

The Soft Path to U.S. Hegemony in the 21st Century: An American Brain Drain Policy against Strategic Competitors

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ABSTRACT

During the four years of the Trump administration, American strategy adopted a provocative *realpolitik* approach to American power. Trump's administration was so focused on U.S. nationalism and threats to American identity that domestic immigration policies became viewed as existential threats. With the introduction of great power competition discourse against China and Russia 2017, a renewed U.S. emphasis on conventional military power and traditional warfare ignores the reality of an increasingly globalized, interconnected world. China and Russia have grown their regional spheres of influence while making in-roads elsewhere with asymmetric tools of influence. While debates rage about how to confront China and Russia through projection of military and economic power, we ask: What can the U.S. do in the long-term to out-compete illiberal authoritarian states? Nullifying Chinese and Russian economic and military power means re-creating a grand strategy that leverages the unwelcoming internal illiberal politics in China and Russia. The U.S. must capitalize on the totalitarian world vision espoused by strategic competitors by emphasizing a liberal ideology to convince the best and brightest around the world to immigrate to America, thus contributing to innovation and overall American hard power. Choosing liberalism over realism will produce an attractive citizen recruitment proposition for the most educated and innovative citizens living in authoritarian regimes, with them leaving their home countries in favor of a United States that promotes free-markets and inclusivity. We contend that America needs a *Strategic Brain Drain* policy as a grand strategy pillar for 21st century strategic competition.

Keywords: Brain Drain, Great Power Competition, China, Russia, Strategic Competition

El camino suave hacia la hegemonía estadounidense en el siglo XXI: Una política estadounidense de fuga de cerebros contra los competidores estratégicos

RESUMEN

Durante los cuatro años de la administración Trump, la estrategia estadounidense adoptó un enfoque provocativo de *realpolitik* para el poder estadounidense. La administración de Trump estaba tan concentrada en el nacionalismo estadounidense y las amenazas a la identidad estadounidense que las políticas de inmigración interna se consideraron amenazas existenciales. Con la introducción del discurso de competencia de las grandes potencias contra China y Rusia en 2017, un énfasis renovado de EE. UU. en el poder militar convencional y la guerra tradicional ignora la realidad de un mundo cada vez más globalizado e interconectado. China y Rusia han ampliado sus esferas regionales de influencia mientras se abren camino en otros lugares con herramientas asimétricas de influencia. Mientras se debate sobre cómo enfrentar a China y Rusia a través de la proyección del poder militar y económico, nos preguntamos: ¿Qué puede hacer EE. UU. a largo plazo para superar a los estados autoritarios no liberales? Anular el poder económico y militar de China y Rusia significa recrear una gran estrategia que aproveche la política interna antiliberal poco acogedora en China y Rusia. Estados Unidos debe sacar provecho de la visión totalitaria del mundo propugnada por los competidores estratégicos al enfatizar una ideología liberal para convencer a los mejores y más brillantes del mundo para que emigren a Estados Unidos, contribuyendo así a la innovación y al poder duro estadounidense en general. Elegir el liberalismo sobre el realismo producirá una atractiva propuesta de reclutamiento de ciudadanos para los ciudadanos más educados e innovadores que viven en regímenes autoritarios, dejando sus países de origen en favor de Estados Unidos que promueve el libre mercado y la inclusión. Sostenemos que Estados Unidos necesita una política de fuga de cerebros estratégica como un gran pilar estratégico para la competencia estratégica del siglo XXI.

Palabras clave: Fuga de cerebros, Gran competencia de poder, China, Rusia, Competencia estratégica

通往21世纪美国霸权的软路径：美国针对战略竞争对手的人才流失政策

摘要

特朗普执政的四年里，美国战略对美国实力采取了煽动性的现实政治（realpolitik）方法。特朗普政府如此专注于美国民族主义和对美国身份的威胁，以至于国内移民政策被视为生存威胁。随着2017年提出针对中国和俄罗斯的大国竞争话语，美国重新强调常规军事力量 and 传统战争，忽视了日益全球化、相互关联的世界现实。中国和俄罗斯扩大了地区影响力范围，同时利用不对称的势力手段影响其他地区。尽管关于“如何通过投射军事力量和经济力量以对抗中国和俄罗斯”的辩论迅速蔓延，我们研究的问题是：从长远来看，美国能做些什么来战胜非自由的威权主义国家？让中国和俄罗斯的经济实力和军事实力失效，这意味着重新制定一个利用中国和俄罗斯不受欢迎的内部非自由政治的大战略。美国必须利用战略竞争对手所拥护的极权主义世界观，通过强调自由主义意识形态，说服世界上最优秀、最聪明的人移民美国，从而为创新和美国整体硬实力作贡献。选择自由主义而不是现实主义，将为生活在威权制度中的、受教育程度最高且创新能力最强的公民提供有吸引力的公民招募提议，让其离开自己的祖国，转而支持推崇自由市场和包容性的美国。我们认为，美国需要战略人才流失（Strategic Brain Drain）政策作为21世纪战略竞争的大战略支柱。

关键词：人才流失，大国竞争，中国，俄罗斯，战略竞争

Already, with Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, over 4 million educated Russians have fled the country, prompting the Biden administration to consider easing visa rules to capitalize on such massive brain drain of Russia.¹

1 Zahra Tayeb, "The US plans to capitalize on a Russian 'brain drain' by easing visa requirements for workers with STEM skills, reports say," *Business Insider*, 30 April 2022, <https://www.businessinsider.com/biden-plans-russian-brain-easing-visa-rules-stem-professionals-2022-4>; Niko Vorobyov, "Criminal adventure: Ukraine war fuels Russia's brain drain," *Al Jazeera*, 23 May 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/23/many-leave-russia-as-ukraine-war-drag-on>.

Introduction

Throughout the rings of the Pentagon, strategists and policy-makers are attempting to change American grand strategy for burgeoning 21st-century threats. Grand strategy is a reflection of national values, and includes policies and plans informing the application of instruments of power to advance national interests.² It establishes the roadmap a nation follows in its quest for international standing and power as demonstrated during the Cold War, where both political parties and foreign policy elites could mostly agree on American interests and threats to them.³ However, when it comes to confronting adversaries, short-term politicking can undermine long-term planning for maintaining and/or growing American power.

After the Cold War, a bipartisan blend of hawks and doves saw a role in using military force to promote American values abroad. Such efforts were pursued by both political parties without much consideration to the externalities that this liberal use of American power would have in the

long-term when intervening in the affairs of peripheral countries with little to no threat to U.S. national interests.⁴ Though the Trump Administration continued these policies to an extent with continued military engagement in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria, the principal focus of its defense policies shifted toward Great Power Competition with the 2017 *National Security Strategy* (NSS) while viewing immigration as a vulnerability and threat to the homeland.⁵ This new path altered the course of America's grand strategy, which generated debate among strategists and policymakers alike.⁶

In some ways, the focus of the 2017 NSS prevailed, evidenced in the Biden Administration's 2021 *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance* (NSSG) framing China and Russia as rivals in strategic competition with the U.S. At the same time, the *Interim* NSSG also rebuked the hostile anti-immigration undertones of the previous administration by advocating for "restoring our nation's historic strengths by ensuring our immigration policy incentivizes the world's best and brightest to study, work, and stay in America."⁷ However,

2 John Lewis Gaddis, *On Grand Strategy* (New York: Penguin Press, 2018).

3 Hal Brands, "Rethinking America's grand strategy: Insights from the Cold War," *Parameters* 45, no. 4 (2016): 7-16.

4 Stephen M. Walt, "US grand strategy after the Cold War: Can realism explain it? Should realism guide it?" *International Relations* 32, no. 1 (2018): 3-22.

5 Donald J. Trump, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, 2017).

6 Hal Brands, "The unexceptional superpower: American grand strategy in the age of trump," *Survival* 59, no. 6 (2017): 7-40; Barry R. Posen, "The Rise of Illiberal Hegemony: Trump's Surprising Grand Strategy," *Foreign Affairs* 97 (2018): 20-27.

7 Joseph R. Biden, Jr., *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, 2021): 17.

the Trump administration damaged perceptions of U.S. 'soft power' through its comparably more restrictive immigration laws that included unprecedented resistance to U.S. immigration among even well-educated foreign professionals.⁸ The Trump administration use of "America First," and policies that reflected such a narrow world view, further undermined the tremendous soft power the U.S. had accumulated over decades as a place for immigrants to move to and excel.

Besides the "Muslim Ban," the Trump Administration's crude demagoguery approach to immigration, led primarily by Stephen Miller, resulted in dramatic changes to policies and laws.⁹ For instance, by early 2021 legal immigration had been reduced by 49 percent, at least 30 percent of highly skilled foreign-born individuals had their H1-B visas rejected, whereas the typical rate

used to be 6 percent, and there was a 143 percent increase in immigrants being denied naturalization despite their service in the US military.¹⁰ Such shifts in domestic policies can have major ramifications as recent research shows that "despite immigrants only making up 16% of inventors, they are responsible for 30% of aggregate U.S. innovation since 1976, with their indirect spillover effects accounting for more than twice their direct productivity contribution."¹¹ Correlation is not causation, but consider China surpassing the U.S. in global patent applications for the first time ever in 2019, with China filing 58,990 applicants to beat out the U.S. rate of 57,840.¹² American power relies on innovation and advanced technologies.¹³ The slipping of U.S. innovation dominance should be a source of strategic concern because it not only helps the U.S. retain an economic edge, but technological ad-

8 For instance, the Obama administration's NSS viewed immigration as contributing to the power of the U.S., while the Bush administration NSS barely mentioned immigration other than to deal with illegal immigration. Regardless, there was political consensus across the spectrum concerning the value of immigration to America. Desirée Colomé-Menéndez, Joachim A. Koops, and Daan Weggemans, "A country of immigrants no more? The securitization of immigration in the National Security Strategies of the United States of America," *Global Affairs* (2021): 1-26.

9 Julie Hirschfeld Davis and Michael D. Shear, *Border Wars: Inside Trump's Assault on Immigration* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020).

10 Stuart Anderson, "A Review of Trump Immigration Policy," *Forbes*, 26 August 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/stuartanderson/2020/08/26/fact-check-and-review-of-trump-immigration-policy/?sh=6c48b5e756c0>.

11 Shai Bernstein, Rebecca Diamond, Timothy McQuade, and Beatriz Pousada, "The Contribution of High-Skilled Immigrants to Innovation in the United States," Working Paper, Stanford University (2019), 1.

12 Stephanie Nebehay, "In a first, China knocks U.S. from top spot in global patent race," *Reuters*, 7 April 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-patents/in-a-first-china-knocks-u-s-from-top-spot-in-global-patent-race-idUSKBN21P1P9>.

13 Teryn Norris and Neil K. Shenai, "Dynamic balances: American power in the age of innovation," *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 30, no. 2 (2010): 149-164.

vancements support and facilitate weapon system developments.

The Trump Administration developed new rhetoric and threat framing through the NSS. The 2017 NSS realigned U.S. security priorities at home and abroad. It drove the Pentagon to think differently about new problem sets, and the policies, technologies, and force structures necessary to meet them. In particular, the Department of Defense's Joint Staff 12th annual Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA) project, *Future of Great Power Competition & Conflict*, attempted to further this strategic reorientation of American policy by surveying dozens of experts in the field to uncover strategic gaps and efficiencies.¹⁴ One such question from the SMA explicates the precarious situation U.S. policymakers think they are in: *What are the long-term implications for the U.S. of adopting an objective of strategic parity with China and Russia rather than military dominance?*

While this question seems direct and unambiguous, the question by its very existence exposes a great flaw in reasoning about how the U.S. should handle China, a rising near-peer, and Russia, a declining revisionist state with a plummeting birth rate and life expect-

tancy that under President Putin, *thinks* its 6,000 nuclear weapons bestow peer status with the U.S.¹⁵ Instead, we argue that the SMA question should be revised, asking: *What can the U.S. do in the long-term so that it benefits from China and Russia being illiberal authoritarian states?*

All too often, American grand strategy looks outwards to existential threats and other U.S. national interests without acknowledging the domestic factors that have contributed to economic and military power over two centuries. Societal elements are sometimes overlooked when it comes to considering what allows a country from mobilizing all its power and resources. While many scholars traditionally rely on the size of the population base as one of the primary metrics, alongside urban population, iron and steel production, energy consumption, military expenditure and number of personnel in the military, to measure national power, such calculations miss data points such as population trends, birth rates, educational attainment, and immigration.¹⁶

As 2018 data indicated the U.S. experienced its lowest birth rate since 1982,¹⁷ it is even more troubling that immigration trends to the U.S. in 2019

14 An archive of SMA projects dating back to 2007 is maintained here: <https://nsiteam.com/sma-publications/>.

15 Angela E. Stent, *Putin's World: Russia against the West and with the Rest* (New York: Hachette, 2019).

16 David J. Singer, Stuart Bremer, and John Stuckey, "Capability distribution, uncertainty, and major power war, 1820-1965," in: *Peace, war, and numbers*, edited by Bruce Russett (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1972), 19-48.

17 Brady E. Hamilton, Joyce A. Martin, Michelle J.K. Osterman, and Lauren M. Rossen, "Births: Provisional Data for 2018," *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System

dropped to pre-2005 levels, undermining American population growth.¹⁸ Decline in immigration to the U.S. was a major byproduct of the Trump administration pursuing a restrictive immigration agenda as a part of the Republican platform without due regard to economic ramifications.¹⁹ This becomes even more problematic when considering that China's population is more than four times larger than America. The global race for talent should be considered a cornerstone of American strategy, and the fact that Canada surpassed the U.S. in 2021 as the top choice for foreign talent to attend university and work, should be considered an existential threat to long-term American growth and hard power.²⁰

While the U.S. remains a leader in educational attainment, male high

school graduation rates have declined—45,000 fewer male students graduate high school every year, making them ineligible for military or government service.²¹ Approximately 84% of the nearly 1.3 million U.S. military service members are male.²² As the available pool of military recruits continues to decline, the U.S. must contend with these realities and seek alternative paths to strategic power through smarter immigration policies. If these challenges remain unaddressed, it could undermine the economic vitality of the U.S. in the long-term, subsequently neutering its military power relative to Russia and China.

American grand strategy, as carried over from the Trump administration, ignores the historical antecedents that made America great in the first

(NVSS) Report No. 007, May 2019, <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/6003979/US-2018-Birth-Rate-Report-From-CDC.pdf>.

- 18 "Unauthorized immigrant population trends for states, birth countries and regions," *Pew Research*, 12 June 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/interactives/unauthorized-trends/>; Sabrina Tavernise, "Immigrant Population Growth in the U.S. Slows to a Trickle," *The New York Times*, 26 July 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/26/us/census-immigration.html>.
- 19 Sarah Pierce, *Immigration-related policy changes in the first two years of the Trump administration* (Washington, D.C.: Migration Policy Institute, 2019).
- 20 Roy Maurer, "Canada Replaces U.S. as Top Work Destination," *SHRM*, 8 April 2021, <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/canada-replaces-us-top-work-destination.aspx#:~:text=Canada%20is%20now%20the%20most,209%2C000%20people%20from%20190%20countries>; Jeremy Neufeld, "STEM Immigration Is Critical to American National Security," *Institute for Progress* 30 March 2022, <https://progress.institute/stem-immigration-is-critical-to-american-national-security/>.
- 21 Richard Reeves, Eliana Buckner, and Ember Smith, "The Unreported Gender Gap in High School Graduation Rates," *Brookings*, 12 January 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2021/01/12/the-unreported-gender-gap-in-high-school-graduation-rates/>.
- 22 Department of Defense, "*Department of Defense by Gender, Race and Ethnicity*," Office of Diversity, Management, and Equal Opportunity: Personnel Readiness, Pentagon, Washington, D.C. (2017). <https://diversity.defense.gov/Portals/51/Documents/Presidential%20Memorandum/DoD%20Military%20by%20Gender%20Race%20and%20EthnicityV2.pdf?ver=2017-01-06-090352-110>.

place, namely that the U.S. is a nation of immigrants.²³ The American ideal as a land of opportunity has remained an essential truth, enabling strategic dominance over near-peer adversaries. Valuing diversity and inclusivity beyond just immigration policies has practical ramifications; it is correlated with battlefield performance in modern war.²⁴

With Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, over 4 million educated Russians have fled the country, prompting the Biden administration to consider easing visa rules to capitalize on Russian brain drain.²⁵ Additionally, as of March 2021, international interest in attending American universities is back.²⁶ Thus, the rhetoric and actions of the Biden administration suggests that the 'soft power' image of the U.S. can be restored but only through the crafting of an explicit Biden administration NSS that values human capital and ties it to American economic progress and power.

The future of American hegemony rests on tapping into a 21st century *Strategic Brain Drain* policy against foreign countries through a well-crafted strategy of encouraging and fostering immigration to the U.S. in the context of great power competition.²⁷ This article begins by discussing the need to consider America's place in a globalized world, providing the impetus for an indirect approach and the need for valuing soft power and image and perception of the U.S. This lends itself to the Brain Drain policy argument for a liberalist approach to domestic and international politics, which ensures the U.S. can grow and maintain hard power at the expense of China and Russia.

23 Janice Fine and Daniel J. Tichenor, "A Movement Wrestling: American Labor's Enduring Struggle with Immigration, 1866–2007–Erratum/Corrigendum," *Studies in American Political Development* 23, no. 2 (2009): 218–248.

24 Jason Lyall, *Divided Armies: Inequality and Battlefield Performance in Modern War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020).

25 Zahra Tayeb, "The US plans to capitalize on a Russian 'brain drain' by easing visa requirements for workers with STEM skills, reports say," *Business Insider*, 30 April 2022, <https://www.businessinsider.com/biden-plans-russian-brain-easing-visa-rules-stem-professionals-2022-4>; Niko Vorobyov, "Criminal adventure': Ukraine war fuels Russia's brain drain," *Al Jazeera*, 23 May 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/23/many-leave-russia-as-ukraine-war-draws-on>.

26 Brendan O'Malley, "International students warming to US after Biden victory," *University World News*, 3 March 2021, <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20210303133839873>.

27 The "Strategic Brain Drain" concept was first introduced in a 2019 Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA) report. See: Jahara Matisek, "Outlasting China and Russia: An Alternative American Way to Victory in the 21st Century," in: *Power under Parity*, edited by Sarah Canna and George Popp, SMA Future of Great Power Competition & Conflict Project, J39, Pentagon, Washington, D.C. (September 2019): 12–14.

Five Objectives for the U.S. Operating in a Globalized World

Direct military competition with China and Russia poses major risks to global stability. One should take notice of the conclusions drawn by the likes of Adam Smith and Hans Morgenthau: economic power begets military power.²⁸ Investments and policies aimed at fostering development and economic progress, ensure national instruments of power are able to be fully wielded. However, pursuing American military power in the long-term as a primary strategy undermines the economic viability of the U.S. Thus, it is problematic that the U.S. spends half of its discretionary budget on national defense, while infrastructure and education remain underfunded, despite them being economic multipliers.²⁹ Instead, the pursuit of market efficiencies and technologies that keep America at the forefront of economic growth will natu-

rally lead to military power, much as it did during the Cold War and before.³⁰

Codifying the right blend of strategy, domestically and internationally, requires policymakers to first identify national interests and threats to them. It also requires placing a relative value on each of these, and whether certain problems can be identified as existential threats to the survival of America, or if these national interests can identified as vital, major, or peripheral.³¹ Proper strategy also means considering what contributes to the power of a nation, and “measuring what matters,” namely assessing assets and liabilities.³²

Balancing domestic policy and foreign strategy is based on politicking by vested actors that can be manipulated by policymakers and senior government officials, including special interest groups such as American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), thus driving Congress to provide billions of dollars of security aid to Israel with minimal conditions.³³ Each actor

28 Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1776), specifically Book V, Chapter 1; Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations* (New York: Knopf, 1960). Morgenthau also mentioned the role of geography, to describe how the U.S. and the UK came to be formidable military powers.

29 Tatyana Palei, “Assessing the impact of infrastructure on economic growth and global competitiveness,” *Procedia Economics and Finance* 23 (2015): 168-175.

30 Sonja Michelle Amadae, *Rationalizing capitalist democracy: The Cold War origins of rational choice liberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

31 Donald E. Nuechterlein, “National interests and foreign policy: A conceptual framework for analysis and decision-making,” *British Journal of International Studies* 2, no. 3 (1976): 246-266.

32 Michael Beckley, “The power of nations: Measuring what matters,” *International Security* 43, no. 2 (2018): 7-44.

33 Historically, whenever the U.S. provides security aid, provisions are typically included that only American weapon systems can be purchased with this aid, and in the case of Israel, the country has been exempted from this requirement. For more on the power of special interest groups influencing American foreign policy, refer to: John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy* (New York: Macmillan, 2007).

has a competing self-interest in driving American grand strategy to elevate the intensity of a peripheral threat to one that supposedly poses an existential threat to the American way of life, and to promote their values as the key to combatting those threats. We have continued to see indicators of this in the past twenty years of U.S. armed conflict.

Intentional or not, post-9/11 era discourse continually elevated the terror threat emanating from Africa and the Middle East from a peripheral concern to an existential threat, contributing to the logic of sustained U.S. troop commitments in the region, much to Israel's chagrin.³⁴ Such rhetoric promoted and entrenched the U.S. in the Global War on Terror, despite Al Qaeda's existence as a terrorist organization intent on stoking fear rather than as a conventional force threatening to mass forces, land on American shores, and seize territory.³⁵ Indeed, political rhetoric has the ability to drive strategic decision making toward the perception and existence of an existential threat posed by adversaries lacking the power and ability to warrant this degree of concern. America's future strategic focus needs to evolve away from domestic politicking that overinflates the 'threat' of terror, leading to overfunding the fight against terrorism, and towards core concepts of generating U.S. power to out-compete rival powers. Shifting a

kinetic strategy from the terror problem towards strategic competition does nothing other than refocus a new target with the same weapon systems. We need to refocus the target, but with different weapons systems. The evolving strategic competition with Russia and China needs to be a 'softer' competition of values and ideology where the U.S. offers a comparable advantage of better principals. Such a competing value proposition demonstrably outperforms illiberal, revisionist states.

For the U.S. to benefit from totalitarian politics in China and Russia, American leaders must better understand the complexities of the evolving international environment and integrate such nuanced thinking into the development of a domestic and foreign strategy to outcompete both. Capitalizing on Chinese and Russian authoritarianism requires an adjusted U.S. narrative publicly emphasizing a more palatable liberal ideology of inclusivity and cooperation. Emphasizing liberalism over realism on the world stage will produce an even more attractive citizen recruitment proposition for the best and brightest Chinese and Russian citizens to move to the United States for educational and work opportunities. This *Strategic Brain Drain* approach should be integrated into future U.S. grand strategy discussion. Adopting a strategy of intellectual attrition against adver-

34 Leonie Huddy and Stanley Feldman, "Americans respond politically to 9/11: Understanding the impact of the terrorist attacks and their aftermath," *American Psychologist* 66, no. 6 (2011): 455-467; Valentina Bartolucci, "Terrorism rhetoric under the Bush Administration: Discourses and effects," *Journal of Language and Politics* 11, no. 4 (2012): 562-582.

35 Richard Jackson, *Writing the war on terrorism: Language, politics and counter-terrorism* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2018).

saries provides the U.S. with the necessary human and social capital needed to offset the population growth of China.³⁶ Such a ‘talent capture’ approach can galvanize U.S. innovation and rebalance the intellectual capital game for future strategic competition.³⁷ International perception matters too, meaning the fostering of a domestic political system and economy that is open to immigration and facilitates success. A complementary system of reforms in American politics is needed ensure high levels of upward social mobility, keeping the perception of the “American Dream” alive for citizens and foreigners alike.³⁸ For instance, a clear pathway is needed for attaining U.S. citizenship after serving in the US Armed Forces.

Future *Strategic Brain Drain* success internationally, also requires domestic discourse that favors a liberal form of inclusive American nationalism, as some elements of U.S. society are

trying to normalize illiberal, non-inclusive American nationalist identity.³⁹ It similarly requires a renewed social contract that emphasizes inclusivity and its value in American foreign policy.⁴⁰ For instance, a U.S. Army Colonel noted that “America has always believed that it represented its ideals through the lens of soft power Diversity is not decisive. It is another tool of power, and one that America possesses in abundance. It can be used better.”⁴¹ However, the waning of American soft power and the perception of it no longer being a welcoming nation of immigrants is at risk.

Soft Power Trumps Hard Power

The U.S. is still in a favorable position to outlast China and Russia in the 21st century, but only through indirect approaches. America is strategically and structurally poised to remain a hegemon, but only if U.S.

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- 36 Michel Beine, Frédéric Docquier, and Hillel Rapoport, “Brain drain and economic growth: Theory and evidence,” *Journal of Development Economics* 64, no. 1 (2001): 275-289; Ejio U. Osioke, “Human capital, capital stock formation, and economic growth: A panel granger causality analysis,” *Journal of Economics and Business* 3, no. 2 (2020); Prasetyo, P. Eko, Andryan Setyadharma, and Nurjannah Rahayu Kistanti. “Social Capital: The main determinant of MSME entrepreneurship competitiveness.” *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research* 9, no. 03 (2020): 6627-6637.
- 37 Adam Tyson (ed.), *The political economy of brain drain and talent capture: Evidence from Malaysia and Singapore* (New York: Routledge, 2018).
- 38 Jennifer Wolak and David A.M. Peterson, “The dynamic American dream,” *American Journal of Political Science* 64, no. 4 (2020): 968-981.
- 39 Jill Lepore, “A New Americanism: Why a Nation needs a National Story,” *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2019), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2019-02-05/new-americanism-nationalism-jill-lepore>.
- 40 Jahara Matisek, Travis Robison, and Buddhika Jayamaha, “Extending the American Century: Revisiting the Social Contract,” *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 20, no. 1 (2019): 5-15.
- 41 Mike Birmingham, “Diversity as power,” *U.S. Army War College: War Room*, 18 May 2017, <https://warroom.armywarcollege.edu/articles/diversity-as-power/>.

leadership avoids counterproductive policies that elevate short-term gains in lieu of long-term payoffs. Policymakers need to elevate strategic ‘soft’ power decisions, such as continuing to be a beacon of democracy and promoting rule of law, inclusivity, diversity, and capitalism—attracting the most educated and talented people to America and retaining them. In cases of adversaries out-matching U.S. hard power, such issues can be more easily resolved through robust alliances and security partnerships.

Ideas about a vibrant, inclusive civil society require ways in which to foster notions of American identity and integration into norms and values of civic duty.⁴² Strategic soft power in this case means retaining the foundations of a welcoming American society while respecting the rule of law and robust property rights. These are the fundamental norms, values, and institutions that Nobel Prize winning economist Douglas North attributed to being vital components of economic growth and development, to include foreign investment.⁴³ However, as evidence grows about how President Trump attempted to promote his “Big Lie” conspiracy of

election fraud after losing, not to mention the failed 6 January 2021 insurrection, these recent events contribute to growing international perceptions of U.S. corruption and democratic backsliding.⁴⁴

For the gender gap and declining population of qualifying males for military service, this means building on the foundation of the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 by fully institutionalizing Defense Objective 1: that the “DoD exemplifies a diverse organization that allows for women’s meaningful participation across the development, management, and employment of the joint force.”⁴⁵ Women around the world are the fastest growing demographic obtaining higher degrees in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) and these skills are needed to compete in the global economy and defense sectors. Hence, attracting the best and brightest means making U.S. institutions attractive to women from both at home and abroad. Foreign engagement requires the shaping of the information environment in elevating the U.S. as valuing a liberal and inclusive society, while simultaneously high-

42 Lauren Gilbert, “Citizenship, Civic Virtue, and Immigrant Integration: The Enduring Power of Community-Based Norms,” *Yale Law & Policy Review* 27 (Fall 2008): 335-398.

43 Douglas C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

44 In 2016, the US was the 16th least corrupt country in the world, but by 2020 it fell to 25th least corrupt country, tied with Chile. Cailey Griffin and Amy Mackinnon, “Report: Corruption in U.S. at Worst Levels in Almost a Decade,” *Foreign Policy*, 28 January 2021, <https://foreign-policy.com/2021/01/28/report-transparency-international-corruption-worst-decade-unit-ed-states/>.

45 Terri Moon Cronk, “DOD Supports Women, Peace and Security Act, Official Says,” *DOD News*, 27 July 2020, <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/2288824/dod-supports-women-peace-and-security-act-official-says/source/GovDelivery/>

lighting the perils of authoritarianism in China and Russia.

Success domestically and internationally, also requires people to know the rules of the game, so to speak. Every country has formal written laws, but the reality is that in most countries, including the United States, there are informal ways in which people coordinate economic activity and in authoritarian regimes, various activities are pursued without legal oversight and through corrupt negotiations with certain powerbrokers.⁴⁶ During the Cold War, the Soviet Union was bent on keeping the pace with a blistering U.S. nuclear weapons development program despite economic stagnation. However, the U.S. could afford such weapon building efforts because of the strong economy under the Reagan administration.⁴⁷ This is because the U.S. has been historically viewed as reliable when it comes to the rule of law and robust property rights, per the advocacy of Douglas North. North always emphasized these values, norms, and institutions as supporting economic stability, whereas countries that deviate from rules and laws discover that foreign investors lose confidence in the ability to do business in that country without the threat of corruption and rent-seekers undermining profits.⁴⁸ While strong authoritarian states can

provide a stable-looking environment characterized by attractive investment opportunities, at least in the near term, long-term viability comes into question, because of certain regime expectations for companies to conform to illiberal policies (e.g., providing all data and information on customers to government officials). When confronted with the realities of anti-Western values and institutions compared to free market economies and democracy promotion as alternatives, long-term investors are more likely to favor the U.S. approach. The U.S. is a bastion of stability, meanwhile, dictators fail to follow international laws and norms and their countries suffer as a result of the perceived authoritarianism-based instability.

Strategically countering these illiberal states necessitates purposeful efforts through intelligence collection and media dissemination to display their malfeasance in governance. Such efforts are politically palatable and remain well-below threshold of conflict. Engaging in deliberate political and information shaping efforts would create and solidify the accurate impression of Russia being a state-sponsor of organized crime that is trying to *Russify* neighboring states, not to mention the numerous war-crimes being committed by Russia's pirate army in Ukraine.⁴⁹

46 Douglass C. North, John Joseph Wallis, Steven B. Webb, and Barry R. Weingast (eds.), *In the Shadow of Violence: Politics, Economics, and the Problems of Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

47 Fred Chernoff, "Ending the Cold War: The Soviet retreat and the US military buildup," *International Affairs* 67, no. 1 (1991): 111-126.

48 Douglass C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

49 Neil Hauer, "Putin's Plan to Russify the Caucasus: How Russia's New Language Law Could

Additionally, it is well documented that the Russian government works with the notorious Russian biker gang *Nochnye Volki* (Night Wolves) to subvert various Eastern European countries by espousing right-wing white nationalism.⁵⁰ Similarly important is changing the perception of China from the docile ‘Panda’ that it pretends to be, and highlighting China as a bellicose ‘Dragon’ trying to bully its neighbors in the South China Sea.⁵¹

China engages in subversive acts (e.g., stealing intellectual property [IP], weaponizing the supply chain, etc.), violates international laws in the South China Sea, and is increasingly reliant on a strategy of ‘debt-trap diplomacy’ in the underdeveloped world; seizing assets and infrastructure in countries that default on loan schedule paybacks.⁵² For instance, while China appeared generous in building the African Union headquarters in Ethiopia, it was eventually discovered that China had ‘bugged’ the building for the purposes

of cyber espionage.⁵³ Most importantly, not enough is being done by the West to paint the current danger of China, which is systematically eliminating its ethnic Uyghur Muslim population in favor of growing ethnic Han nationalism.⁵⁴

Rather than pursuing a coordinated and costly military effort aimed at deterring Russian and Chinese aggression, especially in the gray zone, Western leaders need to showcase the illiberal tendencies of these strategic competitors.⁵⁵ The narrative of competition needs to be leveraged in favor of an alternative, long-term indirect strategy of attrition that will, in time, drain Russia and China of its social and human capital, leading to economic and military submission. Russian and Chinese deceit must rise to the forefront of the international conversation. The U.S. should avoid narratives that portend naked realism in favor of inclusive liberalist ideologies to strategically capture brain drain from China, Russia, and

Backfire,” *Foreign Affairs*, 1 August 2018, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2018-08-01/putins-plan-russify-caucasus>.

50 Kira Harris, “Russia’s Fifth Column: The Influence of the Night Wolves Motorcycle Club,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (2018): 1-15.

51 Rob Gifford, “Panda-Huggers and Dragon-Slayers: How to View Modern China Today,” *Social Education* 74, no. 1 (2010): 9-11.

52 Wilson VornDick, “Let China Fail in Africa,” *The National Interest*, 29 January 2019, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/let-china-fail-africa-42812>.

53 “African Union Bugged by China: Cyber Espionage as Evidence of Strategic Shifts,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, 7 March 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/african-union-bugged-china-cyber-espionage-evidence-strategic-shifts>.

54 Matthew Hill, David Campanale, and Joel Gunter, “‘Their goal is to destroy everyone’: Uighur camp detainees allege systematic rape,” *BBC News*, 2 February 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-55794071>.

55 Jahara W. Matissek, “Shades of gray deterrence: issues of fighting in the gray zone,” *Journal of Strategic Security* 10, no. 3 (2017): 1-26.

other authoritarian states through both cultural and economic appeal. Thus, the U.S. and many other democracies have rightly played up strategic narratives about Russia's illegal and unjust invasion of Ukraine in 2022, as a way of isolating the country and undermining the perception of the country as a desirable place to work and live.⁵⁶

The Russians are master manipulators and overly reliant on coercion, as seen with Russia's war against Ukraine.⁵⁷ Russia pursues various indirect strategies below the level of armed conflict against most of Europe without having to firing a shot. Russia 'misdirects' in Europe by bribing politicians, funding extremist political parties, sowing domestic dissent through information warfare, and worsening the COVID-19 pandemic by promoting anti-mask and anti-vaccine propaganda.⁵⁸ To some, the most effective capability Russia has is in its ability to marshal organized crime syndicates to act on their behalf to collect intelligence, smuggle, and eliminate rivals and dis-

senters abroad. Moreover, as described by one Swedish military intelligence officer interviewed, noted "Russia is weak," but mastered the employment of cheap "misdirection" at the expense of the U.S. and its allies in Europe.⁵⁹

Meanwhile, Beijing targets Western civil society to create positive narratives about China, placing propaganda spewing Confucius Institutes at universities in the West and by requiring companies and entertainment industries (i.e. Hollywood, Disney) to abide by Chinese Communist Party (CCP) censors and rules to do business in China.⁶⁰ China engages in aggressive "Wolf Warrior Diplomacy," while building thousands of acres of artificial islands in the South China Sea for military purposes—disguising such actions as commercial fishing activity, and intimidating neighbors.⁶¹ Worse, much like Russia, China undermines the global COVID-19 response by spreading "malign and subversive" information about the origins of the virus and ways of stopping its spread, further de-

56 Jill Goldenziel, "The Russia-Ukraine Information War Has More Fronts Than You Think," *Forbes*, 31 March 2022, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jillgoldenziel/2022/03/31/the-russia-ukraine-information-war-has-more-fronts-than-you-think/?sh=60583186a1e2>.

57 Gunneriusson, Hakan, and Sascha Dov Bachmann, "Western Denial and Russian Control: How Russia's National Security Strategy Threatens a Western-Based Approach to Global Security, the Rule of Law and Globalization," *Polish Political Science Yearbook* 46, no. 1 (2017): 9-29.

58 Jahara Matissek and Buddhika Jayamaha, *Old and New Battlespaces: Society, Military Power, and War* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2022).

59 Interview, Swedish military officer, March 8, 2019.

60 Buddhika B. Jayamaha and Jahara Matissek, "Social Media Warriors: Leveraging a New Battlespace," *Parameters* 48, no. 4 (Winter 2018–19): 11-24.

61 Zhiqun Zhu, "Interpreting China's 'Wolf-Warrior Diplomacy,'" *The Diplomat* 15 (2020): 648-658; Gregory Poling, "Illuminating the South China Sea's Dark Fishing Fleets," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, January 9, 2019, <https://ocean.csis.org/spotlights/illuminating-the-south-china-seas-dark-fishing-fleets/>

stabilizing Western governments and public trust in their institutions.⁶² Such successful actions only gives more confidence and audacity to leaders in China to continue unabated, because they have scantily suffered any serious blow-back from the West.

Owing to the strategic rebalance of the U.S. military, the pivot towards large scale combat operations to counter Russian and Chinese actions, seems to be focused on integrated deterrence and large-scale combat operation capabilities.⁶³ However, strategic soft power is a more advantageous approach given the structural realities facing China and Russia. For example, while China is expected to surpass the U.S. as the largest economy around 2030, this victory for Chinese will be fleeting. Lagging Chinese birth rates and an aging population will result in economic stagnation by 2040.⁶⁴ Moreover, China's shift towards tightening, authoritarian control of citizens (e.g., social credit rating score, etc.), and their recent moves to 'cleanse' and 'reeducate' Chinese Uyghurs, make

China all the more vulnerable to civil strife and brain drain.⁶⁵

In Russia's case, it is a dying country in terms of falling life expectancy rates, with one of the lowest birth rates in Europe.⁶⁶ Their revisionist leader Vladimir Putin attempts to exert influence for the purposes of making others *perceive* Russia as a great power. Hostile acts by Russia should be viewed through the lens of a country and people that once enjoyed rival status with America during the Cold War, but now has a shrinking economy that is smaller than Texas.⁶⁷ While Russia has attempted to build their own version of Silicon Valley in Skolkovo, this is a failing venture as the country lacks the necessary institutions, laws, and protections needed for the favorable conditions that are conducive to innovation and business growth. With Russia moving towards creating its own internet, much like China's "Great Firewall," this will only further reinforce authoritarian tendencies that will constrain civil society and institutions, undermining

62 Miriam Matthews, Katya Migacheva, and Ryan Andrew Brown, *Superspreaders of Malign and Subversive Information on COVID-19: Russian and Chinese Efforts Targeting the United States* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2021).

63 Michael D. Lundy, "Meeting the Challenge of Large-Scale Combat Operations Today and Tomorrow," *Military Review* 98, no. 5 (2018): 111-118.

64 Yvan Guillemette and David Turner, *The Long View: Scenarios for the World Economy to 2060* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2018).

65 Kate Lyons, "Uighur leaders warn China's actions could be 'precursors to genocide,'" *The Guardian*, December 6, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/07/uighur-leaders-warn-chinas-actions-could-be-precursors-to-genocide>.

66 Nicholas Eberstadt, "The Dying Bear-Russia's Demographic Disaster," *Foreign Affairs* 90 (2011): 95-108.

67 Frank Holmes, "Which Has the Bigger Economy: Texas or Russia?" *Forbes*, 17 April 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/greatspeculations/2018/04/17/which-has-the-bigger-economy-texas-or-russia/#52934a7670b9>.

whatever economic growth and potential Russia has left.⁶⁸ What is the U.S. to do in exploiting these Chinese and Russian vulnerabilities? The most pragmatic approach are non-military solutions in the long-term, because it will ensure hard power can be generated when needed for mobilizing resources to confront an adversary.

The Brain Drain Policy

Jewish refugees escaping Nazi Germany in the 1930s “revolutionized U.S. science and technology.”⁶⁹ Some of these refugees were vital members of the Manhattan Project, which contributed to the creation of the atomic bomb.⁷⁰ The Manhattan Project laid the foundation for American hegemony in the 20th century. A similarly inclusive American model will contribute to economic and military primacy in the 21st century and beyond.

The U.S. needs a *Strategic Brain Drain* policy to take advantage of the shift from the industrial age towards a globalized economy centered on information, service, and knowledge. As the 21st century moves away from industrial age economies, the quality of human

capital will matter most in achieving efficiencies and markets of scale.⁷¹ A post-industrial age economy dependent on digitized interconnectivity, rather than factories and manufacturing, requires both deliberate U.S. citizen recruitment and a new orientation to developing warfighting capabilities that gives the U.S. military a competitive edge.

Specific to citizen recruitment, the U.S. has a great comparable advantage with the internationally recognized perception of “The American Dream.” The associated upward social mobility that a new immigrant in the U.S. might have by making a good living through hard work and dedication attracts talented individuals to the U.S. This American Dream— and the inclusive-liberalist ideology upon which it is built—must be a cornerstone of future U.S. grand strategy and leveraged in competition against totalitarian states. Beyond only social mobility, the American Dream allows for social acceptance of groups marginalized by the illiberal regimes of China and Russia. However, the “American Dream” is increasingly becoming a myth due to American upward social mobility ranking 27th

68 Scott Malcomson, *Splinternet: How geopolitics and commerce are fragmenting the World Wide Web* (New York: OR Books, 2016).

69 Petra Moser, Alessandra Voena, and Fabian Waldinger, “German Jewish émigrés and US invention,” *American Economic Review* 104, no. 10 (2014): 3222-3255.

70 “Scientist Refugees and the Manhattan Project,” *Atomic Heritage Foundation*, 20 June 2018, <https://www.atomicheritage.org/article/scientist-refugees-and-manhattan-project>.

71 Sunita Dodani and Ronald E. LaPorte, “Brain drain from developing countries: How can brain drain be converted into wisdom gain?” *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 98, no. 11 (2005): 487-491; Jarand H. Aarhus and Tor G. Jakobsen, “Rewards of reforms: Can economic freedom and reforms in developing countries reduce the brain drain?” *International Area Studies Review* 22, no. 4 (2019): 327-347.

globally.⁷² This downward trend, which began in 1980, should be considered a true existential threat to American hegemony in this century.⁷³ Political agreement and resolve, between both political parties in America, would be needed to generate policies that address wage stagnation and educational and economic opportunities to make the “American Dream” a reality again.⁷⁴

Countries that pursue policies to exclude certain groups from participation in the economy, government, and military, are undercutting their own human and social capital. Promoting cultural equality and integration alongside policies that promote social mobility will allow the U.S. to recruit some of the most educated and talented individuals from authoritarian states, which increases the human capital of the American economy, and can result in technological advancements for the U.S. military.⁷⁵ Moreover, such a brain drain approach by the U.S. would make it difficult for these authoritarian states to be economically and militarily competitive, due to smaller pools of available human and social capital.

Aspirations by U.S. political and military leaders and think-tanks to always be exponentially more militarily powerful than hostile near-peer states is a cost-prohibitive strategy that will undermine economic growth in the long-term.⁷⁶ Military power is a relative concept with different value benchmarks to different factions. Whereas one faction argues military power is a reflection of total military force, another will argue it is, rather, a reflection of military capability. The resulting ambiguity of the concept continues to mire policy and law makers into a never-ending quest for more, in most cases simply to have more than the next. This is as wasteful as it is myopic. Adopting a numbers-based approach as a strategic guidepost to military power enhancement is steeped in illogical measures of power that have proven to be ineffective predictors of strategic success. A more productive “soft” power strategy focused on capturing *brain drain* is a better policy for undermining revisionist authoritarian states with hegemonic ambitions. American policies that rely on taking the world’s best scientists, en-

72 Robert D. Putnam, *Our kids: The American dream in crisis* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016); “The Global Social Mobility Report 2020 Equality, Opportunity and a New Economic Imperative,” *World Economic Forum*, January 2020.

73 Daniel Aaronson and Bhashkar Mazumder, “Intergenerational economic mobility in the United States, 1940 to 2000,” *Journal of Human Resources* 43, no. 1 (2008): 139-172.

74 For examples and solutions, see: Ben Hecht, *Reclaiming the American dream: Proven solutions for creating economic opportunity for all* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2018).

75 Geoffrey D. Korff, “Reviving the forgotten American dream,” *Penn State Law Review* 113, no. 2 (2008): 417-460; Richard Nadeau, Vincent Arel-Bundock, and Jean-François Daoust, “Satisfaction with Democracy and the American Dream,” *The Journal of Politics* 81, no. 3 (2019): 1080-1084.

76 The most egregious advocate of America not spending enough on defense is the Heritage Foundation. “2021 Index of U.S. Military Strength: Executive Summary,” *The Heritage Foundation*, 17 November 2020, <https://www.heritage.org/military-strength/executive-summary>.

gineers, doctors, and entrepreneurs is a needed strategy to have a comparative advantage in a globalized economy that will increasingly become transformed by the information era.⁷⁷

Blending the Best of Realism and Liberalism?

American political leadership must craft a grand strategy that focuses on shifting and reshaping the public narrative to emphasize time-tested liberalism, with realism when necessary, such as current U.S. led efforts to punish Russia for its invasion of Ukraine. It is the necessary public narrative—the sales pitch—that sells the international community and sows the seeds of confidence into an American economic engine capable of maintaining global hegemony. Economic stability, more than military might, will be the foundation for success in great power competition and the one thing that will set the U.S. apart from its ambitious competitors. Despite their best efforts to cast themselves as democratic and capitalist, China and Russia are authoritarian and unrelenting regimes ripe for economic and social fracturing. The U.S. can generate trillion-dollar deficits with little effect on investor confidence as evidenced through the continued upward trend of the U.S. stock mar-

ket through the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, ballooning spending seems to have little impact—at least for now—on the daily lives American citizens, in part because of America’s concrete foundation and stability-promoting adherence to the rule of law and the resulting confidence it produces. Global powers and investors know this. China and Russia, meanwhile, are hollow economies presenting an illusion of growth and stability thinly veiled under revisionist and unsustainable ideologies. The U.S. has institutionalized relative economic stability; the Chinese and Russians have porous foundations susceptible to exploitation. Future U.S. grand strategy should promote economic power over military power, at least publicly.

The U.S. is a realist nation that advocates for a world of liberalism—as it has been since the end of World War II. But times are changing. The U.S. does not need or benefit from an overt “America First” policy platform as such a naked approach undermines U.S. efforts in the 21st century great power competition. Blatant advertising of *America First* is counterproductive; international image and perception increasingly matters in the internet age. This was most obvious in 2018, where a Pew Research Center study found that “America’s international image continues to suffer.”⁷⁸ A realist approach and

77 Peter A. Hall and David W. Soskice, *Varieties of capitalism: The institutional foundations of comparative advantage* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

78 Richard Wike, Bruce Stokes, Jacob Poushter, Laura Silver, Janell Fetterolf, and Kat Devlin, “Trump’s International Ratings Remain Low, Especially Among Key Allies: 1. America’s International Image Continues to Suffer,” *Pew Research Center: Global Attitudes and Trends*, 1 October 2018, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2018/10/01/americas-international-image-continues-to-suffer/>.

doing what is right for America, first, is a necessary front to ensure continued U.S. interests; boasting about it is not. Liberalism is the more palatable public rhetoric for the global stage. Unabashed realism can alienate American allies and fracture U.S. relations with contributing and influential nations in strategic competition whereas liberalism can unify.⁷⁹ This is not to say the U.S. should abandon realism or its *realpolitik*. The U.S. should take a page from E.H. Carr's playbook to reshape the narrative by injecting moralism back into Trump's *principled realism* of "America First."⁸⁰

Conclusion

The U.S. can continue its realist approach under the umbrella of a liberalist label, benefitting itself first, and in doing so benefitting the rest. Confidence in the American model, and an inclusive liberal American identity, will attract outsiders who want to be a part of the U.S. economy. Foreign talent and faith in the American system, is what makes the U.S. economy so transformative and powerful. Absent a targeted recruitment strategy to attract talented global citizens, the U.S. is

at risk of losing its hegemonic reserve of intellectual and entrepreneurial capital. The newest weapons and technological advancements may be dependent upon Chinese or Russian refugees. It could be fleeing Afghans, Uyghurs, or Chechens that might contribute to future development of artificial intelligence and quantum computing.

Those individuals seeking a better life may be the key to success for a country historically open to those willing to be a part of the greater American work ethic. Human capital translates directly into continued American economic and military power. Economic and military advances may be the lynchpin to offset competitors like China and Russia in the future of great power competition, and there is precedent for such an argument.

For American grand strategy to be successful in maintaining hegemony, it must remain reflective of the values the nation holds dear. International interest in attending American universities is back in 2021.⁸¹ Additionally, the Biden Administration's softer approach to allies and partners, has immediately resulted in highly favorable views of the U.S. image.⁸² Thus, the rhetoric and

79 Eliot A. Cohen, "America's Long Goodbye: The Real Crisis of the Trump Era," *Foreign Affairs* 98 (2019): 138-146.

80 E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939: An introduction to the study of International Relations*, 2nd edition (London: Macmillan, 1962 [1939]).

81 Brendan O'Malley, "International students warming to U.S. after Biden victory," *University World News*, 3 March 2021, <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20210303133839873>.

82 Richard Wike, Jacob Poushter, Laura Silver, Janell Fetterolf, and Mara Mordecai, "America's Image Abroad Rebounds with Transition from Trump to Biden," *Pew Research Center*, 10 June 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/06/10/americas-image-abroad-rebounds-with-transition-from-trump-to-biden/>.

actions of the Biden administration suggests that the ‘soft power’ image of the U.S. can be restored. However, for America to truly benefit in the long-term, it means codifying a *Strategic Drain Brain* policy into national security documents and organizations. This can even translate into more effective negotiations with officials representing authoritarian governments, whereby safe-passage for the official and their family to America could be used as a tool for leverage to get information and/or to weaken an adversarial government.⁸³ It also means taking actions to attract and retain human and social capital, while also making domestic policy decisions that reduce corrup

tion, advocate inclusive ideologies, and improve the “American Dream” of upward social mobility, ensuring that the world’s most talented decide to live in the United States. Achieving all of these objectives will only be possible if elected leaders on both sides of the political spectrum accept that the future of American economic and military power is dependent on innovation and entrepreneurship, which means fostering policies and reforming laws that promotes immigration to support American hegemony for the 21st century and beyond.

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83 Målfrid Braut-Hegghammer, “Cheater’s Dilemma: Iraq, Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the Path to War,” *International Security* 45, no. 1 (Summer 2020): 51-89.