aggression by other great powers</li> <li>• Protecting allies</li> <li>• Nonproliferation</li> <li>• CT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attacks on homeland</li> <li>• Protection of democratic countries</li> <li>• Prevention of massive violation of human rights or international law</li> <li>• Defending states' freedom to seek membership in democratic coalition</li> <li>• Nonproliferation</li> <li>• CT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attacks on homeland</li> <li>• Attacks on homeland of existing allies</li> <li>• Aggressive attacks on regional or global commons that threaten U.S. interests</li> <li>• CT in coordination with other powers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attacks on homeland</li> <li>• Obvious violations of agreed-upon rules as determined by international legal channels               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Threats to common security (ISIS<sup>a</sup>, terrorism, proliferation)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Table 6.1—Continued

Issue	Coalition Against Revisionism	Democratic Coalition	Great-Power Concert 2.0	Global Constitutional Order
What is the role of U.S. military power in this order?	Conducting wide range of missions to form essential core of response to revisions to the U.S.-dominated order	Conducting wide range of missions when backed by allies	Detering threats to key interests; provide bargaining leverage	Serving as hub of international responses to rulebreaking
What are the presumed routes to war or causes of war in this order?	Powerful states seeking to revise the current order	Assault on system of liberal democracy and liberal institutions	Failure to accommodate basic security concerns of other great powers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-state movements</li> <li>• States that break away from order's rules</li> </ul>
What is the dominant theory of deterring great-power conflict in this order?	Direct military deterrence by denial and demonstrations of resolve	Collective defense by liberal states, made credible by commitments within institutions and alliances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce incentives for war; address security concerns</li> <li>• Deterrence by threat of punishment or counterattack</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mutual understanding and shared interests as part of larger shared order</li> <li>• Deterrence to backstop major revisionism</li> </ul>

<sup>a</sup> The organization's name transliterates from Arabic as *al-Dawlah al-Islamiyah fi al-'Iraq wa al-Sham* (abbreviated as Da'ish or DAESH). In the West, it is commonly referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham (both abbreviated as ISIS), or simply as the Islamic State (IS). Arguments abound as to which is the most accurate translation, but here we refer to the group as ISIS.

or stability operations in regions of secondary interest. In an order centered on revisionist near-peer risks, the United States would ultimately prioritize using its limited resources for defending against revisionism by peer competitors.

In theory, the United States could achieve deterrence of adversaries through an offshore, stand-off, delayed counteroffensive approach. However, a forward-deployed, deter-by-denial strategy, supported by capabilities deployed from the continental United States, is the most likely military posture in such an order. If U.S. troops are stationed closer to the territories they have pledged to defend, they may be able to respond to an attack with enough speed and capability to prevent the adversary from realizing its objectives. Partners may also see U.S. security commitments as more credible if U.S. forces show a willingness to pay the costs—both financial and human—to defend their security. Credibility is particularly important for a Coalition Against Revisionism to work: Partners and allies will only acquiesce to U.S. leadership of the international order if they trust that the United States will come to their defense.

A Coalition Against Revisionism would therefore call for a highly demanding defense strategy, one designed to be capable of fighting and winning against at least one and probably two near-peer adversaries in near-simultaneous conflicts. The burden would be somewhat shared among the states that joined the coalition, but the significance of U.S. capabilities means that they could only be shared to a limited degree. The defense strategy in this concept of order would clearly seek to sustain U.S. military predominance, setting a high bar for both capacity and capability. It would demand a forward-postured force and an exhausting series of exercises and rotational deployments. While it might downplay stabilization missions, at least in terms of sizing the force, it could not entirely rule them out.

The military strategy associated with a Coalition Against Revisionism would therefore call for significant increases in U.S. military spending. This spending will enable an increase in the U.S. military's capacity to be forward deployed and operationally present in a range of theaters, as well as its capability to deter and defeat peer competitors. Increased spending under this approach should occur across the joint force, including U.S. Air Force capabilities for a high-end fight across multiple the-

aters, U.S. Navy capabilities for power projection, and a larger Army with improved long-range fire, air defense, and maneuver forces. It would focus on the capacity and capabilities required for two highly demanding major-conflict scenarios against near-peer adversaries. The specific investment priorities will depend on assessments of the evolution of adversary capabilities, new technology, and theories of future warfare, though some likely priorities are outlined in Table 6.2.

This strategy would also place significant emphasis on nuclear deterrence and the advanced capabilities necessary for a cutting-edge nuclear force. Because the primary focus is major war against near-peers, the risk of nuclear escalation and the role of nuclear coercion would be significant components of the strategy. The United States would therefore invest heavily in nuclear modernization and the creation of a flexible suite of lower-yield nuclear weapons to prevent another state from gaining escalation dominance.

The military strategy suggested by the Coalition Against Revisionism bears some similarity to the grand strategy of “primacy” defined (though not endorsed) by Posen and Ross, which holds that “only a

**Table 6.2**  
**Defense Strategy Choices—Coalition Against Revisionism**

Tasks for U.S. military	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defend the homeland</li> <li>• Provide capability to deter or defend against attacks on the territorial status quo</li> <li>• Support allies that face military challenges</li> <li>• Combat terrorism</li> </ul>
Operating principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forward presence</li> <li>• Deterrence by denial</li> <li>• U.S. unilateral action</li> </ul>
Force structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased, modernized, balanced force</li> <li>• Prioritize capabilities to defend against a peer competitor over COIN</li> </ul>
Capability investment priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirements to close gap in near-peer regional contingencies (long-range fires, short-range air defense, higher proportion of armored units, long-range stealthy strike, much greater stockpiles of precision munitions)</li> <li>• Next-generation systems (long-range bomber)</li> <li>• Unmanned systems (subsurface, air)</li> <li>• Counter space</li> <li>• Cyber weapons and defenses</li> </ul>

preponderance of U.S. power ensures peace” and views “the rise of a peer competitor from the midst of the great powers to offer the greatest threat to international order and thus the greatest risk of war.”<sup>2</sup> Posen and Ross suggest that a “nearly Cold War–size” force structure would be required for such a strategy, drawing from the “Base Force” suggested under the George H. W. Bush administration that was designed so that the United States could simultaneously fight the next two, three, or four powers.<sup>3</sup> While such a force was large, it also maintained its advantage through technological superiority. Posen and Ross also note that advocates of primacy would argue that “U.S. forces could be used at will, but would seldom have to be, since threats to U.S. interests would be deterred by overwhelming military capabilities.”<sup>4</sup> Hence, though under primacy the United States should be prepared for combat, it hopes that its strength can deter it, and thus limit war.<sup>5</sup>

This defense strategy would place some emphasis on close coordination and interoperability with allies, but it would be limited. Because the focus is on high-end major combat, the United States would seek allies to provide additional capacity and fill key needs, but it would not count on other members of the coalition or coalitions to provide the most important combined arms capabilities to achieve war-winning effect. Though friends and allies may contribute additional resources as well, the United States will have to provide the lion’s share of the defense capabilities to counter revisionism and will retain the unilateral ability to respond to whatever military conflicts emerge.

Such an approach to defense strategy would have its advantages. U.S. predominance in some ways simplifies foreign policy challenges

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<sup>2</sup> Posen and Ross, 1996/1997, p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Posen and Ross, 1996/1997, p. 41.

<sup>4</sup> Posen and Ross, 1996/1997, p. 41.

<sup>5</sup> Donnelly advocates a similar approach, returning “American and allied forces to the ‘front lines’” and notes “anything less than a military with a ‘three-theater’ capacity and capability . . . falls short of the challenges of our time.” He also recommends new investment in a range of ground, air, and maritime programs to preserve and extend U.S. military capacity and capabilities to achieve these objectives. Thomas Donnelly, “Great Powers Don’t Pivot,” in Jacob Cohn and Ryan Boone, eds., *How Much Is Enough: Alternative Defense Strategies*, Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2016.



as it assumes that the United States is primarily responsible for meeting these challenges. It would generate a dominant overall capability that would reaffirm U.S. conventional superiority in some areas. The significantly enhanced capacity and capabilities of this approach would have the effect of covering a range of secondary missions, such as conflict with regional powers and global CT missions. It would embody the advantages of forward presence, such as diplomatic and economic influence and deterrent value.

Yet the vision also carries very real potential costs and risks. Of the four visions, a Coalition Against Revisionism is most likely to generate action-reaction cycles of arms racing and regional instability. Such a strategy could make this vision of order the most expensive to implement, given the size and scope of the defense capabilities required. The success of this approach would depend on the continued willingness and ability of the United States to spend on defense. It would also be dependent on support from many friends and allies who may not agree with the need for a renewed series of global confrontations.

## Democratic Order

The goal of this order is to create a more international order of democratic countries bound by shared institutions. In such an order, an overall defense strategy would be formulated among the core democratic countries (perhaps as a stronger, all-encompassing, and more-binding version of the NATO Defense Planning Process<sup>6</sup>), and U.S. defense strategy might serve as the center of gravity within this strategy. U.S. and allied defense strategy would also be coordinated with other democratic countries, especially so for those aspiring to join the core, likely through a web of interlocking international security institutions. The tasks of the U.S. military would be to defend the homeland, protect democratic U.S. allies, and fulfill the mutually agreed-upon tasks identified by the collective defense institutions, including the prevention of massive violations of human rights or international law. There would

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<sup>6</sup> NATO, "NATO Defence Planning Process," web page, January 30, 2017.

be a greater emphasis on possible stability or peacekeeping operations than in the Coalition Against Revisionism, in part because this order has a more normative character. This vision assumes a greater risk of great-power war than the Global Constitutional Order: Not all great powers will be in the coalition of democracies, and part of the purpose of this coalition is precisely to defend its members against attack from illiberal near-peer competitors. Table 6.3 outlines some of the leading defense strategy priorities in a Democratic Order.

From a defense strategy standpoint, the basic focus of U.S. strategy in this order would be similar to a Coalition Against Revisionism—detering revisionist states or movements that pose a threat to the democratic coalition. It differs in a number of ways, however. First, this order relies more on collective security, presuming that the combined effort of democracies in Europe and Asia—even if few of them approach the

**Table 6.3**  
**Defense Strategy Choices—Democratic Order**

Tasks for the U.S. military	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Defend the homeland</li><li>• Protect democratic allies</li><li>• Fulfill mutually agreed-upon tasks identified by the collective defense institutions (including but not limited to preventing massive violations of human rights or international law)</li><li>• Safeguard the freedom of countries to pursue democracy and eventually join the Democratic Order</li></ul>
Operating principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limiting U.S. military action based on liberal consensus</li><li>• Fighting with a coalition</li><li>• Diminished forward presence if allies increase burden-sharing</li></ul>
Force structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Smaller force given allied contributions and less need for forward presence</li><li>• Emphasis on air and naval forces, which embody U.S. comparative advantage</li><li>• Role of ground forces remains significant but does not need to be sized to unilateral war-winning capability</li></ul>
Capability investment priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Requirements to close gap in near-peer regional contingencies (long-range fires, short-range air defense, long-range stealthy strike, much greater stockpiles of precision munitions)</li><li>• Next-generation systems (long-range bomber)</li><li>• Unmanned systems (subsurface, air)</li></ul>

level of U.S. technological superiority or combined-arms operational prowess—can effectively deter war even without U.S. predominance. The demands on U.S. defense strategy are thus less than in the Coalition Against Revisionism. Second, because of the combined deterrent effect of aligned democracies, this order presumes that the risk of war is lower, further reducing the day-to-day defense requirements. Third, in this order, the United States restricts itself to missions that are jointly agreed by the democratic powers; this is likely to rule out some contingencies that the United States might have chosen if acting alone.

In some ways, however, the strategy would be very similar. It would require an ability to fight and win at least one major war, even if with greater allied support. It would demand that the United States be capable of projecting power in some ways. And it would retain a secondary capability for large-scale stability operations.

The operating principles for the U.S. military under this strategy include decisionmaking about the use of force through multilateral institutions, military operations as part of a coalition, and, potentially, use of more offshore capabilities. Given the binding character of international institutions within this order, the United States—unless directly attacked or acting in support of a close ally who was directly attacked—would only go to war given a consensus or near consensus of democracies as expressed through an international institution, such as NATO. Because of the assumption that the United States will generally fight within a coalition, significantly greater integration of U.S. and allied military forces would be necessary—and desirable—within this order, especially given the potential for particular allied militaries to focus on their own comparative advantage and to limit duplicative military spending. Finally, because of the assumed strength of the democratic coalition, forward-deployed presence will likely be less critical than in the Coalition Against Revisionism. Illiberal adversaries would be expected to fear the collective wrath of some of the richest and most powerful countries in the world, and hence limit any aggression. The United States would thus be less likely to go to war than in the Coalition Against Revisionism—and would be stronger when it did, given the contributions of its allies.

The U.S. capacity and capabilities necessary to fulfill this defense strategy will likely be significantly less than today, though the United States will need to remain specialized in several areas. The need for U.S. forward presence may be alleviated by the assumption of allied strength and the inherent credibility of institutions of democracies. The United States can also expect to rely on contributions from democratic allies in the event of major war. Still, significant U.S. forces for expeditionary missions will be required, and we identify a force-planning construct associated with this strategy of one major war fought with allies, combined with several simultaneous expeditionary operations. While the United States would retain a range of capabilities in different services, it may be able to specialize in its comparative advantage in the most-modern aviation and naval assets and reduce relative capacity in the ground forces.<sup>7</sup>

In specific terms, this might mean a slightly smaller force size than today, on the assumption that allies could do more. It might allow a U.S. orientation to maritime and air power, leaving the ground combat more to allies. It will continue to call for significant levels of exercises and rotational deployments—even more than today, if forward presence declines. Planned investments in gap capabilities to fight major conflict would still be justified.

This defense strategy has some parallels with the “cooperative security” strategy suggested by Posen and Ross. Both strategies rely “on international organizations to coordinate collective action” and suggest “military action for humanitarian purposes.” Posen and Ross note that the cooperative security “project is seen as already well under way” in Europe, and the democratic coalition defense strategy also reflects an aspiration in European security, albeit not always achieved, in which there is extensive specialization, burden-sharing, and mutual restraint. Unlike the defense strategy for the Democratic Order, however, the cooperative security strategy tends to assume a greater U.S.

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<sup>7</sup> As Posen and Ross note, according to Cooperative Security, “The U.S. contribution to this multinational force would emphasize the country’s comparative advantage in aerospace power: . . . three elements of the reconnaissance strike complex—command, control, communications and intelligence; defense suppression; and precision-guided munitions.” Posen and Ross, 1996/1997, p. 29.

role and responsibility for leading military operations and emphasizes that “peace is effectively indivisible,” meaning that conflict anywhere is a threat to the international order.<sup>8</sup>

The defense strategy outlined here would have prospective advantages. It would, for example, create a more widely shared burden than today, spreading the requirements for military capabilities more equally across democracies. It would thus create a hegemonic military power in coalition form, one that no aggressor would likely challenge. The Democratic Order would make U.S. military actions more legitimate, by grounding them in multilateral action by value-sharing democracies.

But this core advantage also reflects the major disadvantage of this approach to defense strategy: the practical limitations on action. If the states in the coalition had to agree on any use of military force, there would be times when the United States would be restrained from taking steps it found necessary. Further, under this vision of order, the United States may still face challenges in persuading allies to invest in capabilities to support combined military actions.

## Great-Power Concert 2.0

In a Great-Power Concert 2.0 order, the United States would share leadership via a concert of great powers, on the assumption that their ambitions can be accommodated in a shared order. The defense strategy in this vision of order would not assume that the great-power cooperation would always prevail or that war with other great powers was impossible. Indeed, continued ability to deter great powers from aggression would remain necessary to ensure U.S. security and buttress the U.S. bargaining position with the other great powers. But the primary focus of the order is on dampening great-power tensions; it takes a fundamentally realist approach to limited, mostly offshore balancing of power. The order assumes that deterrence by threat of counterattack or punishment can be effective. Moreover, the offshore posture also seeks to limit the threatening aspects of still dominant U.S. capabilities.

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<sup>8</sup> Posen and Ross, 1996/1997, p. 29.

This vision of order would offer at least four categories of tasks for the U.S. military: defend the homeland and allies; execute missions agreed upon and undertaken by all great powers, such as defeating states not included within the concert (e.g., North Korea) and performing counterpiracy; undertake missions pursued unilaterally by the United States but not objected to by the other great powers, such as some CT or counternarcotics missions; and fight wars against other great powers. Moreover, the United States could take military action with other great powers to address common challenges. Thus, this vision of order might produce defense planning guidance on being capable of fighting one major regional war while conducting ongoing global CT activities and retaining some strategic reserve.

The operative principles of this strategy are an emphasis on special operations forces and an assumption that the United States can fight as an offshore military power. The United States would focus on capabilities to deter major powers and likely downplay capabilities for other operations, such as stability and support and COIN operations, which are likely to provoke other powers. The United States would be seeking to preserve its power and reduce conflict with other powers by using force less often. It would likely still need a small active force from all services to undertake missions agreed upon by the great-power concert, such as CT operations. The continuing prominence of global CT missions would suggest that U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) capabilities remain at roughly their current size. The rest of the force would focus primarily on developing the capabilities to fight a peer competitor with forces based in the continental United States. To the extent that great-power relations improve, the United States might move some capacity for major regional contingencies into the reserves. In that scenario, it might only need sufficient regular Army forces to fight with an ally (such as South Korea) to defeat a regional opponent. That same ready-to-fight military would also serve as the nucleus of a possible response to a larger, near-peer aggressor.

In terms of specific capabilities, this order's defense strategy would emphasize long-range strike systems and other means of exercising military effect from a distance. Because of its focus on offshore approaches—suitable for a world of more-formalized spheres of influ-

ence, in which the premium and acceptability of U.S. forward presence would both decline—the strategy would rely on stand-off and inter-continental-range effects from missiles; space, cyber, and undersea systems; long-range drones, and other technologies. It would also demand more investment in strategic lift to be capable of deploying forces great distances if required.

The United States should continue to modernize its forces, as in the other strategies, because it could still confront a great-power adversary, although the relative risk of conflict is assumed to be less than under the strategies associated with the Coalition Against Revisionism or the Democratic Order.

This vision has elements of defense strategies suggested by different international relations scholars and policy analysts. It has some similarities to the “neoisolationism” strategy suggested by Posen and Ross, which “holds that national defense will seldom justify intervention abroad” and advocates against entangling the United States in international commitments.<sup>9</sup> The vision also has much in common with the grand strategy of “restraint,” which advocates limiting U.S. commitments and military expenditures given the rise of great-power competitors, among other factors.<sup>10</sup>

Table 6.4 outlines some of the leading defense strategy priorities in a Great-Power Concert 2.0 order.

This defense strategy would have several possible advantages. It would allow the United States to reduce its defense investments, freeing resources for domestic priorities. The reduced emphasis on direct balancing of great powers might ease the danger of security dilemmas and arms races. Yet the United States would retain the potential to fight and defeat a great-power adversary if necessary and to protect the U.S. homeland from terrorism or other non-state threats.

The strategy would also carry risks. In the event that the United States decided to move more forces to the reserves, it would not preserve

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<sup>9</sup> Posen and Ross, 1996/1997.

<sup>10</sup> Posen, 2014. See also Benjamin H. Friedman, “A Strategy of Restraint,” in Jacob Cohn and Ryan Boone, eds., *How Much Is Enough: Alternative Defense Strategies*, Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2016.

**Table 6.4**  
**Defense Strategy Choices—Great-Power Concert 2.0**

Tasks for the U.S. military	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Defend the homeland</li><li>• Perform missions agreed upon by consensus, such as counterpiracy or responding to the collapse of North Korea</li><li>• Perform missions pursued unilaterally by the United States but not objected to by the other great power, such as CT or counternarcotics</li><li>• Deter large-scale aggression by other great powers</li></ul>
Operating principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Offshore, reserve-based military force</li><li>• Continuing use of small active-duty force, especially for special operations forces, for CT and great-power consensus missions</li></ul>
Force structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Baseline force able to defeat one regional adversary, such as North Korea, in concert with some allied support</li><li>• Details of service balance could differ based on operational concepts</li><li>• Much of capacity for larger-scale combined arms operations into the reserves</li></ul>
Capability investment priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New-generation weapon systems that advance ability to decisively defeat regional adversaries and maintain parity and mobilization base necessary for larger-scale combined arms operations</li><li>• Advanced special operations forces capabilities for ongoing CT operations</li></ul>

active-duty forces capable of engaging in a combined arms campaign against a near-peer competitor in the event of a sudden change in relations. Depending on mobilization and reserves, it would take months or even years to deploy decisive forces to the fight—by which time important elements of the campaign might be decided. The United States would also need to compromise secondary interests that are contested by other great powers, such as the expansion of the NATO alliance and some humanitarian missions.

**Global Constitutional Order**

Finally, in this most universal and rule-bound order, the United States would help sustain a universal global order of rules and institutions based on areas of mutual interest, one that would have special roles for



great powers but would be broadly shared. The defense strategy appropriate to this order would be one in which the primary task for the U.S. military is to support a significantly shared international order. Like the coalition of democracies, this order is one whose norms and institutions are assumed to be strongly binding, and thus one in which the United States would almost never go to war without the concurrence of the international community. This factor significantly constrains the role of military force in this order and shapes the kind of wars the United States would be likely to fight. The U.S. military would retain the task of preparing for a large-scale, near-peer conflict. In the longer term, if deep cooperation took hold, the United States might put less priority on this mission, because it would only arise if the vision of order collapsed.

The operating principles for this strategy would be similar to those of the democratic coalition in the sense that U.S. military action would be primarily based on consensus, although it would differ in that the consensus includes the other great powers. This strategy would emphasize the development of capabilities in areas of comparative advantage even more than the Democratic Order defense strategy would. The defense planning guidance given to the U.S. military would likely center around aiding a coalition to defeat a regional aggressor, such as North Korea, and to conduct missions in defense of shared interests, such as CT operations. This vision, however, would be less likely than the coalition of democracies to endorse liberal humanitarian interventions. As a more comprehensive global order, this vision would be constrained by the views of China and Russia (as well as non-ally democracies, such as India and Brazil), all of which are reluctant to endorse missions justified under the “responsibility to protect” doctrine for fear that such interventions might result in regime change, violating the order’s sovereignty norm. There would likely be some humanitarian catastrophes when all of these powers would come together to endorse some form of intervention; although they might be few and far between, they would still represent a significant proportion of the military missions likely undertaken in this order. There would also be a lower emphasis on forward presence, given that U.S. security com-

mitments would be constrained by the need for agreement with other great powers.

The resulting force structure would likely demand a relatively balanced force, though perhaps one slightly shaded toward maritime and air capabilities of a sophistication and operational capability that are less in evidence in other militaries. The United States could likely afford to shrink its ground forces significantly in this vision of order. In the long term, the entire active-duty military could be considerably smaller than today, given the order's assumptions about the alignment of much of the world community. As in all the orders, a residual risk of great-power conflict will always persist, but in this order the United States could hedge against that risk with mobilizable capabilities in the reserve rather than with active forces. On the other hand, this order is likely to call on the U.S. military to support a long series of humanitarian and peacekeeping operations, as well as a persistent set of CT operations.

The defense strategy under this order would differ from the other three primarily in this last component—the emphasis on stability and COIN operations. The likelihood of major warfare would be extremely small, so the United States could reduce investment in the capacity and modernization of its combined-arms forces. But it would likely need to retain a significant force of light infantry optimized for stabilization missions, well beyond the special operating forces in SOCOM.

This strategy, as noted, would also place intense—indeed, unprecedented—stress on the need to operate within coalitions and to be interoperable with friends, allies, and partners. This would be true across the board at various levels of conflict, but especially in stabilization operations, which would be undertaken only with broad consensus and presumably would involve many nations. The U.S. defense strategy for this order would thus have to build very specific capabilities for integrating with the militaries of other states—from shared communications to logistics considerations to train-and-advise units designed to enhance the effectiveness of multiple militaries.

Table 6.5 outlines some likely defense strategy priorities of a Global Constitutional Order.

**Table 6.5**  
**Defense Strategy Choices—Global Constitutional Order**

U.S. military tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defend the homeland</li> <li>• Support missions authorized by shared global institutions, which may include fighting alongside other great powers</li> <li>• Be prepared in the event of great-power aggression</li> </ul>
Operating principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Military operations as part of coalition, especially through provision of advanced capabilities</li> <li>• Smaller than current active force</li> </ul>
Force structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong emphasis on capabilities for humanitarian and stabilization operations</li> </ul>
Capability investment priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forces trained and equipped for stabilization, peacekeeping, and CT operations</li> <li>• Persistent but secondary investments in combined-arms capabilities; can be more reliant on fourth-generation systems</li> </ul>

This defense strategy would share many of the advantages of the posture outlined for a coalition of democracies. In the longer term, this vision would allow the United States to reduce its defense expenditures and play a more limited international role. But the vision would also carry many of the same risks as the Democratic Order, perhaps to an even greater degree. Most of the work in this vision is done by the assumption of cooperation through the institutions of order rather than enforced by U.S. military power; if that were to falter, this defense strategy might not leave the United States with sufficient military strength to safeguard its security or those of its allies. In theory, the United States could sense when another great power was beginning to break out of the order and start to rebuild its strength in advance of any confrontation, but this assumption depends both on an accurate warning and the political will to use that warning, neither of which is guaranteed.

## Overall Findings: Cross-Cutting Priorities and Lessons

Table 6.6 summarizes the more-specific defense policy implications for each of the possible visions. Our review of those strategies pro-

**Table 6.6**  
**Defense Strategy and Visions of Order—Defense Planning Implications**

Issues	Coalition Against Revisionism	Democratic Order	Great-Power Concert 2.0	Global Constitutional Order
What major contingencies would define U.S. defense strategy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive set: Europe, China (Taiwan + South China Sea), Korea, Iran, ISIS/CT</li> <li>• Various possible but most likely is multiple conflicts: Force sizing construct would assume potential for 2+ major wars</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A major great-power war, in collaboration with allies; smaller missions to address massive violation of human rights; long-term efforts to support peace-building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chinese attack on Japan; Russian attack on NATO; attempts to control the sea lanes</li> <li>• Enforce rules and norms against a weaker state along with other great powers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two or three simultaneous coalition enforcement operations (CT, peacekeeping operations; Syria, Nigeria, North Korea loose nukes)</li> <li>• Less likely, but possible, Chinese attack on Japan; Russian attack on NATO; attempts to control the sea lanes</li> </ul>
Who will the United States fight alongside?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coalitions of the willing but have to be prepared for unilateral action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other democracies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allies and, in some cases, other great powers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coalition of the willing when approved by multilateral organizations</li> </ul>
Implications for posture/forward presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanded forward presence, including in Europe and South Korea, at a minimum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forward presence could be smaller with more allied burden-sharing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less forward, especially for Army and Air Force; minimum to enable power projection for a major war</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global posture can contract somewhat but still reflects U.S. comparative advantage for coalitions</li> </ul>

Table 6.6—Continued

Issues	Coalition Against Revisionism	Democratic Order	Great-Power Concert 2.0	Global Constitutional Order
Defense investment priorities and options—capability, capacity, and concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restore Army and expand Air Force capabilities for high-end fight</li> <li>• Enhanced Navy capabilities for power projection in Asia, EU</li> <li>• Capacity in all services</li> <li>• Army long-range fires, short-range air defense, modernization</li> <li>• Advanced Navy platforms</li> <li>• Nuclear modernization</li> <li>• Cutting-edge weapons in support of major contingencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defense planning depending on comparative advantages among allies</li> <li>• Need air and naval capabilities to deter and defeat peer adversaries</li> <li>• Ground forces able to conduct humanitarian missions, COIN operations, and state-building</li> <li>• United States and NATO could further specialize in capabilities</li> <li>• Major investment in building partner capacity and security cooperation; interoperability, coalition operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Army and Air Force capability for high-end fight against peer competitor</li> <li>• CT, COIN, stability operations in the U.S. sphere or when other powers agree</li> <li>• Increased long-range strike and lift capabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High readiness and new ISR, UAS, strike capabilities for enforcement ops (SOCOM)</li> <li>• ISR, intel for the shared threat issues (CT, nuclear weapons, etc.)</li> <li>• Coalition command and control, interoperable systems</li> <li>• Fourth-generation platforms to sustain major war capability</li> </ul>

NOTE: ISR=intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance; UAS=unmanned aerial system.

duced two broad sets of implications. One is that a number of missions and requirements are common to all or nearly all of the visions. They are therefore likely to be in demand no matter how the United States employs the concept of order to shape its defense strategy. The second set of implications suggests general lessons for defense policy that could be relevant under any vision of order.

Across any likely range of visions of order, the United States will want to preserve the ability to conduct various military missions, including to

- hedge against the risk of major-power warfare
- retain an ability to conduct one conflict against a near-peer great-power adversary, but only *in extremis* and by mobilizing the full military power of the United States
- deter and defeat potential regional aggressors, such as North Korea and Iran
- conduct persistent global CT operations
- control loose nuclear weapons in a situation of state instability
- contribute to humanitarian and limited peacekeeping operations in permissive environments.

That set of missions is not necessarily demanding relative to the current capacity and capability set of the U.S. military. The differences among the orders appear in the roles and missions beyond this limited set that would be required of the U.S. military. Most notably, a Coalition Against Revisionism and Democratic Order demand a more forward posture and more frequent use of military force compared with the other two orders. The Great-Power Concert 2.0 and the Global Constitutional Order use an offshore posture and less frequent use of force to reduce tensions with great powers. In the short term, this would likely mean some reductions to the size of the current force. To the extent that these efforts are successful, these two orders could conceivably involve a substantially smaller overall U.S. military force.

Beyond specific likely contingencies, our review of defense strategies for each vision suggests broader lessons for forming U.S. defense strategy:

- The form of order the United States prefers—and the foreign policy it chooses in service of that order—can have significant, even decisive, implications for the defense strategy it requires. To the extent that the United States can be consistent in identifying the type of order it is trying to build and the way its policies aim to support that objective (as it has been in many ways since 1945, under the postwar order), it will provide for itself clearer strategic guidance for defense strategy and investments.
- Under all visions of order, the United States will look for ways to enhance its deterrent against aggressive peer competitors. But it will do so at a lower cost if it can avoid provoking unnecessary security dilemmas. Therefore, a high priority should be developing concepts and capabilities that allow the United States to bolster deterrence without threatening other powers.
- The role of indications and warning is more important than it has been and will be integrally related to the choice, and ultimate success, of a defense strategy. In orders that use binding institutions and assumptions about shared interests to keep the peace, the United States will need clear warning to begin rebuilding its major war capabilities.
- Sharing the burden for the task of deterring—and, if necessary, fighting—major combined-arms operations will be especially helpful to U.S. defense strategy. If an aggressor knows that starting a major war will mean fighting not only the United States but inevitably a coalition equipped with predominant power, shortfalls in specific U.S. capabilities will be less dangerous, and deterrence will be stronger.
- All of the orders stress the value of some form of U.S. global engagement. Not all of them emphasize the need for forward-deployed combat forces for the purpose of deterrence by denial. But all stress the value of—and, in some cases, urgent requirement for—U.S. forward presence in the form of at least rotational elements aimed at training, advising, exercising, and developing partners.
- Perhaps the most important direction for future research raised by this discussion is the question of how to structure or layer mis-

sions, especially in terms of issues of lesser-included missions and simultaneity requirements. Typically, U.S. defense planning processes have approached these issues in very general and abstract terms. The United States needs a much better sense of how capacity and capability developed for one mission can provide part of the answer for another.



## Lessons and Implications

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As noted in Chapter One, our purpose in this analysis was not to determine a single “best” vision of order. The report has offered a framework for classifying visions of order based on who makes the rules and how binding they are, defined major alternative visions, discussed their implications for three major policy areas, and suggested advantages and potential risks of each. This report does not aim to offer specific policy recommendations for forming a single order. It does, however, suggest lessons that ought to be kept in mind when developing a future U.S. strategy toward order.

To inform such thinking, this concluding chapter derives three sets of insights from the preceding analysis. First, it summarizes what each vision would recommend for a number of leading national security choices. Second, it reviews the analysis of the three issue-area chapters on the risks and benefits of each vision. Third, it points to key criteria that ought to guide the choice of a future order.

One challenge in prioritizing these visions is that the order the United States seeks in world politics must be a function of its grand strategy—and that may be in flux. The American people seem to be questioning the degree of international engagement they support, and foreign policy leaders are recognizing the need to moderate U.S. goals in light of the changing global balance of power and influence. To the extent that U.S. goals change, policymakers should adjust their approach to order.

At a time of renewed debate about the U.S. role in the world, this report offers a template for systematically examining alternative

options. Each of the four visions of order outlined in this report would, for example, provide a distinct perspective for key choices facing U.S. national security strategy. Table 7.1 outlines possible answers that each of the visions of order would provide on such decisions.

Preceding chapters have also outlined specific potential advantages, risks, and costs of each vision of order in relation to the three major issue areas considered in this report: international economic policies, great-power relations, and defense policy. Taken together, these factors provide a menu of the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed visions, and they offer a means of understanding the implications of choice. Table 7.2 summarizes these factors.

The following discussion derives a number of major principles from this work. This analysis does not put us in a position to make fundamental recommendations of one vision over another. Instead, it was designed to generate insights about the relative risks and costs of alternative visions. The lessons derived reflect common themes that emerged across the analysis of visions and specific implications of the cost-benefit calculus.

## **Lesson One: An Order's Character Will Likely Flow from Its Strategy for Achieving Great-Power Peace**

The possible consequences of great-power conflict are the most serious risk in the emerging context of world politics. No other geopolitical risks compare in their possible implications for U.S. interests. After 1945, the United States led the creation of an order designed to do some very specific things. In the wake of the most devastating war the world had ever seen, which resulted partly from economic destabilizations in the 1930s, the order aimed to encourage global economic prosperity and stability and to provide rules and norms to govern state behavior and, ultimately, help prevent war. There is a strong case to be made that the dominant trend in world politics today is the growth of a rivalry among great powers. If this is the case, then the basic purpose for an order would be to set the conditions for a peaceful outcome of the rivalry. As a result, we have designed the alternative visions of order that seek to address this problem in different ways: countering

**Table 7.1**  
**Visions of Order and Key National Security Choices**

National Security Choice	Coalition Against Revisionism	Democratic Order	Great-Power Concert 2.0	Global Constitutional Order
Should the United States bolster forward presence for deterrence and allied reassurance, including in Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia?	Yes	To some degree in support of democratic allies; amount and type can vary	No, unless key interests are challenged	No, unless the cooperative order breaks down
Should the United States enlarge formal alliances and informal security partnerships?	Yes	Yes, especially with democracies; it should also engage on a limited basis with states on the path to democracy	No, except as needed in areas outside other powers' spheres of influence	No, it should work through inclusive regional organizations instead of alliances
Should the United States withdraw from selected alliances or partnerships?	No	Not with democracies; possibly with nondemocratic partners if they violate values of core order	Yes, in some cases, to improve ties with great powers	Yes, if inclusive regional organizations can replace alliances
Should the United States engage in outright democracy promotion?	Yes, but not against potential coalition partners	Yes, where consensus exists among democracies	No	No
Should the United States increase force capacity in the military services?	Yes	Yes	No	No
Should the United States take an unambiguous stand on its willingness to defend contested areas outside formal alliances in Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia?	Yes	Maybe	No	No

**Table 7.2**  
**Benefits and Risks of Alternative Visions of Order**

Issue Area	Coalition Against Revisionism	Democratic Order	Great-Power Concert 2.0	Global Constitutional Order
Inter-national economic policies	Advantages			
	Prevents challengers from using economics to overtake United States	Strengthens ties among democracies and creates incentives for illiberal states to reform	Allows strong engagement of other great powers	Most rule-bound and thus inclusive economic system
	Disadvantages/Feasibility Issues			
	Tries to preserve universal trade regime alongside competition; if it cannot, major trade and economic impacts result	Democracies have different agendas; if competition with illiberal states grows, trade regime could collapse	Great powers have very different approaches to trade, state role in economy; U.S. ties strongest with non-great powers	Intensifying the reach of trade agreements and international institutions is infeasible in the current climate
Great-power relations	Advantages			
	Prioritizes key emerging threat—revisionist states and movements	Builds on shared values; builds on best-functioning relationships; significant deterrent power but not bellicose	Aims at most important priority—avoiding great-power war; open potential for climate action	Universality confers strength and legitimacy; opens potential for win-win solutions
	Disadvantages/Feasibility Issues			
	High-risk strategy with potential for conflict; creates new free-rider incentives for allies; forces hard choices on liberal values	China, Russia will perceive it as hostile; cannot exclude China from economy; preferences of democracies may not align; limits cooperation with illiberal states	Accommodation might whet appetite of great powers; United States loses influence on periphery of other great powers; practical challenge of defining great powers	Makes ambitious assumptions about alignment of interests; does not emphasize deterrent power; no momentum toward it today

Table 7.2—Continued

Issue Area	Coalition Against Revisionism	Democratic Order	Great-Power Concert 2.0	Global Constitutional Order
Defense strategy	Advantages			
	Focuses defense investments on biggest threat—near-peer adversaries; seeks predominant coalition to deter revisionists; sufficient capabilities for range of threats	Share burden of defense more equitably; create predominant coalition to deter aggression or protect citizens in humanitarian crises; provide value-based legitimacy for military action	Allow defense cuts and investments in other priorities; ease risk of security dilemmas; preserve basic ability to fight near-peer if necessary	Offers legitimacy for military action from rules and norms and shared decisions; reduces defense resources
	Disadvantages/Feasibility Issues			
	Provocative to the point of risking security dilemmas; very expensive; some allies might not support	Requirement for consensus would hinder use of force to serve U.S. interests; allies might not actually share burden	Compromise secondary interests when great powers are involved	Need for consensus highly constraining; if assumptions wrong, military potentially too weak to win

revisionist actors, gathering democracies into a self-protective coalition, promoting strong great-power ties, or taking more steps to transcend anarchic competition to a more rule-bound world politics.

An essential consideration for U.S. strategists, therefore, is their assumptions about great-power politics, as discussed in Chapter Two. The choice of an order and the assessment of an order's feasibility should, therefore, be driven by the assumptions made about the degree of zero-sum competition among great powers, particularly the United States, Russia, and China. If one assumes irreconcilable clashes of vital interests among the three leading global powers—shaped and influenced by subsidiary clashes with other major states—then the options for orders become tightly constrained. More-optimistic assumptions about great-power competition, including an expectation that cooperation is still possible and that few vital interests necessarily clash, allow much more room to maneuver.

## **Lesson Two: No Single Order Offers the United States the Ability to Place Equal Value on All Four Goals of Order**

No single order offers the United States a way to equally prioritize its four goals for order. The specific visions outlined in this report illustrate a number of key dilemmas—between outright advocacy of liberal values, for example, and seeking good relations with other great powers.

As a result, the United States will need to establish clear priorities among these goals as it decides which vision of order to pursue.

## **Lesson Three: Preferences of Other States Will Affect the Viability of Each Vision**

Although we have focused on the preferences of great powers, assumptions about the preferences of other powers are also essential to selecting a viable order. For example, in the Democratic Order, key advantages can be achieved only with some degree of coordination among leading democracies. And yet, such states have widely varying preferences and willingness to lead in the international system. If the interests of

democracies—including Japan, South Korea, India, Brazil, Indonesia, South Africa, U.S. allies in Europe, and many more—cannot be aligned, and if their policies toward elements of the order diverge in dramatic ways, it may be very difficult to assemble that order.

#### **Lesson Four: Coherent Views About the International Order Can Strengthen U.S. Policy—but Only So Long as Different Strands of U.S. Foreign Policy Are Consistent with the Desired Vision of Order**

International order can be a useful guiding concept for U.S. policy across a range of issue areas. U.S. policy on economics, for example, can benefit from an approach to defense policy that recognizes the existence of an overarching order, especially because U.S. leaders often describe a vision of the international order as underlying their foreign policy. U.S. allies and adversaries are also likely guided in their relations with the United States by a coherent view of what the international order should be.

The ability of the United States to use international order as a frame for achieving its foreign policy objectives depends on ensuring that its policy across a range of issue areas is consistent with its overriding vision of the international order. Indeed, referencing the international order to justify U.S. policies may be ineffective if the United States adopts foreign policies that run contrary to this vision of order. The visions of order in this report seek to describe relatively coherent views of the world that suggest a range of U.S. policies across different issue areas. There may be other coherent visions of order beyond these, but these four visions of order reflect a wide range of views of order in the policy and academic literature. If the United States continues to use international order as a framing concept for its foreign policy (and based on the history of U.S. policy, it seems likely that it will<sup>1</sup>), it is important to ensure that U.S. policy across a range of issue areas is, at a minimum, consistent with the vision of order it pursues, and ideally reinforces the theoretical assumptions of the order.

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<sup>1</sup> See Mazarr et al., 2016.





## Origin Stories for Visions of Order

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For each vision of order in this report, we have created an “origin story”—a hypothetical scenario illustrating how it might come about. These are included in this appendix.

### Coalition Against Revisionism

Between 2010 and 2020, the degree of aggressive revisionism on the part of Russia and China, but also North Korea (in its nuclear-powered provocations) and Iran (newly empowered by finances and investment flowing from the nuclear deal), created an increasingly dangerous context. Russia followed up its aggression in Georgia, Ukraine, and Syria with a new campaign to punish Ukrainian government forces in 2017 and gained control of additional territory. It began a serious campaign of political and economic sabotage in the Baltic states. In the meantime, China emerged from a pragmatic pause following the 2016 Hague ruling and began a long series of highly aggressive actions to reinforce its sovereign claims in the South China Sea, which led to armed clashes with vessels of the Vietnamese, Indonesian, and Philippine navies.

The United States responded to these developments with a new National Security Strategy in 2020 that explicitly committed the United States to leading a “coalition of states devoted to the preservation of peace and the defeat of aggressive revisionism.” It took steps to reinforce its commitment to traditional alliances, including holding a joint session in Washington in 2021 of NATO allies, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand, with a dozen more states pres-

ent in observer status. Combined with proposed UNSC resolutions condemning territorial aggression, vetoed by China and Russia, these actions have been designed to create a *de facto* global coalition with a presumed mutual defense commitment.

At the same time, the U.S. administration proposed a 20-percent boost to defense spending and took immediate short-term actions to defer proposed cuts in force levels. It has expanded military assistance to more than two-dozen countries. The administration also announced two major competitive initiatives: a large-scale effort to counteract Chinese industrial policy and a massive new U.S. investment in renewable energy to “end the unwarranted geopolitical influence of petroleum-producing states.”

This process of increasing alignment does not have a single formal agreement and has emerged gradually. Some countries, such as Vietnam and Brazil, remain wary of dividing the world into opposing camps, so they have worked to build diplomatic ties with China and continue to participate in Chinese-led institutions, such as the AIIB. But Chinese pressure for growing economic clout (such as reserve currency status for the renminbi) is now being stiff-armed by a large number of states.

## Democratic Order

In response to growing concerns about the fraying of a stable international order, the United States began in 2018 to place increasing emphasis on the “global democratic core” as the centerpiece of its national security strategy. It issued a new national strategy document that year laying out such a coalition as its major goal and began taking measures to enhance the emphasis in policy.

The process began with a series of meetings in 2018 and 2019 among U.S. allies and other democracies. In various NATO, U.S.-Japan, and U.S.-Korea statements, the United States and its allies reaffirmed their common commitment to liberal norms and nonaggression. U.S. allies committed to modest increases in burden-sharing and announced commitments in non-defense areas, such as foreign aid and peacekeeping. In 2020, this process led to the enunciation of a new

set of Information Security Rules of the Road, endorsed by more than 50 leading democracies and to be enforced by an International Cyber-Security Organization possessing dispute-resolution and enforcement powers parallel to the WTO.

The United States announced a separate program of Transitional and Stabilization Assistance designed to encourage at-risk democracies or countries in transition to liberal systems. Other leading democracies are participating as well. Washington also began targeted partnership programs with major democracies demanding more personalized treatment, including India and Brazil.

In the process, the United States has been careful to indicate that this set of initiatives “is not aimed at any country, it seeks no enemies—it is dedicated only to norms and values that participating states will insist upon in the international order.” Nonetheless, public statements from China and, especially, Russia clearly indicate deep skepticism on their part, viewing it as a U.S. effort to align the world community against them and justify liberal expansion that threatens their regimes.

## **Great-Power Concert 2.0**

By 2016, it had become apparent that relations between the United States and China would be the centerpiece of the emerging world system, with relations between those two (and with Russia), as well as with Germany and the wider EU, playing a critical role. The new U.S. administration was determined to place geopolitical objectives first and was convinced that none of the great powers had unalterably opposed interests. It therefore undertook significant outreach missions to Moscow and Beijing and began crafting a national security strategy built around a concert system.

The United States gained assent from all other great powers for two major core principles, essentially reaffirming the promises of the U.N. system: no unprovoked territorial aggression and no violation of others’ sovereignty. As part of a series of major diplomatic agreements, Russia withdrew all forces from Ukraine and issued a new pledge to respect its sovereignty in exchange for U.S. promises of noninterven-

tion. The Ukrainian government agreed to an accord guaranteeing its neutrality in exchange for a pledge not to join “external alliances or unions.” When a new anti-Russia revolt began in a number of western Ukrainian cities, the United States and the EU quickly reiterated their neutrality.

Meanwhile, in Asia, the United States obtained an assurance from China that it would allow freedom of navigation through all sea lanes, regardless of their sovereign status. The United States continued to say it took no position on sovereign claims, but it ended freedom-of-navigation operations and began urging regional states to come to agreement with China.

In 2018, the first of a promised annual series of conferences took place, held in a neutral site (in this case, Budapest), at which the United States, Germany, Russia, and China, as well as a representative of the EU, gathered for “dialogues founded on mutual respect aimed at the resolution of issues of common concern.” The first conference led to a series of unilateral pledges of conventional arms reductions throughout Europe, the formal ratification of Ukraine’s neutrality, and the publication of a common global plan for the defeat of ISIS.

## **Global Constitutional Order**

The United States decided by 2017 that the best route to a reaffirmed international order was to strengthen the universally shared institutions of that order. To that end, it reaffirmed several existing components, such as the U.N. system, and joined with a number of other major powers in reiterating their support and boosting financial contributions to such activities as U.N. peacekeeping and the International Atomic Energy Agency. After the stagnation on TPP and TTIP, the United States proposed a new round of WTO negotiations to gather several dozen low-hanging-fruit proposals that could be integrated into a global agreement.

At the same time, the United States took steps to signal that it would endorse a more shared order. It reversed its position on China’s AIIB, offering to join and suggesting that its allies do likewise, as long

as it remained within World Bank standards. It endorsed a Brazilian proposal for a modified responsibility to protect doctrine—promising to be bound by the resulting U.N. standards—and invited Russia back into the G-8 in response to Moscow’s agreement to a phased withdrawal from eastern Ukraine. The United States also backed an Indonesian proposal for a one-year dialogue to generate options for a more inclusive UNSC.



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**S**ince 1945, the United States has pursued its global interests through creating and maintaining international economic institutions, bilateral and regional security organizations, and liberal political norms; these ordering mechanisms are often collectively referred to as the international order. In recent years, rising powers have begun to challenge aspects of this order. This report examines four options for future U.S. policies with respect to the order. To do so, it distills ongoing debates about the U.S. role in the world and identifies four strategic visions of order that the United States could pursue. These visions differ primarily in the characteristics of the rules of the order: who makes the rules and how binding those rules are on state behavior. The report then considers the fundamental assumptions that would motivate a U.S. choice between these alternatives, and it concludes by outlining policies that the United States would need to pursue to promote each vision of order.



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