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Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth. ***America Abroad: The United States' Global Role in the 21st Century*.** New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. ISBN: 9780190464257 (hardcover, $29.95); 9780190692162 (paperback, $19.95).

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Introduction by Robert Jervis, Columbia University

Our reviewers agree that Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth have produced what Rosemary Kelanic describes as "an extremely useful book that should be required reading for all students of US grand strategy." The reviewers have paid Brooks and Wohlforth the deep compliment of taking their arguments seriously, and any course on American foreign policy would do well to assign *American Abroad* and these responses to it.

In urging that the U.S. should avoid both the restraint advocated by Barry Posen and others and the over-reach of the six years or so of the post September 11, 2001 policy of the George W. Bush administration, Brooks and Wohlforth argue for the goldilocks position of "Deep Engagement."[1] This calls for continued alliance commitments and support of major international institutions. Even with the rise of China, Brooks and Wohlforth argue that American power is sufficient to maintain this position, which brings major political and economic benefits to the United States.

Brooks and Wohlforth stake out a provocative position and our reviewers are provoked. This is not surprising; the volume under review addresses the central issues in American foreign policy, and these are ones over which scholars, as well as elites and members of the public, are in disagreement. All the reviewers note that there may be a slippery slope between Deep Engagement and the over-reach that produced Vietnam and Iraq (what Brooks and Wohlforth call "Deep Engagement Plus"). The ability of the U.S. to maintain self-control and avoid entrapment may be less than what Brooks and Wohlforth posit, and a straw in the wind may be the looser reins on the military under President Donald Trump, who campaigned on a platform of relative restraint. I think it is fair to say that the reviewers generally question the sustainability of Deep Engagement more than they do its desirability.

Bruce Jentleson also argues that the conception of power employed by Brooks and Wohlforth focuses on control over resources to the relative exclusion of the ability to control the behavior of others and the outcomes that result, distinctions that go back to Robert Dahl's classic treatment.[2] Furthermore, not only do Brooks and Wohlforth exaggerate how well the strategy worked during the Cold War, but they pay insufficient attention to the factors in the post-Cold War years such as intra-state instability and the weakness of multilateral institutions that now pose greater barriers to the success of such a strategy.

Kelanic worries that Brooks and Wohlforth's projection of future Chinese power is excessively based on the past and downplays "the possibility for radical discontinuous change a bit too much." More importantly, she believes that the authors' claim that the U.S. followed the Deep Engagement for most of the post-World War II era ignores the fact that until 1990 the U.S. had a peer competitor. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union mark a discontinuity, with the U.S. gaining real preponderance only after these events. And in this period the temptation to over-reach often was too great to resist, which implies that Deep Engagement may be prone to slide into reckless adventures.

[1] Barry Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for US Grand Strategy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).

[2] Robert A. Dahl, "The Concept of Power," *Behavioral Science* 2:3 (July 1957): 201-215.

Joshua Shifrinson terms *America Abroad* "excellent—if flawed," and understandably devotes most his attention to the later characteristics. Like Jentleson, he questions whether Brooks and Wohlforth have measured power correctly and so may be overestimating the ability to sustain Deep Engagement. An even greater worry for him is how the U.S. would avoid entrapment by allies while simultaneously giving them the required assurances. He also joins the other reviewers in worrying about the American ability to avoid the temptation to over-reach.

Tony Smith, an expert on Wilsonianism in American foreign policy, comes at *America Abroad* from a somewhat different direction, arguing that despite its many strengths, the book is limited by its realist perspective. Democracy promotion as it was carried out in Germany, Italy, and Japan was a cornerstone of success in the Cold War, and this reminds us that when carried out appropriately, American interests and values can indeed coincide. The regulation of the international economy was also central to the post-World War II order, and by facilitating economic prosperity this project contributed to the maintenance of democratic regimes. In fact, Smith avers, Brooks and Wohlforth's realist focus leads them to ignore the fact that in the current world it is the democratic foundations of the liberal international order that are perhaps most at risk. Like most outward-looking realists, the authors fail to give sufficient attention to the domestic roots of foreign policy and to the health of supportive international institutions. Unless these are shored up, positive engagement in any form will be unlikely.

Brooks and Wohlforth acknowledge the importance of most of these criticisms, but rebut more than accept them, which is to be expected in debates of this kind.

Participants:

Stephen Brooks is a Professor of Government at Dartmouth College. He is the author of four books, including *America Abroad: The United States' Global Role in the 21st Century* (Oxford University Press: 2016) and *World out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton: 2008), both with William Wohlforth. He has published numerous articles in academic such as *International Security*, *International Organization*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *Perspectives on Politics*, and *Security Studies*. He received his Ph.D. in Political Science with Distinction from Yale University, where his dissertation received the American Political Science Association's Helen Dwight Reid Award for the best doctoral dissertation in international relations, law, and politics.

William C. Wohlforth is the Daniel Webster Professor of Government at Dartmouth. He is the author or editor of nine books and some 60 articles and book chapters on topics ranging from the Cold War and its end to unipolarity and contemporary U.S. grand strategy. He is a member of the Council of Foreign Relations and has served as a consultant for the National Intelligence Council and the National Bureau of Asian Research. His most recent book are *America Abroad The United States' Global Role in the 21st Century* (Oxford University Press, 2016), co-authored with Stephen G. Brooks and *The Oxford Handbook of International Security* (forthcoming, April 2018), coedited with Alexandra Gheciu.

Robert Jervis is Adlai E. Stevenson Professor of International Politics at Columbia University. His most recent book is *How Statesmen Think* (Princeton University Press, 2017). He was President of the American Political Science Association in 2000-2001 and is the founding editor of the International Security Studies Forum. He has received career achievement awards from the International Society of Political Psychology and ISA's Security Studies Section, the Grawemeyer Award for the book with the Best Ideas for Improving World

Order, and the National Academy of Science's tri-annual award for behavioral sciences contributions to avoiding nuclear war.

Bruce W. Jentleson is Professor of Public Policy and Political Science at Duke University. He was the 2015-2016 Henry Kissinger Chair in Foreign Policy and International Relations at the Kluge Center, Library of Congress. His latest book is *The Peacemakers: Leadership Lessons from Twentieth Century Statesmanship* (W.W. Norton and Company, forthcoming, April 2018).

Rosemary A. Kelanic is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Notre Dame and co-editor, with Charles L. Glaser, of *Crude Strategy: Rethinking the U.S. Military Commitment to Defend Persian Gulf Oil* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2016).

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Tony Smith is Cornelia M. Jackson Professor of Political Science Emeritus, Tufts University and is the author of a number of books. Those on American foreign policy include *Foreign Attachments: The Power of Ethnic Groups in the Making of U.S. Foreign Policy* (Harvard University Press, 2000); *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy* (Princeton University Press, expanded edition, 2012), *A Pact with the Devil: Washington's Bid for World Supremacy and the Betrayal of the American Promise* (Routledge, 2007). He welcomes contact at tony02108@gmail.com.

Review by Bruce W. Jentleson, Duke University

If the reader is looking for a book that approaches the U.S. grand strategy debate in terms of globally extensive versus strategically limited interests, posed here as the 'deep engagement' of authors Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth versus the 'restraint' of authors such as Barry Posen and Stephen Walt, this is one for you. But if one thinks that the structure and dynamics of the twenty-first century world and the U.S. position and grand strategy options within it are not sufficiently captured by either paradigm, other books are necessary.

In many respects, Brooks and Wohlforth present their case well. The chapters are structured to address security and economic aspects with a version of cost/benefit net assessment. The coverage is quite sweeping. The end notes are a gold mine. Theirs is as extensive a critique of 'restraint' that one will find. They do tend to equate restraint with disengagement when it is meant by its proponents to be limited engagement: e.g., juxtaposing deep engagement to a strategy that "left the international system to its own devices" (89-90), and in Asia led to the United States "pull[ing] back from the region" (110). Beyond that, I leave the tit-for-tat response to restraint proponents.

My concern is more whether this is the optimal debate for understanding twenty-first century U.S. foreign policy.

First, some issues with the conception of 'deep engagement.'

These start with the term itself. Back in 1994 the Clinton Administration titled its National Security Strategy "A Strategy of Enlargement and Engagement." With the Cold War just over, enlargement played directly off containment. But when it was first floated in a series of speeches in late 1993, it met with mixed reviews. I was serving on the State Department Policy Planning Staff at the time, and recall cables back from a U.S. ambassador in Latin America saying that the Spanish translation was ending up as *imperialismo* (I also recall a side comment in a meeting that it sounded like something that happens to your spleen). Engagement was added in part to attenuate such etymological concerns, and in part to juxtapose against neo-isolationist 'come home America' calls. But it was then and remains now a fudge word. Engage with whom? According to what strategy? With what mix of force and diplomacy? With what objectives? I know well the political utility of this fudging. But adding the modifier 'deep' does not make the concept sufficiently sharp for scholarly work, neither for policy analysis nor policy prescription.

A second conceptual concern is with the lumping together of U.S. Cold War foreign policy as "seven decades of singular grand strategy" (73). While some differences from one presidential administration to another were more of degree than kind, the 1977-1979 Carter foreign policy was not exactly singular with predecessors. And the 2003 Iraq war: while Brooks and Wohlforth do acknowledge this as "not an expression of deep engagement's core" (150), they leave the statement cited above standing and largely stick to it over the course of the book. Although I recognize the inherent uncertainty of any counterfactual, had Democratic Party nominee Al Gore been elected President in 2000, there is a basis in his pre-war declared position, and in my own assessment from having served as a foreign policy advisor in his presidential campaign and earlier in his career, for arguing that he would not have made the decision for this fateful war.[1] And perhaps the one point on which proponents and critics of the Obama administration's foreign policy agree, albeit with very different implications, is its non-singularity.

Third is questioning whether U.S. Cold War policy worked as well as claimed. Yes, as John Lewis Gaddis argues, it did achieve the "long peace": "What never happened, despite universal fears that it might, was a full-scale war involving the United States, the Soviet Union, and their respective allies." Fears and risks that end up being averted often are underestimated in retrospect. We must not do that with the Cold War. But Gaddis's broader claim that "the world, I am quite sure, is a better place for that conflict [the Cold War] *having been fought the way it was* and won by the side that won it" is less consensual, especially the part that I've italicized.[2] Contrast Odd Arne Westad's *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* and the argument that while there was little to praise in Soviet Third World policies, it also was the case that "seen from a Third World perspective, the results of America's interventions are truly dismal."[3] This bears generally on Brooks and Wohlforth's heavily positive assessment of Cold War deep engagement, and particularly on their claims that the U.S. avoided "entrapment" in its alliance commitments (145). Vietnam? Support for the Shah of Iran leading to being cast as the Great Satan by the Islamic Revolution? Afghanistan and the anti-Soviet but then anti-American and Osama bin Laden-sponsoring *mjuaheddin?*

Even if one disputes these points and accepts Brooks and Wohlforth's more undifferentiated analysis that "the United States' unmatched global power position" was "a foundational material pillar of the post-World War II international system," questions remain about the rest of the proposition that "it will remain in place" (11). This assertion of continuity has an end-of-history element to it. Just as Francis Fukuyama argued that democracy and capitalism had emerged from centuries of contestation as the optimal political and economic systems to be refined but not fundamentally changed going forward, U.S. quasi-hegemony gets posited as the culmination for global peace and prosperity applicable on an ongoing basis.[4] I see two principal problems with this line of argument.

First, the conditions that contributed to the U.S. global power position during the Cold War and its immediate aftermath are no longer as determinative of the structure and dynamics of the international system. The Cold War labeling of the U.S. and Soviet Union as 'superpowers' was based on two factors: nuclear weapons that gave them unprecedented military power, indeed the capacity to destroy the world, and their geopolitical competition that was global in scope and believed to be zero-sum. Neither is any longer systemically defining. As important as military power still is, its significance has been diluted in two respects: (a) in a world in which there is much less of a shared security threat, the military power 'currency' is less convertible to other forms of power and influence, and (b) the capabilities-utility gap between military

[1] "Text: Gore Assails Bush's Iraq Policy," *Washington Post,* 23 September 2002, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/transcripts/gore_text092302.html

[2] John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 261, xi (italics added).

[3] Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 404.

[4] Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?," *National Interest* 16 (Summer 1989), 3-18.

superiority as measured by traditional indicators such as those in Chapter 2, but the limited utility of that superiority for achieving strategic objectives given the prevalence of asymmetric warfare.

Nor is this just about military power. In assessing U.S. political-diplomatic power it is instructive to go back to political scientist Robert Dahl's classic three-fold distinction in conceptualizing and measuring power. Dahl starts with control over resources, the usual measure, and then distinguishes the ability to control outcomes and the capacity to shape the behavior of others as not necessarily corresponding to that distribution of power as resources.[5] In this regard the authors' claim that "the unwritten clause in all the alliance relationships is that Washington is the senior partner and provider of security assurance whose preferences tend to prevail when allies differ" (92) runs into quite substantial contrary empirical evidence. Relations with Turkey on issues from internal repression to Syria; Israel and the Iran nuclear nonproliferation agreement and peace with the Palestinians; Saudi Arabia and the Yemen war; the Philippines under President Duterte and China; Iraqi Prime Ministers Maliki and Abadi and internal power sharing, Afghan Presidents Karzai and Ghani and political reform and corruption-fighting – these are but a few of the examples from recent years of limits to U.S. power of the Dahlian second and third types.

Brooks and Wohlforth also largely stick to the power-as-resources measure of economic power. Even in those terms, in a world in which China's economy will grow larger than the American economy in the next 10-15 years, in which 43 countries already count China as their largest trade partner compared to 32 with the US, in which China-led multilateral institutions like the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) are being established, where Weibo is now more highly valued on financial markets than Twitter, and numerous other economic indicators of China's growing economic power and reach, their assessment of U.S. economic power superiority is at best more a snapshot than a trend line.

Moreover, the viability of the U.S.-sponsored international economic order is being questioned. The Bretton Woods system, the rules and norms of which were largely U.S.-determined and managed, largely served collective global prosperity for the first post-World War II quarter century. While showing strains going back to the early 1970s, it rode the initial 1990s wave of globalization. But the current deadlock in the Doha Round of global trade talks is well into its second decade. The international financial system has had huge shocks, most recently from its two ostensible paragons, the U.S.-Wall Street and Europe-Euro. China and to an extent India are modeling a very different state-market balance than the U.S.-Western one, of "purposive state intervention to guide market development and national corporate growth."[6] And all this was in the mix before the British Brexit vote and President Donald Trump's beggar-thy-neighbor economic nationalism.

As to soft power, it did not take long for Trump's deleterious impact to register. The problem is not only with him and his policies, but even more tellingly that the heralded American democracy could produce this type of person as a leader. This Trumpian effect comes on top of the U.S. having the world's worst societal gun violence, and inequality and discrimination that while far from the world's worst fall well short of the self-congratulatory claims that are regularly made. Moreover, whatever global trend towards democracy was there in the immediate post-Cold War years is long gone. According to Freedom House, the last year in which

[5] Robert A. Dahl, "The Concept of Power," *Behavioral Science* 2:3 (July 1957): 201-215.

[6] Gregory Chin and Ramesh Thakur, "Will China Change the Rules of Global Order?," *Washington Quarterly* 33:4 (October 2010), 210.

more countries had gains in freedom than declines was 2005. *The Economist's* Democracy Index is stagnating at 5.5 (scale 1 to 10).[7] To be sure, soft power competitors have run into their own self-induced problems: Scandinavian social democracies are going through their own anti-refugee backlash, China's political crackdowns are intensifying, Turkey no longer modeling Islamist democracy, Brazil's claim to "globalization with a social conscience" being the victim of its own political and economic turmoil.[8] We see more and more the emergence of what Steve Weber and I have called a global competition of ideas which functions more like the dynamics of a marketplace than a war.[9]

Along with these changes in many of the conditions that had been conducive to the U.S. global power position, issues on which U.S. strategy and the American-led international order either had never been particularly effective or were losing effectiveness over time now have even greater salience and severity. Two examples.

One is intra-state instability. Even to the extent that one takes a starkly realpolitik perspective and attributes success to U.S. Cold War military interventions and CIA support for pro-American dictators who could impose order however brutally, this is a much less viable option in today's world. The two longest wars in American history continue to be fought in Afghanistan and Iraq, and yet stability remains elusive. Nor has democracy promotion registered many successes. Yet riffing from the Las Vegas tourism television commercial that "what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas," the 'Vegas dilemma' in twenty-first century international affairs is that what happens inside states does not stay inside states.[10] Whether safe havens providing refuge for terrorists, internal conflicts spreading to neighboring states, inadequate public health capacity failing to prevent disease outbreaks from becoming pandemics, or other externalizations of internal threats and instability, globalization's interconnectedness means that there are few states whose weaknesses or failures stay their own business. Little in the Brooks and Wolhforth grand strategy bears on issues such as these.

A second example is the general weakness of multilateral institutions and global governance. Responsibility is by no means to be principally attributed to the U.S. There is plenty to go around to other major powers, to smaller nations, to the institutions themselves. So many issues require the kind of collective action for which international institutions are crucial. Yet UN peacekeeping fails far more often than it succeeds. The World Health Organization has a budget barely higher than what a single non-state actor, the Gates Foundation, spends just on global health. The World Food Program is a long list of pledges unfulfilled. The whole gamut of organizations dealing with refugees are overwhelmed in a world that has more refugees than at any time

[7] Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2017: Populists and Autocrats: The Dual Threat to Democracy,* https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2017; Economist Intelligence Unit, *Democracy Index 2016: "Revenge of the Deplorables,"* http://www.eiu.com/Handlers/WhitepaperHandler.ashx?fi=Democracy-Index-2016.pdf&mode=wp&campaignid=DemocracyIndex2016, 3.

[8] Julia Sweig, "A New Global Player: Brazil's Far-flung Agenda," *Foreign Affairs* 89:6 (November-December 2010), 174.

[9] Steve Weber and Bruce W. Jentleson, *The End of Arrogance: America in the Global Competition of Ideas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

[10] Bruce W. Jentleson, "The Vegas Dilemma and Failed States," *The Globalist,* 15 May 2009, https://www.theglobalist.com/the-vegas-dilemma-and-failed-states/

since World War II. Even if the United States had not withdrawn from the Paris climate agreement and all countries meet their pledges, the effects will fall short of the temperature ceiling needed to prevent catastrophic climate change. Any grand strategy purporting to be realistic for the twenty-first century has to deal with these issues, yet they get little attention in Brooks and Wohlforth's book.

In these and other ways Brooks and Wohlforth miss the extent to which the United States now finds itself in an historically unique position.[11] For much of its history it stayed largely apart from the world. While not as isolationist as often depicted, insulated by oceans and blessed by a bountiful land, it was able to selectively engage with the outside world when and where it chose. During the Cold War and immediate aftermath, the U.S. sat atop the world. Militarily, economically, technologically, diplomatically, politically, ideologically—the U.S. was dominant by most every measure, indeed, with the fall of the Soviet Union, the sole surviving superpower. Today, though, with insulation stripped away amidst globalization and dominance chipped away as other countries assert themselves, it finds itself neither apart nor atop but rather *amidst* the world, both shaping and being shaped by global events and forces., Even more fundamental than the policy challenges posed has been the shock of this "apart/atop/amidst" transition to the very sense of self as a nation—part of the context in which Trump's "America First" mix of reverting to being apart and re-asserting being atop has been having its appeal to the national psyche.

Brooks and Wohlforth are far from the only ones missing such profound shifts and their implications for an alternative to Trump's America First. Since Trump's election I have heard more invocations of the 'Liberal International Order' than I can recall ever hearing before in a comparable time period. And not just in scholarly discourse, also in think tank circles, and the media. While a viable twenty-first century U.S. grand strategy does need to draw from what has worked in the past, it needs to do so in ways that are adaptive and recalibrating to the way the world is today and will be going forward, more than how it used to be or how we might want it to be.

[11] Bruce W. Jentleson, "Apart, Atop, Amidst: America in the World," *War on the Rocks*, 12 January 2017, https://warontherocks.com/2017/01/apart-atop-amidst-america-in-the-world/.

Review by Rosemary A. Kelanic, University of Notre Dame

Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth's new book, *America Abroad: The United States' Global Role in the 21st Century*, could hardly be more prescient in the age of Donald Trump, whose emerging foreign policy proclivities appear to favor a United States that is less engaged in the world. His election has underlined the question as to whether the United States should remain committed to maintaining the Western economic and security order that it created after World War II and expanded into a global system following the disintegration of the USSR. Contra the Washington establishment, the President has signaled an interest in reducing the American role in international matters, including free trade and European security. As the U.S. interest in international cooperation appears to ebb, the rise of potential competitors such as China has unleashed a new uncertainty about the direction of U.S. grand strategy in the decades ahead.

America Abroad addresses two interlinked questions about the U.S. position in the world. First, will the United States remain the world's lone superpower for the foreseeable future, or might rising powers, particularly China, catch up or even displace it? Though the authors have tackled this question before,[1] they update their analysis to take into account recent developments that raise the question anew: China's continued rapid growth; increasing assertiveness from Beijing and Moscow in the South China and East China Seas, and in Europe; and setbacks experienced by the U.S. such as the 2008 recession (3). They argue that these events, while important, have not fundamentally altered the international system. Although China has narrowed the gap between the size of its economy and that of the United States, Brooks and Wohlforth claim that Chinese technological development lags so far behind that the country remains decades away from approaching the United States in overall capabilities (60-63).

Having made the case that U.S. preeminence will be long lasting, the authors turn their focus to a second question, which motivates the bulk of the book: As the dominant power, what grand strategy should the United States pursue? Should it continue to press its power advantage through some type of internationalist grand strategy, or would the country be better off returning to its pre-WWII tradition of isolationism? Brooks and Wohlforth argue that the best strategic choice is to continue the current, outward-looking U.S. grand strategy, which they characterize as "deep engagement" and which consists of three parts. The first objective, "managing the external environment in key regions to reduce near- and long-term threats to U.S. national security," is rather vague, but it seems to consist of maintaining the Cold War alliances that forward-deploy U.S. troops in Europe and Asia as well as protecting the free flow of Persian Gulf oil. The second goal is to "maximize domestic prosperity" through liberal economic agreements that also benefit the global economy at large. The third and final plank is to promote global cooperation through U.S.-led institutions that allow the U.S. to influence cooperative outcomes to its benefit (75). Deep engagement should not be confused with primacy or liberal hegemony, the authors contend, because it deliberately excludes normative elements intrinsic to those approaches—namely, democracy promotion and humanitarianism (82-83). These are walled off into a residual category labeled "deep engagement plus," which also appears to include ill-conceived wars like Iraq and Afghanistan (82-83, 150-152).

America Abroad employs the typical Washington euphemisms to describe U.S. policy—using terms such as 'leadership' and 'global engagement' as opposed to the blunt language of power, coercion, and dominance—

[1] Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

but it is a serious piece of scholarship. Of the many books that argue for extensive U.S. involvement abroad, it is stands unrivaled in its rigorous application of academic theories to the grand strategy question. It also covers an impressive span of intellectual territory by considering both the economic and security aspects of deep engagement—all without sacrificing readability.

Like any book, however, *America Abroad* has weaknesses. For instance, the assessment of the U.S.-China power balance hinges too strongly on the claim that China not only technologically trails the U.S. but also has no real possibility for 'leapfrogging' intermediate stages of technological development to close the gap. Present-day technological development is depicted as a relatively linear progression devoid of surprises. This view may be accurate, but one wonders if the authors downplay the possibility for radical, discontinuous change a bit too much. For example, the sudden rise of oil-burning internal combustion engines in the early twentieth century had devastating consequences for the British navy, which had dominated the nineteenth century thanks to Britain's plentiful coal production. Once petroleum emerged as the premier fuel, oil-poor England's relative power was bound to decline, especially compared to the oil-rich United States. Could an unexpected scientific breakthrough similarly alter the distribution of capabilities over the next several years, helping China to close the gap? Brooks and Wohlforth contend that computer-driven technology differs so much from the machine-driven technology of the past that disruptive transformation is functionally impossible. Perhaps, but do policymakers in Washington and Beijing share this belief and act accordingly? The authors could strengthen their argument if they demonstrated that decision makers actually view the power differential as insuperable and support deep engagement with that understanding.

Perhaps the most glaring weakness of *America Abroad* arises from the decision to backdate the rise of U.S. preeminence—and deep engagement along with it—to the post-World War II era rather than the end of the Cold War, against conventional wisdom. Doing so allows the authors to distance deep engagement from the adventurism of post-Cold War U.S. grand strategy—especially the period from 2001-2013, when the U.S. pursued "deep engagement plus" in the form of nation-building in Afghanistan and Iraq (85). After all, if deep engagement dates back 70-plus years, then the 2001-2013 period looks like the exception to an otherwise rosy history. But if U.S. preponderance only dates back to the end of the Cold War—where most scholars put it—then deep engagement is 25 years old at best. This would mean that the strategy produced foreign adventurism during nearly half of the years the United States pursued it. With that ratio, 'plus' policies would seem endemic to deep engagement whether they are strictly necessary components or not.

Is it defensible to backdate American dominance by 45 years? The contention that the United States was a "peerless superpower" throughout the Cold War rewrites an awful lot of history (7), and Brooks and Wohlforth simply do not lay the theoretical groundwork that is necessary to justify such a claim—the implications of which are provocative when followed to their logical conclusions. If the U.S. truly was predominant over the Soviet Union during the Cold War, as the authors claim, then the argument that the U.S. will remain predominant over China should be disquieting rather than reassuring. After all, the Soviet Union caused serious trouble for the United States with what the authors classify as significantly inferior capabilities.

More broadly, backdating U.S. dominance raises the question of how the U.S. relative power position vis-à-vis China today compares to the U.S.-Soviet power gap during the Cold War. If the U.S. was a "peerless superpower" then as now, does today's international structure essentially mirror that of the Cold War? If so, does this mean that China can constrain the U.S. in ways similar to the Soviet Union, truncating the depth of deep engagement? If the structures are not equivalent, on what theoretical basis can we distinguish between them? Most scholars would say that the difference is polarity—i.e., that the Cold War was bipolar and the current system is not. Polarity cannot be the answer for Brooks and Wohlforth, however, because they firmly reject the multipolar/bipolar/unipolar typology as "misleading," "blunt," and "inadequate" to explain change (64-65, 69).

Instead, they propose a tiered framework of 1 + Y + X, which distinguishes the U.S. as the sole superpower but includes two additional categories: potential superpowers, represented by Y, which consists of China today; and run-of-the-mill great powers, represented by X, and including countries like Russia or Japan. The *number* of Y or X powers does not change the system's basic structure; what matters is the number of superpowers, which is 1 (68-71). However, Brooks and Wohlforth do not explain whether 1 + Y + X is generalizable to the Cold War or other eras. Was the Cold War also a period of 1 + Y + X, whereby the Soviet Union was Y and X consisted of Britain, France, Germany, and Japan? Was it simply 1 + Y? Was it 2? Or, does the framework just not apply before 1991? As a result, we are still left without a method by which to compare previous eras to this one.

Depicting the United States as a "peerless superpower" since World War II also downplays the danger of sliding into 'deep engagement plus' by obscuring the constraints on U.S. grand strategy from 1945-1991, which were considerable. Perhaps the United States pursued fewer 'plus'-level policies because there were fewer opportunities to do so when the Soviet Union existed. Balancing by the USSR likely acted as a check on the worst U.S. foreign policy excesses. For example, the 2003 Iraq War—the largest strategic blunder of the last few decades (and 'deep engagement plus' poster child)—would have been unimaginable during the Cold War. The Soviets never would have tolerated a U.S. occupation of a major oil-producing country in their own backyard, and consequently, the United States did not attempt one. Putin did not wish to tolerate the invasion of Iraq either, but by 2003, Russia could not deter U.S. challenges to the status quo. Thus, an opportunity for 'deep engagement plus' existed in 2003 that did not exist in, say, 1953 or 1973. This means that even if we accept Brooks and Wohlforth's periodization that dates deep engagement back 70 years, realistic opportunities to slide into 'plus' still only date back to the end of the Cold War. Thus, the ratio between the years when the U.S. pursued 'plus' policies (2001-2013) versus the years for 'plus' opportunities (1991-2017) remains about 50%.

In the final analysis, *America Abroad* misses some opportunities—arguably the most relevant theoretical question is not the size of the U.S.-China power gap, which Brooks and Wohlforth examine at length, but rather, how the U.S.-China power gap compares to the U.S.-USSR power gap during the Cold War, which the authors hardly broach at all. Yet despite its weaknesses, *America Abroad* is an extremely useful book that should be required reading for all students of U.S. grand strategy.

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German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck once claimed (perhaps apocryphally) that 'God has a special providence for fools, drunks, and the United States of America.' Bismarck's quip, of course, came during the United States' stunning growth in the nineteenth century, its immunity from the vicissitudes of European great power politics, and the comparatively small effort the United States needed to exert during its rise. Nevertheless, Bismarck's aphorism might well serve as the proper subtitle for William Wohlforth and Steven Brooks's excellent—if flawed—recent volume, *America Abroad: The United States' Global Role in the 21st Century*.

Brooks and Wohlforth's work centers on two inter-related questions. The first is a question central to any discussion of U.S. foreign relations: what is the distribution of power in the world today, and how does the United States stack up compared to existing and potential competitors? The second follows from the first: what grand strategy should the United States pursue with the resources at its disposal? As their earlier research and the title of the present volume both imply, their answers are clear: not only does the United States remain far and away the most powerful state in international relations, but active American management of international relations in core geopolitical regions overseas—what they term "Deep Engagement"—is the optimal strategy for ensuring the United States remains a rich and secure nation into the future.[1] This prescription differs markedly from a spate of works—some quite recent—calling for the United States to reduce its overseas presence and husband its resources, as well as policy pressure for the U.S. to pursue an expansive and quasi-transformational overseas agenda.[2] In short, just as the United States of Bismarck's day was rapidly consolidating dominance of the North American continent with little opposition, so too for

[1] For their earlier work, see Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, "Don't Come Home, America: The Case against Retrenchment," *International Security* 37:3 (December 2012), 7-51; Stephen G. Brooks and William C Wohlforth, "The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers in the Twenty-First Century: China's Rise and the Fate of America's Global Position," *International Security* 40:3 (Winter 2015-2016), 7-53.

[2] The literature is voluminous, but see Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for U.S. Grand Strategy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014); Stephen M. Walt, *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006); Stephen M. Walt, "In the National Interest: A Grand New Strategy for American Foreign Policy," *Boston Review* 30:1 (February/March 2005), http://bostonreview.net/BR30.1/walt.php; John J. Mearsheimer, "Pull Those Boots Off the Ground," *Newsweek,* 31 December 2008, http://www.newsweek.com/id/177380; Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press, and Harvey M. Sapolsky, "Come Home, America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation," *International Security* 21:4 (Spring 1997), 5-48; Benjamin H. Friedman, Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press, and Harvey Sapolsky, "Restraining Order: For Strategic Modesty," *World Affairs* (Fall 2009): 84-94; Paul K. MacDonald and Joseph M. Parent, "Graceful Decline? The Surprising Success of Great Power Retrenchment," *International Security* 35:4 (Spring 2011), 7-44; Christopher A. Preble, *Power Problem: How American Military Dominance Makes Us Less Safe, Less Prosperous, and Less Free* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009); Christopher Layne, "From Preponderance to Off- shore Balancing: America's Future Grand Strategy," *International Security* 22:1 (Summer 1997), 86-124; Christopher Layne, "Offshore Balancing Revisited," *The Washington Quarterly* 25:2 (Spring 2002), 233-248.

Brooks and Wohlforth is the U.S. poised to remain preeminent in world affairs in the twenty first century provided it plays its strategic cards right.

The book makes about as good an argument as is possible for the merits of active American management of geopolitical competition in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. A serious piece of scholarship and a powerful attempt to apply theory and history to current policy debates, the project stands as a core contribution to a burgeoning literature on U.S. foreign policy and grand strategy in the early twenty-first century. That said, the work raises more questions than it answers, and is ultimately unconvincing either on its own terms or in theory in making the case for continued 'American Deep Engagement.' Although Brooks and Wohlforth show that the United States retains great power, they are less convincing that the United States' relative strength gives it quite the latitude to pursue the preferred Deep Engagement course. As importantly, even if one allows that Deep Engagement is feasible given the United States' relative power, it is far from clear that Deep Engagement is as attractive, advantageous, or easily sustained as the volume suggests. I return to these points below.

The Argument: Deep Engagement and Its Challengers

Brooks and Wohlforth's is one of the first serious works to emerge in response to a spate of recent research calling for the United States to reduce its overseas presence. In this latter telling—often referred to as 'Restraint' or 'Offshore Balancing'—not only is the United States losing relative ground to states such as China, but active American management of international politics in Europe, Asia, and beyond is at best superfluous and, at worst, self-harming.[3] Here, major states such as Germany, Russia, China, and Japan have the capacity to create security for themselves without the United States. Should a threat to international security emerge, meanwhile, the United States should have the time and resources to partner with other threatened actors to deter, contain, and—if needed—defeat such an aggressor. By projecting its influence abroad, the United States ends up expending its blood and treasure by abetting allied cheap-riding, risks its ensnarement into foreign adventures, and may end up harming its security by cultivating rivalries with major states (e.g., China and Russia) which might otherwise have few issues of contention vis-à-vis the United States.[4]

In response, Brooks and Wohlforth set out to rescue Deep Engagement from its critics. They proceed in sequence. The first part of the volume is a powerful (pun intended) rebuttal to arguments that American

[3] Brooks and Wohlforth prefer the term 'retrenchment' to 'Restraint' or 'Offshore Balancing' in their work. This is an interesting rhetorical choice. By its very nature, 'retrenchment' implies an ongoing process of surrendering ground without an apparent end; Britain's retrenchment from the 1890s-1960s comes to mind. In my opinion, this obscures the logic of Restraint/Offshore Balancing: as Posen, Layne, Mearsheimer, and others (see fn2) indicate, the call for the U.S. to do less in the world is premised on a set of propositions as to how local actors are likely to react to U.S. withdrawal and specifies conditions—particularly the emergence of a potential regional hegemon or peer competitor – that would vitiate the strategy. Moreover, some proponents of Restraint/Offshore Balancing are quite precise in the regions where they envision the U.S. doing less—it is not a universalist impulse to pull back. Although advocates of the strategy do not always agree among themselves with how little the U.S. should do in the world, the general call deserves a proper noun.

[4] For the most developed treatment, see Posen, *Restraint*.

strength is waning relative to potential challengers.[5] In fact, the authors argue that U.S. power across a wide array of economic and military indicators is nearly as robust today as it was at the height of the United States' post-Cold War moment. Even China – often touted as a nascent peer competitor to the United States – is only an 'emerging' superpower that remains far behind the United States and unlikely to soon be in a position to challenge the United States. Although, as the authors acknowledge, China's rise means that the distribution of power is no longer as robustly weighted in the United States' favor as it once was, the power structure of the post-Cold War world remains intact.[6]

Having proposed that the United States retains the capacity to pursue whatever grand strategy it chooses, the authors lay out the case for Deep Engagement, drawing upon an impressive array of scholarly and policy reports to highlight the strategy's virtues. Not coincidentally, the same research is employed to critique the logic underlying Restraint arguments and—notably—alternative calls for a transformational American grand strategy involving extensive efforts at regime change and the assertive use of force to coerce or defeat U.S. adversaries (what the book labels 'Deep Engagement Plus'). In brief, Deep Engagement is found to afford the United States numerous advantages both directly and compared to its alternatives.

First, through active involvement in core geopolitical regions abroad, the United States is able to deter prospective challenges to the status quo even while finding ways of reassuring powerful allies such as Britain, Germany, and Japan. Second, these security advantages provide the United States leverage over other major international players. This ostensibly helps the U.S. structure diplomatic relations, international institutions, and economic affairs in ways that reinforce the United States' relative power while avoiding situations (e.g., major-power conflict) that might disrupt the global economy and harm American welfare. Finally, these efforts are economically and strategically sustainable. After all, not only is the United States able to extract economic and military concessions from its overseas partners that offset the direct costs of American engagement, but the risk of unwanted involvement in foreign imbroglios is manageable as well: not only can the U.S. defect from an alliance if the situation warrants, but the U.S. is comparatively well-positioned to reassure prospective adversaries of the United States' benign intentions. Deep Engagement, in short, helps the United States shape international affairs in ways conducive to its interests at comparatively limited cost and risk. Restraint, in contrast, risks squandering many of these gains for little obvious benefit by needlessly underdoing the foundations of the American state's postwar dominance; conversely, Deep Engagement Plus risks undercutting the United States' position by squandering resources on fruitless foreign adventures while inviting counterbalancing. In short, provided the United States sticks to Deep Engagement while avoiding the temptations of either doing too little (Restraint) or too much (Deep Engagement Plus) in the world, the U.S. will retain a winning grand strategy for the foreseeable future.

Critiquing Deep Engagement

The book is excellent. At the most general level, Brooks and Wohlforth have done scholars a great service by breaking down Restraint, Deep Engagement, and Deep Engagement Plus into their constituent causal

[5] See Brooks and Wohlforth, *America Abroad*, chaps. 1-2.

[6] For a similar argument on the distribution of power, see Michael Beckley, "China's Century? Why America's Edge Will Endure," *International Security* 36:3 (Winter 2012): 41-78; for debates, see Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shifrinson and Michael Beckley, "Debating China's Rise and U.S. Decline," *International Security* 37:3 (December 2012): 172-181.

propositions and subjecting them to real scrutiny. In doing so, and while making the case for Deep Engagement, Brooks and Wohlforth effectively lay out a competing model of modern international relations that, although in the realist wheelhouse, breaks from many existing frameworks. Much of the grand strategy literature today draws implicitly or explicitly from balance-ofpower versions of realism.[7] In contrast, Brooks and Wohlforth's model owes far more to varieties of hegemonic stability theory, depicting a world in which (1) there are high barriers to entry for a state to join the great power ranks; (2) institutions, diplomacy, and economic interactions are heavily structured to asymmetrically benefit existing great powers; and (3) powerful states thus have a variety of means to keep potential challengers in check.[8] In today's system with the U.S. the sole superpower, the net result creates a dynamic where the United States stands to benefit greatly from the status quo, paying few costs and bearing minimal risks. Even if one does not agree with this depiction of international relations, the fact that scholars are making such an argument in serious form advances both the grand strategy debate and international relations theory more generally.

That said, the book is not entirely persuasive. Several issues stand out in terms of how the book conceptualizes and measures the distribution of power, alongside the ability of the United States to project influence in the world and the costs/risks it bears in this process. None of these amounts to a critical failing for the volume, but each pushes against the ringing endorsement of Deep Engagement as presented.

First, one wonders whether the current distribution of power is so sharply weighted in the United States' favor as Brooks and Wohlforth claim. Indeed, one of the oldest debates in international relations concerns how we should conceptualize and measure hard power. In the late nineteenth century, for instance, the quest to find some systematic way of measuring economic and military performance led analysts to turn to an array of trade, financial, and military figures of questionable utility; even then, the measures chosen were recognized as the best of comparatively bad alternatives.[9] Likewise, the late Cold War saw strategists in both the East and West debate how relative economic and military strength could and should be compared; no resolution was truly reached before the Cold War ended.[10] Given this history, the claim that more modern metrics of hard power—innovation levels, environmental sustainability, capacity to produce cutting-edge military technology, and so on—should be favored over other, more traditional metrics of power (e.g., GDP) that suggest a comparatively faster relative decline in U.S. strength comes across as problematic. Indicators are theoretical

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[7] Foundational works in balance of power theory include Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1979); Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations; the Struggle for Power and Peace*, 2nd ed. (New York: Knopf, 1954).

[8] The seminal work of hegemonic stability theory remains Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); for a useful recent extension, see William Wohlforth, "Hegemonic Decline and Hegemonic War Revisited," in *Power, Order, and Change in World Politics*, ed. G. John Ikenberry (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[9] A good discussion of debates over British strength can be found in Aaron Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

[10] Indeed, Wohlforth's early work remains the best treatment; William C. Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions During the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); a good retrospective on the economic side of these debates can be found in Gertrude E. Schroeder, "Reflections on Economic Sovietology," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 11:3 (July 1995): 197-234.

constructs themselves, reflecting what analysts believe to matter in shaping some set of behaviors. Although it may be true that classic measures of strength such as GDP are less relevant for the modern world, it may just as likely be true that the more 'modern' indicators Brooks and Wohlforth prefer are wrong. After all, not only does it often take all-out war for the true distribution of power to be revealed,[11] but history is replete with examples of statesmen—especially in declining states—relying on overly-rosy metrics of their state's strength.[12] Ultimately, the claim that U.S. strength remains fundamentally intact is a provocative one grounded in a spate of recent studies, but one which is also questionable.

A deeper problem relates to how the project depicts the United States' ability to interface with allies and prospective adversaries. To have the volume tell it, the assertion of American power (1) dampens local spirals of insecurity and (2) deters potential adversaries, both of which are feasible because the U.S. can also (3) reassure prospective opponents that it is a status quo actor that will (a) not threaten their security unless provoked, and (b) protect allies and sustain deterrence in the breach. In short, the case for Deep Engagement relies on a claim that the United States is both incredibly strong and benign, which helps reassure friends and foes alike.

Again, one wonders about the logic linking these claims. At a basic level, it seems difficult to sustain that the U.S. can simultaneously dampen spirals of insecurity without courting conflict with other actors. Indeed, projecting power on an ally's behalf means that the U.S. must meaningfully risk conflict with an ally's adversaries—taking on, as Eugene Gholz has observed, an ally's conflicts as its own.[13] Not only does this significantly diminish the United States' ability to reassure states which may be threatened by or involved in insecurity spirals with American allies—after all, the U.S. is effectively acting on behalf of their opponents—but it gives the threatened actors strong incentives to build up to offset American advantages.[14] Of course, as Brooks and Wohlforth rightly suggest, the rate of such counterbalancing is constrained by current American

[11] For war as a strength-revealing event, see Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War*, 3rd ed. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988).

[12] Thus, British strategists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries expected that gains from 'invisible trade' would help offset British economic problems, while the invisible bonds of a common culture would help keep the British Empire together as a political and military unit in the face of external and internal pressures. Similarly, policymakers in the late Cold War Soviet Union expected a unifying Communist ideology to sustain the political, economic, and military integrity of the Warsaw Pact, COMECON, and Soviet Union itself despite Soviet economic and political decline. Meanwhile, planners in pre-1914 Austria-Hungary recognized the objective military and economic problems of the monarchy, but still hoped that the unifying institutions and symbols of the monarchy would help knit the empire together and sustain it should war erupt. On these issues, see Friedberg, *Weary Titan*; Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016); Mark Kramer, "The Collapse of East European Communism and the Repercussions within the Soviet Union (Part 1)," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 5:4 (Fall 2003), 178-256.

[13] Gholz comments to Cato Institute conference, "The Case for Restraint in U.S. Foreign Policy," 15 June 2016, Washington, D.C.

[14] Put differently, states balanced when threatened, and a massively powerful United States acting on behalf of local clients is likely to be highly threatening to other regional actors. For an early and related discussion of the problems posed by U.S. post-Cold War preponderance, see Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise," *International Security* 17:4 (April 1993): 5-51.

advantages and the risks that a buildup will court further conflict with a powerful U.S. Nevertheless, the logic of Deep Engagement itself strongly suggests that regional and local actors, faced with an assertive U.S. that may operate in ways inimical to their interests, will move as rapidly as possible below a level likely to provoke conflict to offset American strength. The United States' ability to reassure opponents, protect allies, and sustain the status quo may therefore not be quite as stable as the argument suggests.

In turn, expanding American involvement on behalf of partners and a diminished ability to reassure prospective opponents courts a growing risk of American entrapment or entanglement in foreign conflicts. Here, however, one again runs into a contestable aspect of the Brooks and Wohlforth thesis. Citing Michael Beckley's work, *America Abroad* discounts the risk of entrapment by noting the U.S. can always defect from an alliance in the breach, or otherwise craft escape clauses and workarounds to avoid unwanted involvement in foreign conflicts.[15] Yet, while intuitively plausible, this logic begins to break down a bit upon further examination. Allies, for one, would have little reason to trust American assurances if the U.S. were prone to defect from an alliance when U.S. interests alone so dictated.[16] Put differently, forming an alliance requires two or more states to accept that their security interests are interwoven and take risks that they would otherwise avoid on behalf of their partners. By definition, this increases the threat of entrapment and entanglement (a problem compounded if opponents are prone to worry about U.S. intentions and so take more assertive stances against the U.S. and its allies).

Likewise, and as debates over what NATO's Article V actually requires states to do, alliance deals are rarely so stable and precise that states party to an alliance will not haggle, hard-bargain, and try to manipulate their partners into actions the partners would otherwise try to avoid.[17] This incentive, notably, should be particularly large if (as Brooks and Wohlforth have it) the United States is so much more powerful than prospective challengers. Here, the value to having the U.S. intervene gives U.S. partners great incentive to try to undercut U.S. efforts to avoid entrapment.[18] Although Brooks and Wohlforth have a plausible case that the risk of entrapment can be avoided in any given instance, it seems difficult to argue that these risks can be universally avoided. At the end of the day, Deep Engagement's call for sustained American engagement abroad significantly increases the number of alliances through which the U.S. may be entrapped or entangled, thereby raising U.S. exposure to these problems over time. Again, Deep Engagement seems not quite as stable as the project proposes.

[15] Michael Beckley, "The Myth of Entangling Alliances: Reassessing the Security Risks of U.S. Defense Pacts," *International Security* 39:4 (April 2015): 7-48.

[16] As Glenn Snyder noted long ago, entrapment and abandonment work at cross purposes: the more an ally tries to hedge against the threat of entrapment, the more it is likely to cause its allies to fear abandonment. Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics* 36:4 (July 1984): 461-495.

[17] On the intentional ambiguity over NATO Article V, see Timothy Ireland, *Creating the Entangling Alliance* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981). For recent work underscoring the inherent ambiguity of Article V, see Joshua Shifrinson, "Time to Consolidate NATO?" *The Washington Quarterly* 40:1 (Spring 2017), 115.

[18] Making a similar point are Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shifrinson and David Edelstein, "It's a Trap! Security Commitments and the Risks of Entrapment" in Ben Friedman and Trevor Thrall, eds., *US Grand Strategy in the 21st Century: The Case for Restraint in U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

Of course, entrapment/entanglement risks and fraught relations with local opponents would not be problematic if American strength is such that the U.S. could easily swat aside or sidestep any pushback it encounters. Again, however, the situation seems more complex than the case for Deep Engagement allows. To be sure, the U.S. has the ability to produce cutting-edge military technologies that often afford the U.S. meaningful advantages with real or prospective adversaries. When married to highly trained American forces and sustained by a technologically-advanced economy, the result is a potent instrument of statecraft that few, if any, other states have the capacity to match. Drawing on these insights, alongside the observation that the U.S. can spend more on defense and find operational workarounds to issues such as anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) capabilities, *America Abroad* suggests that the U.S. can, at a minimum, ultimately overcome others' efforts to balance American might. Recent U.S. military engagements and defense policy adjustments, however, indicate that this issue is not as settled as the volume implies. On one level, policymakers across the Obama and Trump administrations have called for increased defense spending to offset other states' growing defense efforts; strikingly, this comes on top of U.S. military expenditures that are already over one-third of the global total.[19] Nor is it defense spending alone that matters. As the late Obama administration's defense priorities underscored, the proliferation of once-advanced technologies to real or potential American adversaries has significantly raised the cost of the U.S. 'doing business' (my term) in or near these countries, requiring significant and sustained U.S. steps to find ways of maintaining U.S. military leads.[20]

In short, it is far from clear that the United States' ability to produce and sustain leading edge military power is sufficient to ensure U.S. strategic dominance going forward. Although framed as a status quo strategy, Deep Engagement obviously involves quite a bit of American offense to reassure allies and deter or defeat local adversaries.[21] Nevertheless, it seems that even technologically and militarily inferior opponents can meaningfully raise the costs to such U.S. actions, requiring the U.S. to either work harder than in the past to pursue its interests, or to surrender on some issues. In the parlance of an older research tradition, today's

[19] See, e.g., Philip Ewing, "Fact Check: Has President Obama 'Depleted the Military?'" *NPR News*, 29 April 2016, http://www.npr.org/2016/04/29/476048024/fact-check-has-president-obama-depleted-the-military; Natalie Stanley, "Air Force Risks Becoming Too Small to Succeed Under Sequestration," *Air Force News*, 28 January 2015, http://www.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/562760/air-force-risks-becoming-too-small-to-succeed-under-sequestration/; Benjamin Friedman, "The Pentagon's Bloat," *Boston Globe*, op-ed, 17 February 2015; Michael D. Shear and Jennifer Steinhauer, "Trump to Seek $54 Billion Increase in Military Spending," *New York Times*, 27 February 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/27/us/politics/trump-budget-military.html; Ryan Browne and Jeremy Herb, "Congressional Republicans see Trump's Defense Budget Hike as Insufficient," *CNN*, 23 May 2017, http://www.cnn.com/2017/05/23/politics/trump-defense-budget-increase/index.html. Military expenditure figures from Nan Tian et al., "Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2016," *SIPRI Fact Sheet*, April 2017, https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/Trends-world-military-expenditure-2016.pdf.

[20] Mackenzie Eaglen, "What is the Third Offset Strategy?" *Real Clear Defense*, 15 February 2016, https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2016/02/16/what_is_the_third_offset_strategy_109034.html; Kathleen Hicks et al., *Assessing the Third Offset Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: CSIS, 2017).

[21] Useful analyses in the China context are found in Joshua Rovner, "AirSea Battle and Escalation Risks," Policy Brief 12 (January 2012), http://escholarship.org/uc/item/08m367zt; Caitlin Talmadge, "Would China Go Nuclear? Assessing the Risk of Chinese Nuclear Escalation in a Conventional War with the United States," *International Security* 41:4 (Spring 2017): 50-92.

international system thus seems to advantage the defense over the offense.[22] Indeed, a defense-dominant system would help explain both the aforementioned calls for greater defense spending and technological innovation while accounting for U.S. difficulties in offsetting such militarily inferior countries as Serbia (e.g., the 1999 Kosovo War) and China.[23] If so, then we should expect comparatively weak and backwards countries to be able to better oppose U.S. policies over time, while requiring asymmetrically more expensive American efforts to overcome this opposition – it will become progressively more difficult to surmount sustained local opposition by adversaries that are inferior in technology and skill to the United States. Ultimately, Brooks and Wohlforth may be correct that the U.S. can invest heavily in its military and produce a highly capable force, but there remain good reasons to suspect these investments may not produce the strategic payoffs expected, nor be sustainable, given others' military options.

Finally, what of the ability of the U.S. government itself to remain coolly focused on Deep Engagement and avoid the temptations of overstretch? This is one of the curiously underdeveloped portions of the volume. Brooks and Wohlforth rightly note that Restrainers see a virtue in foreclosing the United States' strategic options, if only to avoid the temptation of engaging in windmill-tilting exercises like the 2003 Iraq War. By the same token, they acknowledge that Deep Engagement Plus—which would embrace more Iraqs and a hyper-muscular and value-laden foreign policy—would void many of the advantages of Deep Engagement. Still, even if one prefers to avoid Restrainers' calls to tie American hands, the issue of how one precludes Deep Engagement from transforming into Deep Engagement Plus remains. Brooks and Wohlforth devote scant attention to the matter in practice, but the problem looms large.

We now know that the United States quickly expanded its foreign ambitions in the post-Cold War world. Although strategists in 1991 remained formally wedded simply to sustaining Deep Engagement's core, interest in spreading U.S. influence, promoting American values (even at point of an M-16) far and wide, or engaging in expansive and expensive regime change operations was bubbling beneath the surface.[24] In fact, it

[22] Great confusion surrounds the concepts of offense- and defense-dominant systems, let alone how to measure whether a situation favors the offense or defense. As used here, offense dominant systems are ones where it is comparatively inexpensive to invest in tools that can be readily used to attack other states, such that actors can reap a meaningful grand strategic advantage by attacking an opponent upon the outbreak of hostilities; defense dominant systems, in contrast, denote situations where it is comparatively inexpensive to invest in tools that can repel or blunt an attack, such that grand strategic advantages are found in forgoing military offensives. Standard works of "offense-defense theory" include Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30:2 (January 1978): 167-214; Charles L. Glaser and Chaim Kaufmann, "What Is the Offense-Defense Balance and Can We Measure It?," *International Security* 22:4 (Spring 1998): 44-82.

[23] On Serbia, see author Barry R. Posen, "The War for Kosovo: Serbia's Political-Military Strategy," *International Security* 4 (2000): 39-84; on China, see Eric Heginbotham et al., *The U.S.-China Military Scorecard: Forces, Geography, and the Evolving Balance of Power* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2015). See also Eugene Gholz, "Why U.S. Strategy Must Adapt to Technological Change," *World Politics Review*, 18 April 2017.

[24] For early debates, see Eric S. Edelman, "The Strange Career of the 1992 Defense Planning Guidance," in *In Uncertain Times: American Foreign Policy After the Berlin Wall and 9/11*, ed. Melvyn P Leffler and Jeffrey Legro (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 63–77; Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shifrinson, "Deal or No Deal? The End of the Cold War and the U.S. Offer to Limit NATO Expansion," *International Security* 40:4 (Spring 2016): 7-44; for the post-Cold War evolution of U.S. grand strategy, see Derek H. Chollet and James M. Goldgeier, *America Between the Wars: From 11/9 to*

took barely one decade for the United States' initial post-1991 Deep Engagement to transform by 2003 into a Deep Engagement Plus strategy that—as public discussion and elite votes for the Iraq War evinced—enjoyed widespread bipartisan support.[25] If U.S. power is truly as robust as Brooks and Wohlforth allege, then these same temptations will remain—prior American behavior strongly suggests that Deep Engagement is prone to giving way to Deep Engagement plus. One wonders, therefore, what is to be done to avoid Deep Engagement Plus from rearing its head. Certainly, as Brooks and Wohlforth allow, external pressures alone are unlikely to keep the U.S. in check—at root, the absence of a peer competitor in the 1990s-2000s allowed American grand strategy to run unchecked. This pushes attention towards domestic solutions to Deep Engagement Plus. Here, however, the liberal impetus in U.S. politics and the consequent desire to pursue a values-based policy abroad, as well as the open nature of U.S. policymaking which allows interest groups to promote their preferred policies, suggests that domestic forces alone are unlikely to keep the U.S. away from foreign adventurism. Neither domestic nor international factors, then, seem poised to prevent Deep Engagement from transforming into the bête noire of Deep Engagement Plus.

In sum, while Brooks and Wohlforth treat Deep Engagement Plus as a harmful alternative to their preferred strategy, another reading of the grand strategy debate in light of prior U.S. experience suggests that Deep Engagement Plus is the cost one pays to occasionally have Deep Engagement. If so, however, the virtues of Deep Engagement begin to diminish. Defined this way, the grand strategy debate is not so much whether Restraint – and the accompanying uncertainties any fundamental alteration in U.S. policy would bring—is to be valued more or less than Deep Engagement. Rather, the issue becomes whether the risks of Restraint are less than or equal to (1) the risks of Deep Engagement, and (2) the added risk of Deep Engagement's transformation into Deep Engagement Plus. Recent U.S. experience indicates that one cannot have the Dr. Jekyll of Deep Engagement without the Mr. Hyde of Deep Engagement Plus; the merits of Deep Engagement thus become significantly more contestable both absolutely and relative to the Restraint alternative.

Conclusion

These problems aside, Brooks and Wohlforth have done researchers and practitioners a service. No issue in U.S. foreign policy and international security today elicits as much attention from policymakers and scholars alike as what the fundamental premises of U.S. engagement in the world should entail. Nearly a quarter century after the U.S. decided to modify its Cold War strategy for a post-Cold War world, the grand strategy debate is again in flux with Restraint in its various forms gaining more traction than at any other time since, perhaps, the early postwar period. In evaluating the claims of Restraint against the logic of Deep Engagement, Brooks and Wohlforth have set the stage for further progress in this debate by crystallizing (1) the logic of Deep Engagement, (2) the areas where Deep Engagement, Restraint, and Deep Engagement Plus disagree, and (3) in so doing, identifying areas of the grand strategy discussion that need systematic research from scholars and open deliberations by policymakers. Not only does the result push proponents of Restraint to better elucidate their claims and the evidence that would support their propositions, but it also pushes proponents of Deep Engagement to better explain how their preferred grand strategy is to be sustained given

9/11: The Misunderstood Years Between the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the Start of the War on Terror, 1st ed. (New York: BBS PublicAffairs, 2008).

[25] Barry R. Posen, "Stability and Change in U.S. Grand Strategy," *Orbis* 51:4 (October 2007): 561-567.

the risk of Deep Engagement Plus. Although the argument in favor of Deep Engagement is not fully persuasive, this does not diminish the great virtues of the volume. At the end of the day, this work exemplifies how progress can and should be made on policy and scholarly issues alike. In an era of alt-facts and spin, who could ask for anything more?

Review by Tony Smith, Tufts University, Emeritus

America Abroad is essentially an exercise in Realist academic theory intended to help formulate a role for United States foreign policy in the twenty-first century. Although the book was completed before Donald Trump's election as president, one would be mistaken to think that it was dated just as it appeared. Because the study is theoretically focused on thinking about the current distribution of power in the international system and what that means for the security of the United States, this book's shelf-life is assured.

The opening chapters provide an excellent, comprehensive review of Sino-American relative power positions for today and the foreseeable future (let's say at least the next generation). While the authors repeatedly acknowledge the striking growth of Chinese abilities on multiple dimensions over the last several decades, they mount a strong argument—backed by the analysis of extensive statistics—that the United States will easily outstrip Beijing's power position for some time into the future (chapters 2-3, but elsewhere as well). I am no expert on this question, but I know a good argument when I see one, and that is what they have presented.

Brooks and Wohlforth then turn their attention to the question of what to do with this extended period of American international hegemony. Here debate turns into an analysis of three alternative Realist worldviews: "retrenchment" (think Barry Posen, "deep engagement" (Brooks and Wohlforth's position), and "engagement plus" (their targets are less clear here, but take Robert Kagan, whom they do not name).[1]

Distinguishing among these three Realist approaches to world affairs is difficult for the simple reason that the centrist position favored by the authors, deep engagement, almost by default declares itself to be immune to shortcomings that can be identified with the two others and so the obvious course to be followed. To be fair, by focusing on work such as that of Posen, our authors give us some idea of what retrenchment sounds like and why they disagree. But what they mean by "engagement plus," presumably a continuation of neo-conservative policies of the sort favored by Kagan, is not fleshed out except to say that nation- and state-building efforts abroad should be abandoned. More, the book fails adequately to rebut the likely charges of each of the others that "deep engagement" is in fact "retrenchment" (in the eyes of the "Plus" crowd) or alternatively a continuation of the "Plus" strategy (in the eyes of those who are labeled in favor of "retrenchment").

A strength of the book is in chapters 5 to 9, which lay out the gains to be made for the United States by a combination of economic, institutional, and security arrangements that have served it well in the past and that might continue to do so in the future. Of course, all this with a proviso: that the United States neither retrenches nor tries the impossible. The book is therefore a reminder of what the U.S. was able to accomplish since the end of World War II and a welcome call to remember these ingredients of success as it acts now and in the future in the world arena.

It is at this point, however, that the book enters into troubled waters and this for two reasons.

[1] Barry Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for U.S. Grand Strategy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014); Robert Kagan, *The World America Made* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012).

First, locked as they are in the arena of combat among Realists, Brooks and Wohlforth do not seem to realize that their "Grand Strategy" for "deep engagement" as laid out in chapter four is nothing other than liberal internationalism, the Wilsonian agenda. Set out implicitly by the twenty-eighth president in 1918-1919 as he contemplated how to win the peace after winning the Great War, Woodrow Wilson's mixture of support for democratic governments, world economic openness, multilateral institutions, and American leadership became the agenda adopted by Franklin D. Roosevelt and his successors (in different ways) from at least 1940 on. With the Bretton Woods system, Occupation policy for Germany and Japan, the Marshall Plan, and the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (to which one could add many other achievements of the 1940s including the United Nations), Washington laid the groundwork for eventual victory in the Cold War. One may debate how consciously this grand strategy was held by leaders in the White House and Congress, but the problem for a Realist volume is that to recognize that the argument supports traditional liberal internationalism requires crossing the self-imposed boundary that limits the analysis by theoretical borders. This is clearly revealed when the authors lay out most of the elements of liberal internationalism as characteristic of Cold War "deep engagement" and then mistakenly give it the Realist name "containment" (75, and by implication 80 where they talk of "Realism 101").

They pay a high price for their theoretical blinders. For on the opening page of chapter four (and thereafter) they make democracy promotion an "add-on" to be distrusted, as distinct from what they call "the grand strategy debate" (73). In fact, democracy promotion, where the ground was fertile for it to succeed, as in Germany, was the cornerstone of liberal grand strategy and so of our authors' "deep engagement." Only if the peoples of Western Europe (and beyond, as in Czechoslovakia) were democratic would the economic openness, multilateralism, and correspondence with American leadership work in a synchronized fashion. This is simply a basic error in historical analysis (call it "Liberalism 101") and should be standard knowledge to any exercise in IR theory.

It is true that following the Cold War, and thanks to the imperialist decision to force democracy on others that was born of neo-liberal and neo-conservative thinking in the 1990s, we arrived at what Brooks and Wohlforth label "engagement plus" and the disasters that this self-righteous self-confidence unleashed (which they rightly criticize 82-3). But because they ignore liberal internationalism's impact on American foreign policy, they fail to see the essential distinction between the "protection" of democracy from communism as the keystone of the Cold War and instead confuse it with the kind of promotion by force we saw in Iraq and thereafter. The "seven decades the United States has pursued a singular grand strategy—'deep engagement'"—(as the opening sentence of chapter four declares) actually had a breaking point after its first half century. With the Bush Doctrine, the defense of democracy was replaced with an offensive determination to spread such a system of society and government. As Samuel Huntington had warned in the mid-1990s, the result was to unleash a clash of civilizations which we continue to suffer from today. Failing to make this distinction is no small matter.[2]

The second problem arises from the first. For if the book had a richer understanding of what is involved in the liberal internationalist agenda of deep engagement, Brooks and Wohlforth might not have been so confident that we can go back to resurrect a time now far behind us. Take the future of the European Union where Humpty Dumpty is unlikely to be put back together again at all easily. It was already apparent when

[2] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

this book was written that between Russian pressures, the economic strains caused by certain member states and banks, issues raised by migration, and now by Brexit that the key role played by the European Union and NATO in American foreign policy is in danger of implosion, with little that Washington can do to right these multiple crises. Even if President Trump's current arguments make a bad situation worse, just what would he do were he to embrace "deep engagement?"

Nor do our authors propose how to improve the regulation of the international economy so as to control the anarchy of an open world economy system and to save democracy from the hands of big capital and finance through cooperative measures. To be sure, they look at some length at economic trends as evidence of underlying currents of power in world affairs (chapter ten and elsewhere). Yet they complacently find that the character of international economic relations has served American interests in a variety of ways, but fail to see that today the foundations of democratic constitutionalism seem to be crumbling, taking with them any hope of "deep engagement."

China's rise in East Asia, Russia's growing influence in Europe, the failure of American policy in the Middle East—what does "deep engagement" say about these events, which, for the most part, are independent of Washington's ability to reverse the trends? Apparently, we can still 'party like it's 1991,' with the virtuous pursuit of open markets, participation in multilateral institutions, support for human rights and democracy promotion where feasible, all under the political and military protection of the American eagle.

I would suggest that the very evolution of "deep engagement" into "deep engagement plus" led to an unchecked international capitalism combined with disastrous imperialist ventures which together created much of the groundwork for America's inability to recapture an earlier period. The most obvious breach with the past comes in rising economic insecurity among vast sectors of the American population combined with security fears—both of which were used as tools of populist uprising by Donald Trump in his successful campaign for the presidency. In short, there may well be no going back to the *status quo ante*. By leaving out any speculation on the likely future of democratic government in today's world, our authors miss the major stake that is up for grabs. Presumably, if a fascistic America arises from our current dilemmas it will not matter to Realist theory, ever confident of its ability to monitor changes in the relative Balance of Power, (The reply that the Trump administration does not seem set to embrace "deep engagement" leaves my point unanswered.)

One other example of the deaf ear of this book is telling: its disregard for America's wars in Vietnam and Iraq by assessing only the relative power position of the United States despite these terrible wars. Whatever the cost of millions of lives lost in these struggles (Afghanistan and Libya should be thrown into the mix), Brooks and Wohlforth assume that the world remains uni-polar for the time being. They dismiss concern about the moral and practical tragedies of Vietnam and the Muslim world as part of a "syndrome" (151). For Realists all that matters is the structure of power conceived globally (as the neo-conservatives first instructed us to do and as these Realists now do as well). Such offhand remarks are not simply shocking in moral terms but shallow theoretically as well. In a word, defeat matters, just as income inequality matters, to the sort of government we have and the way world affairs evolve in American interactions with other governments—but such considerations are no bother to those who see America still as supreme. Their willingness to spare us moral pieties with their dismissal of the tragedies of Vietnam and Iraq/Afghanistan/Libya only underscores how Realism blinds its proponents to, as the book's subtitle puts it, "the United States' Global Role in the 21st Century."

Author's Response by Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, Dartmouth College

We knew when we started research on *America Abroad* back in 2012 that the two questions it addresses were *the* big questions about the United States' global role: "Will the United States long continue to be the only superpower in the international system? And if so, should it maintain its effort to actively shape the global environment by continuing to be deeply engaged in the world" (3). After years of research we arrived at positive answers, and we are gratified to see that notwithstanding their criticisms, most of the reviewers in this forum agree that the questions we address are more important and relevant than ever.

When we began reporting our results a few years ago, many audiences—especially in Washington, D.C.—questioned the 'policy relevance' of our deep dive into whether the U.S. should stay engaged or pull back. We do not get that question anymore: the arrival of a new and decidedly unconventional U.S. presidential administration has created more uncertainty throughout the world about America's willingness to sustain its leadership role than at any time since the Cold War dawned 75 years ago.

Concerning America's material ability to sustain that role, the book's preface issues a call to avoid 'headline chasing' when it comes to assessing global power trends. The message in current headlines could hardly be clearer: Not since the days of Presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev have concerns over America's decline and expectations of another superpower's rise to challenge or supplant the United States been so strong. Analysts now routinely proclaim that China is now or will soon be another superpower, replacing or at least matching the United States

Uncertainty about America's leadership role and seeming certainty about China's rise combine to make the analysis presented in *America Abroad* more salient than ever. How damaging are the arguments presented in the reviews here to that analysis? You will not be surprised to learn that that our answer is 'not very,' even though each reviewer engages thoughtfully with the book and raises good points. All told, these four responses add up to around 25 pages of material containing dozens of arguments. To do justice to everything would require almost as much space and make this symposium too hard to digest.

To avoid this problem, we respond to the point each reviewer raises that strikes us as being most important to advance the conversation. Accordingly, we set aside three sets of arguments that the reviewers address:

a) points we have dealt with extensively before—such as Joshua Shifrinsons's discussion of the "temptation" problem[1];
b) points that we agree with; indeed, the only way we could have constructed the argument we did was if we recognized and appreciated them—such as Bruce Jentleson's discussion of the low utility of military power for achieving changes in the status quo;

[1] See *America Abroad,* chaps 8-9; Stephen Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William Wohlforth, "Don't Come Home, America: The Case against Retrenchment," *International Security* 37:3 (Winter 2012/13): 28-33; and Stephen Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William Wohlforth, "Lean Forward: In Defense of American Engagement," *Foreign Affairs* 92:1 (January/February 2013): 135-137.

c) 'ships passing in the night' type criticisms where the reviewers think we are saying things we do not say—such as Tony Smith's interpretation that we "dismiss the concern about the moral and practical tragedies of Vietnam and the Muslim world as part of 'syndrome'."

Rosemary Kelanic's main criticism concerns our "decision to backdate the rise of U.S. preeminence—and deep engagement along with it—to the post-World War II era rather than the end of the Cold War, against conventional wisdom." In a sentence on page 7, we did indeed say that the US was a "peerless superpower" throughout the Cold War. In saying this, we certainly never meant to imply that the U.S. was as unconstrained before as after the USSR's fall. We simply meant to reiterate the conventional view that even in the Cold War the United States possessed critical advantages over its superpower rival. Kelanic's review helps us to see how our intense focus on assessing change in a one-superpower world created ambiguity. Having criticized the analytical utility of polarity for assessing change in a one-superpower system, we never apply our favored "1+X" framework to the Cold War era. We did clarify in chapter 9 that while both the United States and the Soviet Union were superpowers, only the U.S. had the economic heft to organize the global economy. And we stressed in chapter 3 that (unlike China today) for much of the Cold War the USSR was America's technological peer. (In addition, in other works we made it clear that U.S. and USSR were both superpowers, though the U.S. had key advantages, and that the post-1991 era ushered in an unprecedentedly unconstrained strategic environment for the U.S.[2])

But all that is too fuzzy, and Kelanic is right to call us out on this ambiguity. Had we received her comment in time, our analysis would have been stronger and clearer. Had we done so, it seems certain that in our framework the very early Cold War was 2 superpowers plus 1 X (1 great power—Great Britain). With time, the X term grew to include other major powers like France, Germany, and China. But as most observers did not realize at time (though Kenneth Waltz did) more X powers did not change the fundamental nature of the system. For that, the number of superpowers had to change. With a bit of work, we believe the framework could easily be developed to handle the core assessment problem of the latter Cold War: how to track the trajectory of a state declining from superpower towards the X category.

'Backdating' deep engagement to the Cold War era, however, is simply not controversial. Given its economic, naval, and geographical advantages over the Soviet Union, the Cold War-era United States had the means and motive to conceive and implement the globally engaged grand strategy we detail. America's decision not to junk that grand strategy after the Soviet Union's collapse is what called forth the clarion call for retrenchment, which is perhaps best exemplified by canonical contribution to that huge genre, Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press and Harvey M. Sapolsky's 1997 paper "Come Home, America."[3] And it is precisely the continuation of this same basic grand strategy that is so puzzling to many who now favor retrenchment; in this regard, Stephen Walt stresses:

[2] Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "The Rise and Fall of Great Powers in the 21st Century: China's Rise and the Fate of America's Global Position," *International Security* 40:3 (Winter 2015/16): 7-48.

[3] Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press, and Harvey M. Sapolsky, "Come Home, America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation," *International Security* 21:4 (Spring 1997), 5-48.

> "Here's the puzzle: the Soviet Union disappeared in 1992, and no rival of equal capacity has yet emerged. Yet somehow "deep engagement" is *still* the optimal strategy in these radically different geopolitical circumstances. It's possible that U.S. leaders in the late 1940s hit on the ideal grand strategy for any and all structural conditions, but it is surely odd that an event as significant as the Soviet collapse can have so few implications for how America deals with the other 190-plus countries around the globe."[4]

Tony Smith zeroes in on something the book lacks: a positive argument for when and how the United States should seek to promote democracy in the world. We were crystal clear about two things: democracy promotion is not in fact a constant, defining feature of deep engagement, and big military interventions are a bad way to spread democracy. On the second issue—the futility of seeking to spread democracy as a headline goal of big military interventions—there is no dispute: we and Smith are in complete agreement. Smith rejects the first claim, and we are not sure how to resolve this debate in the confines of this symposium other than to refer readers to chapter 4 in which we develop this point. The point is not actually that controversial. To demonstrate it, all we need do is show that deep engagement has been pursued for lengthy periods without emphasizing democracy promotion (and even often acting at cross-purposes to that aim), which is easy to accomplish and which we do in chapter 4. That does not deny that democracy promotion played a big role at times, especially in the unique circumstances of the aftermath of World War II.

But having established these two negative arguments, the book does not contain a theory or framework for deciding when it might make sense to push a democracy agenda and how to do so. Even today, we remain unsure how to develop such a framework. We do not believe the U.S. should never seek to advance democracy. All we can say—again it is a negative point rather than a positive one—is that our analysis would reject any democracy promotion agenda that is inconsistent with our understanding of deep engagement as a status quo grand strategy. To put this in concrete terms, U.S. grand strategy should not be built on any premise that forecloses stable, cooperative agreements with non-democratic great powers.

Whatever the flaws of our treatment of the democracy issue, they are not, as Smith alleges, a consequence of dogged adherence to realist theories. In fact, we self-consciously sought to show that *all* of the main theories contain arguments and have yielded empirical research that add up to a recommendation to sustain deep engagement. We drew most heavily on realism for many reasons, a principal one being that this is the theoretical toolkit from which proponents of pulling back have exclusively drawn their arguments. To show that models and research emanating from this particular intellectual tradition actually show the opposite was, we thought, especially probative. At any rate, it debunks the endlessly repeated and patently false equation of realism with grand strategic retrenchment. But we did not stop there; chapters 9 and 10 are heavily grounded in the underlying logic of neoliberalism (aka neoliberal institutionalism or institutionalism) about the value of international institutions and also draw to some degree on core insights from constructivism (most notably, in our discussion of legitimacy at the end of chapter 9).

Bruce Jentleson's core comment is that the debate to which our book contributes (whether to stay engaged or pull back) is beside the point, or fails to grapple with key ways the world has changed. To say that we disagree vehemently would be an understatement. The question is: of all the interesting and important issues mentioned in his review, would any be easier to address if the U.S. pulled back from world? While his review

[4] Stephen M. Walt, "More or Less: The Debate on U.S. Grand Strategy," *Foreign Policy* 92:1 (January 2013), http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/01/02/more_or_less_the_debate_on_us_grand_strategy.

contains numerous astute observations about current challenges, we are at loss to understand how he or anyone concerned with those challenges could be indifferent to the grand strategic choice our book addresses.

Now, one might counter that it increasingly seems unlikely that the current U.S. administration will seek to pull back from America's traditional alliances. But strategic choices can be made without strategy, and indeed may occur as unintended consequences. As we stress in chapter four, grand strategy is often an emergent phenomenon. A government confronts challenges, deals with them in crisis mode, and the sum total of those decisions may be rightly described as a grand strategic choice. So even if we dismiss the naïve image of grand strategy—visionaries in a room somewhere synoptically designing a comprehensive foreign policy plan to last for decades—the concept can still usefully organize thinking about a state's general posture towards achieving its interests abroad. And the general idea that small choices can sum up to an unintended yet big and hard-to-reverse choice may also apply to a disruptive leader who sets in motion forces beyond his control that conspire over years to produce a new reality, in this case a disengaged America. We hope that does not come to pass. But if it does, we would be interested to hear back from those who think the pull-back versus deep engagement debate does not matter.

A core change in the world that Jentleson suggests may undermine the relevance of deep engagement concerns the U.S. power position. Jentleson quotes us as saying that "a foundational material pillar of the post-World War II international system—the United States' unmatched global power position – will remain in place." An important word is missing here; actually we wrote "….will long remain in place." We never said, or implied, that U.S. would lack anything like a peer in the international system *forever*. We said this would likely be the case for many decades. So we can dismiss the claim that we posit the end of history à la Fukuyama.

More specifically on the economic foundation of U.S. power, Jentleson notes the following:

> "in a world in which China's economy will grow larger than the American economy in the next 10-15 years, in which 43 countries already count China as their largest trade partner compared to 32 with the US, in which China-led multilateral institutions like the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) are being established, where Weibo is now more highly valued on financial markets than Twitter, and numerous other economic indicators of China's growing economic power and reach, their assessment of U.S. economic power superiority is at best more a snapshot than a trend line."

The analysis in chapters 2 and 3 about the longevity of the U.S. power is the result of decades of research. The upshot is that the U.S. power position is based on an overlapping web of capabilities and attributes across the military, economic, and technological realms. We sought to measure this web of attributes and capabilities as best we could, using the most recent research and methods across a wide range of fields. To this point, we have seen *no* real critique of this analysis, the core of which we published over two years ago.[5] Cherry picking a few indicators which seem to point the other way is not a meaningful response; rather, it would be necessary to show how the measures we used were inadequate and/or how the extrapolation we made about their expected timeline was inappropriate. Unless and until such an analysis appears, we see no reason to conclude that our analysis is faulty.

[5] Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "The Rise and Fall of Great Powers in the 21st Century: China's Rise and the Fate of America's Global Position," *International Security* 40:3 (Winter 2015/16), 7-48.

To be sure, Jentleson is right that our power assessment might be wrong—a point Shifrinson also makes. We did the best we reasonably could. Events could conspire against our forecast. But to us, it is notable that the only new analysis we are aware of that has also sought to take such a deep dive into measuring power in the twenty-first century reaches a very similar conclusion. Indeed, Michael Beckley's forthcoming *Unrivaled: Why America Will Remain the World's Sole Superpower* (Cornell University Press, September 2018) is a *deeper* dive than ours, uses many metrics and approaches we did not, reflects much greater China expertise than we have, and yet concurs on the robustness of the U.S. position as the globe's sole superpower.

Joshua Shifrinson directs the most sustained fresh firepower on the advisability of sustaining U.S. alliances. This is an area that has witnessed a cascade of new, focused research, some of which, as on the question of the U.S. power position, could well end up countering our core findings. But it is important to be clear about what is necessary to conclude in order to determine that major alliances are a net plus for U.S. national interests. It is not necessary to show that the U.S. can reassure allies without ever upsetting potential adversaries, as Shifrinson suggests. Rather, our claim is more modest: that overseas security provision is on net better for regional and global security than local. This conclusion does not imply that adversaries will never take umbrage, but just that the net gains in U.S. security and leverage outweigh the costs and risks that do arise vis-à-vis potential rivals.

Regarding the hoary issue of entrapment, we cannot but agree with Shifrinson's claim that having allies entails more entrapment risk than not having allies. But, again, to conclude that maintaining alliances make sense does not require showing that entrapment risk is zero. Rather, it requires showing that it can be *minimized* such that the net effect of alliances remains positive. That is what we take to be the main implication of research on this issue by scholars such as Beckley and TongFi Kim.[6] It also demands a net assessment of the risks of not having alliances, something few scholars have analyzed but which we addressed as best we could. We believe we showed that summing across these equations yields a positive result for the U.S. maintaining its alliances rather than ditching some or all of them.

Shifrinson also questions the United States' ability to sustain the military posture required to maintain credible alliance commitments. That is a major issue which has understandably attracted immense analytical effort. Again, though, you have to get the metric right. Read Shifrinson's review carefully, and you will see that he elides the distinction between defending the U.S. position and the ability of "comparatively weak and backwards countries to be able to better oppose U.S. policies over time." We accept that weaker states will increase their ability to oppose U.S. policies even as U.S. retains the ability to defend allies. Ultimately, this criticism comes down to question of affordability, which we discuss in some detail. We have no doubt that this issue will continue to be debated. Our main admonition when it comes to further studies it is to keep our eyes on the ball, and the ball is that deep engagement is at its core a defensive strategy, one whose military requirements, while substantial, are considerably more modest than more expansive grand strategic visions.

[6] Michael C. Beckley, "Entangling Alliances? Assessing the Security Risks of US Defense Pacts," *International Security* 30:4 (Spring 2015), 7-48; and Tongfi Kim, "Why Alliances Entangle but Seldom Entrap States," *Security Studies* 20:3 (July 2011).