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Rebecca Lissner and Mira Rapp-Hooper. *An Open World: How America Can Win the Contest for Twenty-First-Century Order*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020. ISBN: 9780300250329 (hardcover, \$26.00).

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INTRODUCTION BY NAAZNEEN H. BARMA, UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

Editorial note: The authors both hold positions in the Biden administration and are therefore unable to provide a response to the reviews. They thank all of the participants for their engagement with the book.

The United States faces a host of strategic geopolitical challenges today, many of which have long been brewing as a result of structural changes and some of which have been self-inflicted by successive administrations, most recently and most especially the Trump Administration. In *An Open World*, Rebecca Lissner and Mira Rapp-Hooper deliver a lucid and incisive diagnosis of these multidimensional strategic challenges that is strengthened by their admirable restraint in dwelling on where any blame should be apportioned and is written in precise and elegant prose. Their goal is to provide a clear-eyed assessment of the current geopolitical landscape facing the U.S. and to chart a strategy for how the U.S. should navigate the world it faces today in order to advance its national interests in a manner that is in line with its values — and they succeed, to a very large extent, on both counts. *An Open World* is an important and timely contribution from two scholar-practitioners who wrote this immensely relevant book with the explicit aim of bringing rigorous research to bear on American foreign policy and are now positioned, as senior national security officials in the Biden Administration, to work to bring parts of their vision to fruition as they contribute to the new National Security Strategy and beyond.¹

An Open World begins with a sober recognition of the limits of American power and acceptance that a return to the days of American geopolitical primacy is no longer possible, even if it were desirable. Lissner and Rapp-Hooper make clear that while President Donald Trump may have precipitated a more urgent reckoning with America's role in the world, the necessity of reformulating U.S. grand strategy is driven by longer standing emergent trends and deeper structural transformation. They are also sharp in their assessment that the foreign policy landscape is altered as a result of changes from both without and within: an irreversible geopolitical re-ordering is taking place at the same time that significant changes in American politics and society are necessarily affecting the country's capacity and appetite for potential national security approaches. The United States has, quite simply, lost its ability to set important terms of international order more or less unilaterally, especially in Asia. And now that American military primacy is clearly contested, the importance of non-military competition, especially in the economic and technological realms, becomes that much more important even as American society, the economy, and the private sector must be readied to play their part.

In order for the United States to meet this new set of challenges with the values and capacities at hand, Lissner and Rapp-Hooper propose that it adopt a new strategic framework that centers on a foreign policy of “openness.” They do a great service to both international relations scholarship and foreign policy practice by eliding the often stale arguments embedded in paradigmatic debates about U.S. grand strategy. Jasen Castillo notes in his review that Lissner and Rapp-Hooper offer a truly *new* grand strategy for the United States, one that sidesteps the familiar paradigms of American primacy, liberal internationalism, and isolationism by synthesizing the best of each. An American foreign policy guided by the principle of openness would, as outlined by the authors, prevent spheres of closed influence across the globe, defend open access to the global commons, protect and bolster the political independence of all countries, and modernize existing global institutions while constructing new forms of order where necessary (93, 98–101, 121).

Adopting such a strategy would, according to Lissner and Rapp-Hooper, enable the United States to defend its national interests and advance its commitment to liberal democratic principles even as it loses the unparalleled military and geopolitical primacy it has held for the better part of a century. As Hillary Briffa notes, a major strength of the proposed strategy of openness is that it does not seek to divide the world into static blocs but, instead, calls for the U.S. to change its strategy to building fluid and evolving coalitions around openness and then adapt as necessary. In this vein, the authors advocate what Briffa characterizes as “agile multipolar diplomacy with small and middle powers” such as Germany, Japan,

¹ Rebecca Lissner currently serves as Director for Strategic Planning at the National Security Council and Mira Rapp-Hooper is currently seconded to the National Security Council as Senior Advisor on China on the Secretary's Policy Planning Staff at the State Department. As such, they are not in a position to write a response to the reviews.

and India. Thus, while India may not always support openness on every matter, the U.S. should act to ensure that India is in its coalition whenever its interests do align with openness principles (139). Briffa points out that the question remains what this “inclusive new patchwork structure of the international order” will really look like. Many of the fascinating questions provoked by this book lie similarly in how the principles it articulates could translate into specific components of a new American foreign policy.

An Open World will feature prominently in the contemporary scholarly debate on U.S. grand strategy. It is also a book that is already having a real and timely impact on the practice of U.S. foreign policy.² For those who engage with this work for both of those reasons, it is important to point to where the diagnosis could have been sharper and where the implications might be better crystallized. Here, I focus on four such areas, drawing on the generous and perceptive reviews by Hillary Briffa, Jasen Castillo, and Alexander Cooley that make up the rest of this roundtable.

First, while Lissner and Rapp-Hooper draw a sharp picture of the new order they posit faces the U.S. today, they are less clear on the nature of the causal mechanism that has brought us here. By the authors’ own reading of the scholarship, war has been the mechanism that enacts the transition from one global order to the next. In the absence of great power war, Jasen Castillo thus poses an important theoretical question: “Does a shifting balance of power, however, permit a transition to a new type of order?” The policy relevance of this question lies in how much leverage the U.S. has to shape what comes next. Lissner and Rapp-Hooper subscribe to an essentially rationalist and agent-centered view of geopolitical change, where American adversaries act to advance their interests and the U.S. and its allies have recourse to specific actions to counter those threats and advance their own preferred outcomes. From a historical institutionalist perspective, by contrast, one could interpret the current geopolitical moment as an exceptionally fluid critical juncture, where institutional drift and confusion are entirely as likely as decisive action toward an instrumental reordering. The authors hint that such ambiguity is a feature of this moment, emphasizing as they do several times over that the new order is one that is “multilayered and differentiated by issue, region, and domain” (87).

Second, more clarity is needed on the spaces in between open and closed systems. In some regards, Lissner and Rapp-Hooper posit that the world can be quite clearly divided into an open versus closed dichotomy. There are those countries — the United States and its select allies — who would promote openness; and others — China and Russia, the U.S.’s peer competitors, chief among them — who would attempt closure instead (61–74, 94–98). More subtly, in other places, the authors return to the “multilayered and differentiated” refrain (4, 90), proposing that the U.S. and its allies must not overlook the potential for cooperation with illiberal regimes (87, 90). It is not contradictory to say, as do the authors, that the U.S. should prioritize openness for the most part and cooperate and experiment on hybrid approaches where our core values and interests are not compromised.

Yet it is precisely these interstitial, hybrid nodes in the order that will be some of the most confounding and stymying spaces for American policymakers to contemplate as the U.S. negotiates its new strategy — and *An Open World* gives us much less of a roadmap for addressing such ambiguities. The authors delineate how the two main adversaries of the U.S., China and Russia, are pursuing a range of strategies to counter the American-led order. Cooley observes that, in addition to the revisionist aspirations and actions of these two countries vis-à-vis formal international institutions, both Russia and China are also pursuing counter-ordering actions in the informal spaces of the UN and regional institutional order. At the same time, Cooley notes, the U.S. faces greater contestation from transnational networks — for example, global corruption and organized crime — that would support and privilege closed systems. The U.S.’s main rivals, both state and non-state, might, as Castillo warns, simply choose not to sign up for an order predicated on openness, leaving them outside it and creating an

² See Biden Administration, *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance*, March 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>

altogether different strategic proposition from contesting rules within.³ The devil will be in the details of developing a clear strategy to manage the hybrid nature of formal and informal challenges to the U.S. national interest — with distinct regimes comprising different participants for varied policy issues and geographic spaces, while some legacy institutions endure. Such complications and ambiguities are likely to be most extreme on transnational existential challenges such as migration and climate change.

Third, the authors do not grapple with whether openness itself is always *a priori* in the U.S. national interest, in terms of either intended goals or unintended consequences. In outlining components of a renewed set of economic objectives in Chapter 2, for example, the authors advocate what is essentially a new American industrial policy for the technology sector, a prescription that cannot be fairly characterized as part of a commitment to economic openness (30–34). Unalloyed openness, moreover, is premised on contestation as a feature (not a bug) of the system — which is sure to result in unintended consequences beyond the control of the United States.⁴ As with an open-source software system, foregrounding openness means that the code can and will be innovated upon and adapted for other purposes — by both Americans and others.⁵ Cooley notes that openness in some areas and on some issues will entail greater contestation of the types of rules, standards, and norms that have been set almost exclusively by the West for the better part of a century. In a similar vein, Castillo questions how the U.S. would enforce openness and attempt to ensure that openness continued to redound its advantage, asking whether the principle of openness might create its own rigid hierarchy that the U.S. might not want.⁶ On this front, Cooley points to the illiberal shifts in the open global media landscape, where state-backed entrants from across the world have “fueled the illiberal transformation of a critical global governance domain.”

Finally — and perhaps most importantly from the progressive standpoint — *An Open World* does not squarely face the question of whether a commitment to openness would also ensure the protection of the most vulnerable and fairness in terms of the potential inequities imposed. The authors tend to highlight the benefits of openness and the drawbacks of closure, while reality is less black and white. Briffa cautions that the inevitable domestic tradeoffs with an open trade strategy must be addressed not just in theory but in practice, an issue that has plagued every contemporary American presidential administration since at least Bill Clinton’s.⁷ Lissner and Rapp-Hooper do an admirable job of addressing the costs of domestic political polarization for a robust foreign policy strategy.⁸ But how does a grand strategy predicated on “openness” square with the Biden Administration’s “foreign policy for the middle class” let alone the very real need in the

³ This eventuality was also sketched in Naazneen Barma, Ely Ratner, and Steven Weber, “A World Without the West,” *The National Interest* 90, (July/August 2007): 23–30.

⁴ See Henry Farrell and Abraham L. Newman, “The Janus Face of the Liberal International Information Order: When Global Institutions are Self-Undermining,” *International Organization* 75 (Spring 2021): 333–358.

⁵ See Steven Weber, *The Success of Open Source* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

⁶ See Alexander Cooley and Daniel Nexon, *Exit from Hegemony: The Unraveling of the American Global Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

⁷ See Kimberly Clausing, *Open: The Progressive Case for Free Trade, Immigration, and Global Capital* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019).

⁸ See James Goldgeier and Bruce W. Jentleson, “A Democracy Summit Is Not What The Doctor Ordered: America, Heal Thyself,” *Foreign Affairs*, December 14, 2020; Alexandra Stark, Candace Rondeaux, and Heather Hurlburt, *The Meaning of Security: Can a Divided Society Provide for the Common Defense*, New America Report (April 2021).

aftermath of the Trump administration to grapple with racism, sexism, and other forms of exclusion and imperialism in American national security practice?⁹

Lissner and Rapp-Hooper cannot be held responsible for addressing all such questions — and they should be commended for sticking to an appropriately streamlined narrative and resulting set of implications in their excellent book. Yet issues like those raised in this roundtable will continue to remain relevant if, as seems likely, the United States begins to adopt elements of the strategy proposed in *An Open World*. One final question will also be central: what will the U.S. *not* be doing if it predicates a foreign policy on the principle of openness? Ultimately, strategies are tested as much by the tradeoffs they articulate and make as they are by the extent to which they meet their stated objectives. Rebecca Lissner and Mira Rapp-Hooper have given scholars and foreign policymakers a necessarily and incisively pared down and yet still idealistic and ambitious framework to shape the pursuit of U.S. national interest for at least a generation. The importance of that framework will lie in the extent to which it contributes to the basis of a truly reimagined national security strategy.

Participants:

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Alexander Cooley is the Claire Tow Professor of Political Science at Barnard College and the Director of Columbia University's Harriman Institute for the Study of Russia, Eurasia and Eastern Europe. His books include *Exit from Hegemony: The Unravelling of the American Global Order* (co-authored with Daniel Nexon, Oxford 2020), *Dictators without Borders: power and Money in Central Asia* (co-authored with John Heathershaw, Yale 2017) and *Great Games, Local Rules: the New Great Power Contest in Central Asia* (Oxford, 2012).

⁹ See Deborah Avant, "Has Trump Changed How We Think About American Security?" *H-Diplo* | ISSF Policy Series 2021-2040, June 17, 2021; <https://issforum.org/roundtables/policy/ps2021-40>.

REVIEW BY HILLARY BRIFFA, KING'S COLLEGE LONDON

Premised on an abandonment of Cold War hubris and the embrace of pragmatism, *An Open World: How America Can Win the Contest for Twenty-First Century Order* by Rebecca Lissner and Mira Rapp-Hooper is both a book about President Donald Trump and a book about so much more than Trump. It is a book about Trump in that it was written in the immediate wake of the 2016 election in an effort to better understand the driving forces that brought him to power and to determine whether his presidency could be considered a transitory “isolated political shock” (2). Yet, it is also a book that is much broader than Trump in its rejection of the notion that his leadership represents a fleeting blip, one which will easily be reverted. Instead, the authors diagnose underlying structural transformations that began far before he stepped into the Oval Office. Significant shifts brought about by rapid and widespread technological change, and the hyper-partisanship that has left the American political system acutely dysfunctional, are challenges the incoming Biden administration will need to contend with.

The book builds a compelling and persuasive case that the United States has reached a moment of reckoning and must readjust its own self-conception to reflect the fact that it is no longer the world’s sole superpower. Although it remains, and will continue to remain, among the world’s most powerful actors, it will no longer be able to dictate terms in the same unilateral way as it was able to do in the past. At the same time, the longstanding hope that illiberal states that were participating in the liberal international order would slowly come to liberalise has, in turn, been discredited, as exemplified by the growing strength of China and its efforts to revise the order to better reflect its own preferences.¹ For these reasons, the U.S. must reimagine its policymaking to undertake what Lissner and Rapp-Hooper advocate as a transition from liberal universalism to openness as the guiding principle of American grand strategy.

Lissner and Rapp-Hooper’s proposed strategy is clearly predicated on an awareness that whatever forms of dominance the U.S. used to seek in the past, it can no longer do so. Its efforts to spread liberalism across far-flung areas of the globe have foundered, and it should not be seeking to exert control over independent states in the same heavy-handed manner that has characterised the past two decades.² At the same time, America is not about to just hand over the reins to illiberal competitors, and the “open world” approach focuses on forestalling closed spheres of influence of the imperial variety that China may seek to construct in its region.

Although recourse to contiguous territorial annexation is increasingly unlikely due to lower returns and greater costs in an interdependent and networked economy, Lissner and Rapp-Hooper recognize that twenty-first century dominance may be more covert, and their strategy is devised to account for this possibility. China may attempt to exert political influence to achieve a Mercantilist economic system by means of the construction of physical and digital infrastructure, as exemplified by the One Belt One Road programme, in order to achieve what imperial powers previously sought to achieve through outright conquest and domination.³ Given these threats, the advocates of the “open world” idea recognize that the U.S. will need to learn to co-exist alongside a powerful, authoritarian China, but that this should not mean a ready acceptance of its ascendancy if the latter’s intention is to bring about closed spheres of influence. Whilst trying to live alongside China, the

¹ See, for example, Stewart Paterson, 2018. *China, Trade and Power: Why the West’s Economic Engagement Has Failed*. 1st edition. London: London Publishing Partnership.

² See, for example, Inderjeet Parmar, “The US-Led Liberal Order: Imperialism by Another Name?” *International Affairs* 94:1 (2018): 151–72.

³ See, for example, Thomas Cavanna, Thomas, “Unlocking the Gates of Eurasia: China’s Belt and Road Initiative and Its Implications for U.S. Grand Strategy.” *Texas National Security Review* 2:3 (2019), and Jonathan Holslag, “How China’s New Silk Road Threatens European Trade.” *The International Spectator* 52:1 (2017): 46–60., contrasted with a more benign interpretation offered by Zhang Zhixin, Zhang, “The Belt and Road Initiative: China’s New Geopolitical Strategy?” *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* 4:3 (2018): 327–343.

U.S. will hedge, not accommodate, recognising that the two countries are at loggerheads over several issues, but will willingly collaborate on trade and core areas of mutual interest. Concurrently, despite this selective engagement, the U.S. will work with like-minded states to keep the world open and make it impossible for China to make moves for closure.⁴

This approach is interesting because it is not designed to create static blocs reminiscent of the Cold War bipolar system, but to change coalitions around openness. The authors use the example of India to illustrate this idea, recognizing that India “may not align with openness principles on every matter of global or regional governance— but when it does, the United States should seize the opportunity to bring Delhi into its coalition” (139). In the Indo-Pacific, India’s regional security interests generally align with those of the United States in seeking to prevent Chinese revisionism, and frictions have been increasing with China on their shared border; yet “eschewing any permanent alliances” (5), Delhi’s development trajectory produces opportunities to cooperate with China on climate and trade. Domestically, prolonged internet shutdowns in Kashmir are reminiscent of Chinese threats to cyber sovereignty.⁵ With these competing dynamics at play, the “open world” strategy is realistic in advocating that the U.S. capture support on issues where priorities align but in also recognizing that it will be impossible to enforce rigid blocs that support openness or closure on every issue.

Given this reality, the driving premise of the work is that the U.S. should continue to offer an alternate ordering vision to safeguard international security, stability, and prosperity by promoting behaviour and relationships between states that are characterised by openness and transparency. Global cooperation and trade should be conducted through international institutions governed transparently and modernised to better address future challenges, particularly new forms of international governance to account for the unprecedented pace of innovation and growing challenges in the global commons.⁶ In order to confront Chinese “digital authoritarianism” (45), the U.S. must ensure that it can match strategic competition in terms of technology and that it is the one setting the terms for governance in this area.

Of course, to be in any position to set standards or to compete with its emergent peer competitor, the U.S. must first get its own house in order. Lissner and Rapp-Hooper understand that some of the greatest threats to security are those that come from within, with inequality and partisanship providing a breeding ground for authoritarianism. Recognising that grand strategy must account for domestic factors (not only foreign policy), Lissner and Rapp-Hooper fully acknowledge the fact that America needs to restore the domestic health of the nation to make the “open world” strategy viable.⁷ The hyper-

⁴ In relation to Lissner and Rapp-Hooper’s arguments, like-minded refers to countries similarly committed to combating closure, and not the exclusive club of democracies, or even “D10” advocated by scholars such as Ash Jain, “Like-Minded and Capable Democracies: A New Framework for Advancing a Liberal World Order.” International Institutions and Global Governance Program, Council on Foreign Relations (2013), https://cdn.cfr.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2012/11/IIGG_WorkingPaper12_Jain.pdf.

⁵ See, for example, Vasuki Shastry, “Asia’s Internet Shutdowns Threaten the Right to Digital Access.” *Chatham House*, February 18, 2020, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2020/02/asias-internet-shutdowns-threaten-right-digital-access>.

⁶ See, for example, Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, “Globalization: What’s New? What’s Not? (And So What?).” *Foreign Policy* 118 (2000): 104–19, Elizabeth Mrema, “Protecting the Global Commons: The Challenge of Collective Action.” *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 18:1 (2017): 3–5, and Christiaan Boonen, Nicolás Brando, Samuel Cogolati, Rutger Hagen, Vils Vanstappen, and Jan Wouters, “Governing as Commons or as Global Public Goods: Two Tales of Power.” *International Journal of the Commons* 13:1 (2019): 553–577.

⁷ See, for example, B. H. Liddell Hart’s concern with the domestic health of the nation in Basil H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy* 2nd ed. (London: Faber & Faber, 1967), and the holistic approach to both domestic and foreign policy factors adopted by scholars such as Alasdair Roberts, “Grand Strategy Isn’t Grand Enough.” *Foreign Policy*, February 20, 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/02/20/grand-strategy-isnt-grand-enough/>. Rebecca Friedman Lissner, “What Is Grand Strategy? Sweeping a Conceptual Minefield.” *Texas National Security Review* 2:1 (2018), S. Minar, “Grand Strategy and Foreign Policy: How Grand Strategy Can Aid Bangladesh’s Foreign Policy Rethinking?” *Journal of Social Studies* 4:1 (2018): 20–27, and Alex Roland, “Article

partisanship that is presently plaguing the U.S. risks “congressional dysfunction and gridlock” (35) and the dramatic policy swings whenever the White House transfers between the Republicans and the Democrats make it impossible to have a far-reaching vision or build credible alliance commitments. If that is not enough cause for alarm, it also makes America more susceptible to disinformation and foreign interference as adversaries exploit the democratic crisis.⁸

The authors recognize that “income inequality is deeply intertwined with partisan polarization” (38) and that these two challenges must be addressed in parallel in order to break the causal loop. Crucially, although the terms ‘soft power’ and ‘reputation’ are conspicuously absent from the book, it is clearly understood that tackling the hyperpartisan crisis and ameliorating income inequality are essential for the recovery of American soft power and ideological appeal – elements critical to the credibility of an “open world” strategy which is premised on contrasting the model of the emblematic ‘city on a hill’ with that of its illiberal counterparts. Domestic renewal at home would reduce the efficacy of hybrid threats, whilst also rejuvenating American competitiveness.⁹ This must be an essential priority as the world weathers the economic upheaval generated by the COVID-19 pandemic. But it is not only the political divide that Lissner and Rapp-Hooper want to bridge in order to serve these ends – they also recognize the necessity of improving cooperation between the technological sector and government through investment in research and development to support innovation and adaptation.

An “open” America is one that welcomes the free flow of ideas and information, and that recognizes the mutual benefits of economic interdependence with the world. However, any push in the international economic space to remake the international trading order going forward has to be conducted with U.S. workers in mind. There will be trade-offs, and a robust set of domestic policies is necessary to remediate any negative consequences. Fundamentally, the publication of a national security document, no matter how robust, is not enough to have a ‘national’ strategy in practice, especially when it comes to deciding upon the place of the U.S. in the world, and what it seeks to accomplish. To truly be a national strategy, the strategic ends need to be socialized into the way people think about the country (not just an elite project) and how day-to-day actions feed into the larger picture in order for the strategy to be durable and gain traction. Consequently, although Lissner and Rapp-Hooper argue that “openness is a model for international, not domestic, governance” (98), for the strategy to be persuasive, the principle of openness may primarily be international in nature, but it must surely be obtained domestically as well. One may even go so far as to argue that the distinction between domestic policy and international policy is artificial; the U.S. cannot act one way abroad and expect this to be disassociated from what is happening at home.

In pursuing such domestic restoration, the U.S. would do well to swallow its pride and learn some lessons from other ‘cities on hills’ in the international system. Whilst Lissner and Rapp-Hooper recognize the importance of pursuing “partnerships with middle powers and strategically consequential small states” (139), their realpolitik approach to the international environment limits their assessment to geopolitical and material considerations. Although they identify the capacity of countries such as Israel and Finland to provide public-private partnerships in the development of an alternative to HUAWEI amid 5G competition, innovation is not just for the technological space. Singapore’s healthcare system produces

Review 93 on “Beyond the Buzzword: The Three Meanings of ‘Grand Strategy.’” *H-Diplo ISSF Article Reviews*, February 21, 2018, <https://issforum.org/articlereviews/93-grand-strategy%0D>, among others.

⁸ See, for example, Lee Drutman, “We Need Political Parties. But Their Rabid Partisanship Could Destroy American Democracy,” *Vox*, September 5, 2017, <https://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2017/9/5/16227700/hyperpartisanship-identity-american-democracy-problems-solutions-doom-loop>, and Eric Klinenberg, Caitlin Zaloom, and Sharon Marcus, eds., *Antidemocracy in America: Truth, Power, and the Republic at Risk* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).

⁹ See, for example, Gregory Treverton, Andrew Thvedt, Alicia Chen, Kathy Lee, and Madeline McCue, “Addressing Hybrid Threats.” *Swedish Defence University*, Stockholm, 2018, <https://www.hybridcoe.fi/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Treverton-AddressingHybridThreats.pdf>.

striking results at a quarter of the relative expense of America's.¹⁰ Education is fundamental both for realizing the technological vision in *Open World* and to redress the aforementioned inequality issue; yet where Finnish pupils receive a universal quality education and consistently outperform almost all international rivals, in the U.S. the amount spent per pupil can differ by more than 200%, perpetuating the disadvantage gap in poor neighbourhoods from early childhood.¹¹ Whilst the U.S. is being strangled by affective polarization, and public trust in the government has reached a historic low, the Nordic countries are characterized by high societal cohesion and outstanding institutional and interpersonal trust.¹² When it comes to meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century, scholars of American grand strategy must eschew their short-sighted great power focus and look beyond the tired trope of small powers as geopolitical chesspieces. When it comes to “models of innovation” (56), it is to smaller actors such as Finland, Singapore, and New Zealand that the U.S. should be looking as laboratories of innovation whose successful experiments the U.S. can scale up to redress some of its own failings.¹³

At the same time, whilst there is scope for even more ambition and nuance in the discussion of smaller international counterparts, Lissner and Rapp-Hooper's recognition of the importance of “agile multipolar diplomacy with small and middle powers” (131) as a core tenet of the openness strategy is certainly a welcome golden thread throughout the book. Just as they understand the need to restore domestic relationships, they recognize that allies are critical to operationalising the openness strategy and revitalising the relationship with allies after the traumatic Trump presidency must take precedence for the new Biden administration. In the dynamic future order envisioned by Lissner and Rapp-Hooper, middle powers such as Japan, Germany, and the UK will exercise a more important role and sources of international power will be more wide-ranging. Military power will always matter, but states with highly advanced industrial or technological bases may become AI powers.¹⁴ Economic production will also continue to matter, especially in the bid to compete with an alternative Chinese development model. Yet, multidimensional conflict with China will not only be military in nature, and burden-sharing should not be reducible to what quantification is being spent on defence spending.

In view of this, Lissner and Rapp-Hooper commendably recognize that allies have more to bring to the table than their military budgets. Calls for increased military spending are insufficient; the U.S. must also leverage the economic and technological capabilities of allies, and there must be a much broader conception of burden sharing that responds to the greater spectrum of threats going forward. As part of this reconfiguration of the U.S. position in a more multipolar world, the authors advocate for institutional reform that will more accurately reflect the changing nature of the international system. They propose reforms to universal institutions such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization, as well as new multilateral trade agreements and “new universal rules” (141) and standards – particularly for the preservation of open access to the global commons.

The challenge for the U.S. will be to lead the charge in articulating what this inclusive new patchwork structure of the international order should look like, and to rally partners to move in that direction. The authors recognize that

¹⁰ Sean Masaki Flynn, *The Cure That Works: How to Have the World's Best Healthcare -- at a Quarter of the Price* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2019).

¹¹ James R. Breiding, *Too Small to Fail: Why Some Small Nations Outperform Larger Ones and How They Are Reshaping the World* (New York: Harper Business, 2019).

¹² Bo Rothstein, “Introduction: Social Capital in Scandinavia.” *Scandinavian Political Studies* 26:1 (2003): 1–26.

¹³ See, for example, Jen Rae and Stian Westlake, “When Small Is Beautiful: Lessons from Highly-Innovative Smaller Countries,” *Nesta*, 2014, <https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/when20small20is20beautiful20final.pdf>.

¹⁴ See, for example, Michael Horowitz, “AI and the Diffusion of Global Power.” *Centre for International Governance Innovation: Modern Conflict and Artificial Intelligence essay series*, November 16, 2020, <https://www.cigionline.org/articles/ai-and-diffusion-global-power>.

“partnerships will be more issue-specific and opportunistic, predicated on mutual interests rather than open-ended treaty commitments” (139) and it is encouraging to see the existential threat of climate change highlighted as one such major priority issue. Several excellent policy recommendations are put forward to address this climate challenge, albeit only occupying a single page of serious consideration (50). Unlike Lissner and Rapp-Hooper’s frequent emphasis on “strategically vital regions” (5, 110, 139), however, the global crisis of climate change knows no borders and here there is a real opportunity for the U.S. to demonstrate leadership on this first order issue for the international system. In particular, small states are disproportionately vulnerable to the effects of climate change, despite being the lowest emitters, and COVID-19 has only reinforced the pre-existing structural challenges that make a green recovery a necessity.¹⁵ 108 members of the United Nations are part of the loose grouping known as the Forum of Small States, and the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) represents 44 small island and low-lying coastal developing states. These are not inconsequential numbers. In the world Lissner and Rapp-Hooper envision of “fluid alignments and contests for the allegiances of small and middle powers alike” (88) the U.S. should think big and understand the significant strength in numbers that would rally behind an ambitious, titanic climate leader.

As the authors desire new rules for the global commons to ensure open access is guaranteed, it is worth remembering that the pioneers of the principle of ‘common heritage of mankind’ that underpins the law of the sea, and which appears in treaties on climate, outer space and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, came from the small island of Malta.¹⁶ If this tiny country – the 10th smallest in the world – martialled enough support to revolutionize international law, the extraordinary potential for the U.S. is unparalleled. Given the scale of the threat, Lissner and Rapp-Hooper are entirely correct in diagnosing that “it may be the danger, as well as the opportunity, presented by climate change that encourages collective action for common ends” (130) and this should be emphasised as a primary opportunity for the U.S. to play a major role around the world without deploying military force and undertaking intervention as its leading instrument of state power. More specifically, following the lead of the Welsh, the only country in the world that has taken the step to protect both current and future generations by enshrining sustainability practice in law through the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015, would be a world-leading place to start.¹⁷

In summary, Lissner and Rapp-Hooper have offered a serious and impressive framework for the United States as it strives to navigate a changing international order and readjust its self-conception. The *Open World* strategy aspires to allow the U.S. to secure its dearest interests and preserve its values, despite losing economic and military primacy. It advocates that the U.S. compete with China by supplanting interventionism with multilateralism, prioritising technological innovation, restoring alliances, recognizing the continuing centrality of trade to U.S. prosperity, and envisioning a significant American role in the world in the preservation of openness and forestalling closed spheres of influence. Altogether, there is much to unpack in this thought-provoking and eloquent book, and even if one does not subscribe to all of the ideas put forth, the breadth of its fresh coverage ensures several recommendations should resonate among diverse audiences.

¹⁵ See, for example, Riad Meddeb, “Small Island Developing States Do Not Have the Luxury of Time.” 2020, *United Nations Development Programme*, December 2, 2020, <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/blog/2020/small-island-developing-states-do-not-have-the-luxury-of-time.html>, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. 2021. “For Heavily Indebted Small Islands, Resilience-Building Is the Best Antidote.” *UNCTAD*, January 7, 2021, <https://unctad.org/news/heavily-indebted-small-islands-resilience-building-best-antidote>, and Climate Ambition Support Alliance, “Joint Statement of Small Island States and Least Developed Countries at Climate Week 2020,” September 25, 2020, <https://casaclimate.org/news/joint-statement-of-small-island-states-and-least-developed-countries-at-climate-week-2020/>.

¹⁶ Tullio Scovazzi, “The Concept of Common Heritage of Mankind and the Genetic Resources of the Seabed beyond the Limits of National Jurisdiction.” *Agenda Internacional* 14:25 (2007): 11–24.

¹⁷ Jane Davidson, *#futuregen: Lessons from a Small Country* (White River Junction: Chelsea Green Publishing Co, 2020).

REVIEW BY JASEN J. CASTILLO, TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

I tell my students that American policy-makers, deep-down inside, wish they could take the world back to the 1990s because marked the beginning of the unipolar moment. The U.S. had recently emerged from the Cold War as the world's preeminent economic and military power. Those were heady days. With its unrivaled power position, the U.S. could shrink the armed forces while increasing its defense commitments and military interventions abroad. Under these conditions, some scholars concluded history had ended and it was time to export its liberal ideals with gusto.¹ A foreign-policy consensus emerged that the United States could and should play the role of global gendarme.² It was, after all, the sole superpower and Americans were living the unipolar dream to its fullest.

And then reality intruded, first with the global war on terrorism, and then, the recognition that great power politics still mattered. Quagmires in the Middle East, the rise of China, and the realization that we had new allies to protect in Eastern Europe began to undermine the foreign policy consensus that primacy was easy and desirable. In part, dissatisfaction with American grand strategy, especially our “forever wars,” helped propel the Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump to victory in 2016. How much fundamental change occurred during Trump’s presidency remains debatable, but as a new administration prepares to take office, it is a good time to take stock by asking the following questions: What grand strategy should the United States follow after the Trump leaves the White House? What interests abroad should the U.S. pursue as the ‘Liberal International Order’ decays? More fundamentally: What do changes in the international balance of power mean for the country’s foreign and defense policy?

These are the questions that *An Open World: How America Can Win the Contest for Twenty-First Century Order* tries to answer.³ In their terrific new book, Rebecca Lissner and Mira Rapp-Hooper have produced a careful, thoughtful assessment of the constraints and opportunities that United States faces internationally. They sketch out a new American grand strategy, calling for the U.S. to pursue a policy of “openness.” The authors recognize the limits of American power, they understand that there is no going back to the halcyon days of unipolarity.

Instead, Lissner and Rapp-Hooper advocate for a less ambitious international course for the United States. We should eschew regime change, press for international cooperation—especially among our allies, prevent spheres of influences, and keep the global commons open. Their proposal advances the debate on America grand strategy by offering alternatives to the familiar ideal types: primacy, liberal internationalism, off-shore balancing, and isolationism⁴. They instead offer an innovative synthesis, seemingly borrowing from the different camps in the grand strategy debate. One might even conclude that their policy seems more *restrained* than what we have grown accustomed over the last three decades. But more on that later.

Their timely book will no doubt attract interest from members of the in-coming Biden administration, who must now guide the U.S. as it faces a raging pandemic, economic distress, domestic turmoil on top of the global challenges outlined in *An*

¹ Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?” *The National Interest* 16 (1989): 3-18.

² Charles Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment,” *Foreign Affairs* 70:1 (1990-1991): 23-33; Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York: Vintage, 2004); Stephen Rosen, “An Empire, if You Can Keep It,” *National Interest* 71 (Spring 2003): 1-7.

³ Rebecca Lissner and Mira Rapp-Hooper, *An Open World: How America Can Win the Contest for Twenty-First Century Order* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).

⁴ The key work remains Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” *International Security* 21:3 (Winter 1996/1997): 3-51.

Open World. What I like most about this compelling book is the authors' description of the three structural problems the United States faces. First, we suffer from deep political divisions at home. The weeks after the 2020 election have painfully reinforced this observation. Second, the U.S. government has not invested enough in the technologies that keep us competitive. Our technological advantages will not last forever, especially without government funding. Third, and most pressing, changes in the balance of power have undercut our economic and military capabilities. For example, Chinese and Russian efforts at military modernization have focused on blunting our ability to project power. They clearly don't want to suffer the fate of Saddam Hussein. These three problems provide a convincing case for a course correction. Advocates of more restrained grand strategy would concur.

Whether or not a grand strategy of openness is the best solution, however, is a more debatable proposition. In particular, there are three questions that we should address before pursuing such a grand strategy. Each of these questions stems from the distressing, but not unpredictable, fact that the balance of power is changing. First, how different is openness from the current, or decaying, liberal international order? Second, how would the United States enforce openness? Finally, is there a more restrained version of openness that U.S. could pursue that would better align with a more realistic sense of ends and means?

Moving from the Liberal International Order to Openness

Over the last four years, a debate has erupted over state of the American-promoted liberal international order. Skeptics argues no such order ever existed.⁵ The U.S. created the image of an order to pursue its own interests.⁶ Some believe it existed but we idealize it, ignoring its darker downsides.⁷ Others say it existed but would inevitably fail.⁸ We cannot rescue this order because it contains too many flaws.⁹ Still others believe that focusing on the liberal character of the global order misses important mechanisms that organize and create hierarchies in international politics.¹⁰

Optimists, in turn, argue that the liberal international order remains more resilient than critics suggest. This order never depended on American military dominance. Its institutions and norms remain resilient enough to survive the change in the

⁵ Patrick Porter, *The False Promise of Liberal Order: Nostalgia, Delusion and the Rise of Trump* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020).

⁶ Graham Allison, "The Myth of the Liberal Order: From Historical Accident to Conventional Wisdom," *Foreign Affairs* 97:4 (July/August 2018): 124-133.

⁷ Paul Staniland, "Misreading the 'Liberal Order': Why We Need New Thinking in American Foreign Policy," *Lawfare* (blog), July 29, 2018, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/misreading-liberalorder-why-we-need-new-thinking-american-foreign-policy>.

⁸ John J. Mearsheimer, "Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order," *International Security* 43:4 (Spring 2019): 7-50.

⁹ Charles L. Glaser, "A Flawed Framework: Why the Liberal International Order Concept in Misguided," *International Security* 43:4 (2019): 51-87.

¹⁰ Alexander Cooley and Daniel Nexon, *Exit from Hegemony: The Unraveling of the American Global Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); Kyle M. Lascuertes, *Orders of Exclusion: Great Powers and the Strategic Sources of Foundational Rules in International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

balance of power. In fact, policy-makers need to find ways to create a more inclusive order that will fit the coming great power competition with China.¹¹

Lastly, a small group believe the liberal international order has changed but reforms can save many of its core elements. These reformers believe that we must recognize that the erosion of American power means that the U.S. cannot pursue business as usual. Constraints on American capabilities—some domestic, other international—mean it is time for a different order.¹² Lissner and Rapp-Hooper seem to agree with the reformers, that we must adjust the current global arrangement to fit the times.

Does a shifting balance of power, however, permit a transition to a new type of order? Do conditions exist to tweak the liberal order to establish something less ambitious like openness? If the previous liberal order has to change, what makes reformers sanguine that they will pivot successfully to openness? Traditionally, new international orders emerge after major great power wars, like the Napoleonic Wars, World War I, and World War II. The victors had the power to create a new arrangement among the great powers because the vanquished could not oppose it, and others states were too exhausted to object. These conditions do not exist today. My worry is that rivals like China and Russia might politely decline to join an order that looks too similar to the circumstances they already oppose. If the answer is that these great power competitors will remain outside of this zone of openness, as I am afraid it is, then this grand strategy will face a different problem.

Enforcing Openness

If the United States could establish an order based on openness, how would we enforce it? Openness seems less ambitious than previous American grand strategies. Narrowing our international objectives makes good sense since the balance of power is shifting against the U.S. But it also means we have less capacity to change the behavior of adversaries. What if rivals like China and Russia continue to carve out spheres of influence, an objective that directly opposes openness? What if even minor power opponents like Iran attempt the same? If the U.S. relies on the military instrument, then a grand strategy of openness does not seem all that different from our typical way of doing business. If we don't use military instrument, then why are we optimistic that other instruments will work to promote openness?

Still further, would enforcing openness cause backlash among adversaries? A grand strategy of openness rejects regime change as an objective. This was a hallmark of the liberal order. Nevertheless, how does the United States credibly convince adversaries that we have truly changed our ways? From Iraq to “maximum pressure” on Iran, the U.S. has ruthlessly pursued efforts to change regimes that oppose our interests, often time to deleterious effect. In the capitals of our competitors, openness might appear as mere rebranding of American grand strategy, rather than a wholesale change. Even the language of openness seems directed at the authoritarian nature of the governments in Beijing, Moscow, Pyongyang, and Tehran. With some analysts calling for a great power competition based on ideology, such perceptions do not seem unwarranted.¹³

Openness and Restraint

¹¹ G. John Ikenberry, “The Next Liberal Order: The Age of Contagion Demands More Internationalism Not Less,” *Foreign Affairs* 99:4 (July/August 2020): 133-142; Ikenberry, “The End of Liberal International Order?” *International Affairs* 94:1 (January 2018):7-23; Kori Schake, *America vs the West: Can the Liberal World Order Be Preserved?* (London: Penguin, Lowy Institute, 2018).

¹² Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “The Rise and Fall of American Hegemony from Wilson to Trump,” *International Affairs* 95:1 (January 2019): 63-80; Thomas Wright, “The Return to Great-Power Rivalry Was Inevitable,” *The Atlantic* (September 12, 2018), <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/09/liberal-international-order-free-world-trump-authoritarianism/569881/>.

¹³ Matthew Kroenig, *The Return of Great Power Rivalry: Democracy versus Autocracy from the Ancient World to the U.S. and China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

An Open World recognizes that the unipolar moment is ending and that the country suffers from deep political divisions. Because of these painful realities, the authors argue for a change in American grand strategy. The first factor reflects a natural tendency of international politics. Realists understand that nothing lasts forever. They would also agree with Lissner and Rapp-Hooper that time has come to invest wisely in the technologies to that would improve our ability to engage a great power competition, if the need arises. The second constraint—our domestic politics—might prove more daunting to fix. In my darker moments, I fear we increasingly resemble France in the interwar period.¹⁴ Repairing these divisions would seem a task for the long term.

Given the changing balance of power, coupled with the internal dissension at home, perhaps the United States should pursue a more restrained version of openness. The rationale is simple: we need some time to get our house in order. This more modest version of an openness grand strategy would work to ensure access to the global commons, as Lissner and Rapp-Hooper advocate. The U.S. would also declare that it values open political systems, but would not seek to change the regimes of our rivals. No more military interventions and no more maximum pressure campaigns. This less ambitious version of openness would also embrace spheres of influence among the great powers as a mechanism that could either dampen incentives for rivalry or, more importantly, give the United States time to prepare for intense security competition-- if it becomes necessary. Right now, China represents an economic power with military potential and Russia represents a military shadow of the Soviet Union without a great power economy. Under these circumstances we should not rush to engage in an intense security competition. Far better that we hedge our bets. More importantly, the United States could use some breathing room to promote democracy at home.¹⁵ In other words, we should address our domestic divisions, devoting ourselves to improving conditions within the United States.¹⁶ Without such focus how could we credibly continue to promote democracy abroad?

The good news is that U.S. possesses several competitive advantages that give it the breathing room to pursue a restrained version of openness. We are blessed with a safe neighborhood that not only lacks great power rivals but comes with two oceans as moats. In addition, nuclear weapons increase the cost of great power war, reducing (but not eliminating) incentives for conflict and instilling caution. This combination of our nuclear deterrent and geography offer a unique buffer. As another layer of security, the United States retains an advantage within the maritime commons. Finally, our allies, even when they wring their hands about our credibility, will show a tendency to balance with rather than align with rising powers that could threaten their sovereignty.¹⁷

What I propose does not entail a return to 1930s isolationism, the common caricature for doing less in the world. My suggestion, instead, argues that we can promote some forms of openness abroad while focusing our attention and resources on improving conditions at home. Doing less abroad would probably go along way of addressing some of our domestic divisions. Richard Haas once described the United States as the “Reluctant Sheriff.” Building on this analogy: the time has come for the sheriff to focus on some overdue home repairs, while the deputies (our allies) take over some of the policing

¹⁴ For an account of the end of Third Republic France, see Eugen Weber, *The Hollow Years: France in the 1930s* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994).

¹⁵ For similar thoughts see James Goldgeier and Bruce W. Jentleson, “A Democracy Summit Is Not What the Doctor Ordered. America, Heal Thyself,” *Foreign Affairs* (December 14, 2020), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2020-12-14/democracy-summit-not-what-doctor-ordered>.

¹⁶ Disagreeing is Thomas Wright, “The U.S. Must Now Repair Democracy at Home and Abroad,” *The Atlantic* (January 10, 2021), <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/01/us-must-now-stand-democracy-home-and-abroad/617626/>.

¹⁷ Jasen J. Castillo and Alexander B. Downes, “Loyalty, Hedging, or Exit: How Weaker Alliance Partners Respond to the Rise of New Threats,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* (July 30, 2020), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2020.1797690>.

duties.¹⁸ Among the American public, there is support for the idea that our allies can do more.¹⁹ An *Open World* admirably tries to move U.S. grand strategy away from the previous goal of maintaining a liberal international order. I worry that its new strategy of openness does not move us far enough.

¹⁸ Richard N. Haas, *The Reluctant Sheriff: The United States After the Cold War* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1997).

¹⁹ William J. Burns, “The Blob Meets the Heartland: Foreign Policy Should Work Better for America’s Middle Class,” *The Atlantic* (September 24, 2000), <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/09/foreign-policy-should-work-better-for-americas-middle-class/616456/>.

REVIEW BY ALEXANDER COOLEY, BARNARD COLLEGE

In *An Open World* Rebecca Lissner and Mira Rapp-Hooper present a fresh and thoughtful new strategy for how the United States should actively refashion the waning liberal international order along the principles of open and inclusive governance. Confronting head-on the revisionist challenges posed by states like China and Russia, Lissner and Rapp-Hooper rightly jettison the idea that American global primacy can or should be recovered, either in terms of “post-Cold War liberal universalism” or “Cold War-style containment” (7), but also current calls for U.S. retrenchment. Instead, they carve out a forward-looking vision of global leadership that is informed by principles of open access in global governance while advocating for pragmatic compromise with strategic competitors on global commons issues like climate change. In doing so, the book positions itself at the intersection of debates about American grand strategy and analyses of the waning liberal international order, aligning itself more broadly with the “build back better” approach of the Biden Administration.

The book’s central argument, one that has only become more pressing in the wake of the election of Joe Biden as the 46th president of the United States, is that while attempts to reconstitute the hegemonic international liberal order are ill-advised, the world is now confronted with a number of new under-governed global challenges and emerging issue areas that require the U.S. to actively fashion new governance rules, norms and standards in order to manage and safeguard global inclusivity even amidst accelerating interstate competition. In areas like Artificial Intelligence (AI), cyber defense, technological transformation and climate change, U.S. policymakers, in cooperation with democratic allies and like-minded actors, must actively remake the international order and global governance in a way that is broadly consistent with liberal norms and participatory global governance. But when necessary, especially on issues relating to managing the global commons, U.S. policymakers must also bracket these domains and pragmatically engage with emerging rivals and revisionists. At the same time, the book appropriately draws our attention to the urgency of confronting domestic challenges that will hinder such global efforts- namely, the ability of the United States to harness its own technological capacity and the debilitating consequences of political polarization.

Since I find the book’s major arguments compelling, in the interests of advancing the discussion I wish to highlight three current trends that might hinder or complicate enacting the *Open World* blueprint.

First, while the book rightly focuses on establishing new “open world” governance architectures to tackle emerging issues and challenges, it is not at all clear whether institutionalizing openness and ensuring global access will ultimately advance outcomes that are favorable to U.S. values and interests. For example, consider the evolution of international media infrastructures and the impact of state-funded global media outlets. I use this example because it both has implications for how the “open world” agenda can be effectively advocated for in such a crowded global media ecology, but also as a case study in its own right of an issue domain where greater openness and new entrants appear to have fueled the illiberal transformation of a critical global governance domain. The global media environment is far more diverse and contested than it was two decades ago as a result of the prominent role played by the global rise of state-centered media like the China Global Television network (CGTN) and Russian-sponsored RT (formerly Russia Today). These state-sponsored media giants enjoy government budgets of hundreds of millions of dollars that allow them maintain networks of national foreign bureaus and correspondents, cultivate local media partners, advance public diplomacy and convene international summits and fora devoted to identifying emerging topics and standards.⁴⁶

Even more consequentially, perhaps, are the news wires services– such as those offered by Xinhua and TASS– whose coverage feeds world news stories and photographs to regional and local news outlets across Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Eurasia– either for free or at a fraction of the price charged by Western competitors *AP* and *Reuters*–

⁴⁶ On China’s global media expansion, see Anne Nelson, *CCTV’s International Expansion: China’s Grand Strategy for Media?* (Washington, D.C.: Center for International Media Assistance, 2013). On the differences between China and Russia’s public diplomacy agendas, see Gary D. Rawnsley, “To Know Us is To Love Us: Public diplomacy and International Broadcasting in Contemporary Russia and China,” *Politics* 35:3-4 (2015): 273-286.

thereby setting the agenda of how global issues, rules and norms are framed.⁴⁷ By contrast, Western media outlets have been crushed by unceasing financial pressures with even reputable state broadcasters like the BBC facing severe cuts and retrenchment of foreign coverage. If anything, Western news outlets appear to be emulating their more illiberal counterparts, as exemplified by the Trump administration's new interference in the editorial decisions of the Voice of America and its decision to deny visa renewals to the organization's foreign-based journalists.⁴⁸

The illiberal shifts in the evolution of the global media landscape also apply to other areas where global rules and standards were once exclusively set by the West, including human rights, peace building and intervention, and development norms and practices. Across these sectors the entrance of new actors, backed by emerging powers, have broken the governance monopoly of the United States and its allies, offering both alternatives actors and redefining our understanding of the purpose and underlying values of these global practices.

Second, while Lissner and Rapp-Hooper understandably focus their evaluation of China and Russia's revisionist track record on formal international institutions, both Beijing and Moscow, as part of their counter-ordering strategies, are experimenting with multiple modes of governance. New regional organizations— such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) or the Eurasian Economic Union— may be the most visible of these as they attempt to channel Chinese or Russian leadership and agendas into their respective spheres of interest. Such counter-ordering efforts are also bolstered by a vigorous engagement with the UN system to shape new rules and standards, such as those that govern the internet, along more “sovereignist” lines. But such formal institutional efforts cannot be understood without also considering how they fit in with parallel bilateral Russian and Chinese initiatives and informal governance arrangements. For example, while Chinese officials did, indeed, relent and agree to adopt more DAC-consistent governance and lending standards at the AIIB after being internationally pressured, they did so while contemporaneously expanding more opaque, politically targeted and clientelistic loans and projects, funded by Chinese sources like the Chinese Development Bank, to dozens of the same AIIB members, but this time as Belt and Road Initiative partners.

A closer consideration of Russian ordering efforts in the post-Soviet space reveals that such informal cooperation may be just as important as the substantive track record of any single new regional body to promote regional influence. Lissner and Rapp-Hooper rightfully point out that Russia's attempts to carve out an exclusive “sphere of privileged influence” (in the words of President Dmitri Medvedev in the aftermath of the 2008 Georgia conflict⁴⁹) have suffered significant set-backs as Moscow's preferred regional architectures such as the Eurasian Economic Union and the Collective Security Treaty Organization have not functioned as effectively or coherently as their Western economic and security counterparts. And many post-Soviet countries, which are wary of Russia, have actively sought to diversify their engagement with external partners. But should this be the main metric that relegates Russia to the status of a “regional power” of limited means?

In fact, Russian initiatives through formal regional organizations have been accompanied by pragmatic bilateral bargains struck with outside actors that Russia perceives as useful partners in countering Western influence in the post-Soviet sphere and beyond. In Central Asia, Moscow has accepted recent Chinese initiatives, investments, and even a growing security footprint because of its asymmetry of power with Beijing, but also because Russian policymakers believe that joint efforts to

⁴⁷ Samuel Brazys and Alex Dukalskis, “China's Media Message,” *Journal of Democracy* 31:4 (2020): 60-61.

⁴⁸ Sarah Ellison, “How Trump's Obsessions with Media and Loyalty Coalesced in a Battle for Voice of America,” *Washington Post*, June 19, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/media/how-trumps-obsessions-with-media-and-loyalty-coalesced-in-a-battle-for-voice-of-america/2020/06/19/f57dcfe0-b1b1-11ea-8758-bfd1d045525a_story.html; and Paul Fahri, “Voice of America Faces Loss of International Journalists as new Overseer Lets Visas Expire,” *Washington Post*, July 9, 2020; https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/media/voice-of-america-faces-loss-of-international-journalists-as-new-overseer-lets-visas-expire/2020/07/09/42f09844-c192-11ea-b4f6-cb39cd8940fb_story.html.

⁴⁹ Andrew Kramer, “Russia Claims its Sphere of Influence in the World,” *New York Times* August 31, 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/01/world/europe/01russia.html>.

erode the U.S.-led liberal order are proving successful; accepting a Chinese regional presence in Central Asia is a price well worth paying to expand the overall global Russian-Chinese counter-ordering strategic partnership. Similarly, the recent conflict in the Caucasus between Armenia and Azerbaijan saw Russia's Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) security client—Armenia—militarily defeated in the areas surrounding the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. But the terms of the settlement brokered by Moscow has allowed, for the first time, the stationing of Russian peacekeepers in the disputed territory, while Moscow has agreed to establish a joint monitoring center with Turkey, which decisively supported Azerbaijan during the conflict, and a land corridor that will connect Turkey through Armenian territory with the Azerbaijani enclave of Nakhchivan. This new Russian-Turkish “joint sphere of influence” deal has also effectively marginalized the role of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Minsk Group, which in the post-Cold War era had served as the principal regional negotiating forum and was co-chaired by the United States, Russia and France. In short, in both Central Asia and the Caucasus, Moscow has demonstrated pragmatic compromise by forging new bilateral partnerships and informal security frameworks that exclude the United States.

Similarly, on the global stage Russia has proven both more assertive than expected and more accepting of the limitations of its own capabilities. Russian intervention in Syria has not proven to be the quagmire or budget drain that many predicted, while the Russian-led Astana Process has helped to establish Russia as a regional mediator and showcase its convening power. We have seen fewer attempts by Moscow to influence countries by offering public goods or trying to outbid Western patrons, as Moscow tried to do in 2013 with Ukraine's President Viktor Yanukovich in its effort to prevent Ukraine from joining the European Union's Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area.⁵⁰ Russia's recent growing footprint and domestic influence operations in African countries including Libya, Mozambique, Sudan and the Central African Republic suggests that Moscow seeks to exploit perceived external power vacuums and prefers to use lower cost instruments and proxies like private security companies and social media campaigns to support its preferred domestic factions.⁵¹ In the big picture do any of these activities constitute a major challenge to international ordering? Probably not, but I do think that they should caution against a certain complacency inherent in labelling Russia a “declining” or “regional” power, while reminding us that there are a variety of lower-cost instruments available to states for influencing international order beyond the formal use of the UN system and regional organizations.

My third and final comment relates to the emerging transnational interests likely to oppose or even actively block the blueprint for action set out in *An Open World*. Although we tend to analytically treat domestic challenges, such as political polarization, and the international governance challenges as distinct levels of analyses, an array of new transnational networks are likely to actively collaborate to resist the “open world” agenda. First, we have witnessed a rise in populist rightwing populist parties in Europe that push an anti-globalist agenda that includes restricting immigration, promoting autarky, and openly doubting the purpose of global governance institutions, with some even questioning their country's membership in core transatlantic institutions such as the NATO and the European Union. Beginning with its strong support for Brexit and the efforts of the UK Independence Party, the Trump administration appears to have openly aligned with such political factions including in countries like Hungary and Poland.⁵² Second, transnationally positioned oligarchs, from both the United States and outside, take advantage of an unrestricted global financial system that allows revenue and capital to be moved seamlessly across jurisdictions in a way that minimizes tax liabilities; but they are more active than ever in opposing open society governance agendas, funneling dark money to anti-systemic political parties and lobbying efforts to vigorously oppose regulatory frameworks that might infringe upon their core business interests or expose them to individual

⁵⁰ Samuel Charap and Timothy J. Colton, *Everyone Loses: The Ukraine Crisis and the Ruinous Contest for Post-Soviet Eurasia* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018).

⁵¹ “Master and Chef. How Russia interfered in elections in twenty countries.” *Proekt Media* April 11, 2019, <https://www.proekt.media/en/article/russia-african-elections/>; and Kimberly Marten, “Russia's Back in Africa: Is the Cold War Returning?”, *The Washington Quarterly* 42 (2019), 155-170.

⁵² “After Trump, Europe's Populist Leaders Will have Lost ‘One of their Cheerleaders.’” NPR December 1, 2020: <https://www.npr.org/2020/12/01/938613764/after-trump-europes-populist-leaders-will-have-lost-one-of-their-cheerleaders>.

or sectoral sanctions. Third, political clients with private interests in foreign policy— from crafting highly supportive policies towards the regimes of Gulf countries to advocating for the drawdown of troops levels in Afghanistan in order to replace them with private security actors— appear to have made headway with the transactional mode of the Trump administration and should serve as a warning about the susceptibility of US foreign policy to private capture. Finally, it is difficult to imagine, when the domestic political stakes are so high, that populists, nationalists and cultural conservatives— even when out of power— will not actively leverage transnational funding and partnerships to incubate and advance a parallel anti-globalist and counter-ordering agenda.⁵³

To meet these and other potential transnational blockages, the Biden administration should push hard for a transnational anti-corruption agenda that views kleptocracy especially when it emanates from competitors like China and Russia⁵⁴— as a strategic threat, with the potential for weakening the institutions and decision-making processes necessary to aggregate the national interest and project the open world agenda. This will require greater regulatory harmonization with the European Union, a serious effort to enforce new rules on beneficial ownership, and a more aggressive and uniform use of extrajudicial tools like the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, including its possible amendment to allow for the criminal indictment of bribe-taking foreign officials (currently pending as the Foreign Practices Extortion Act). Moreover, as Dan Nexon and I have argued, greater transnational contestation may necessitate U.S. foreign policy officials, in a break from previous practice, to more actively weigh in on matters of domestic politics in allies and partners in order to check illiberal actors that openly contest open world agendas and partnerships with the liberally-aligned West.⁵⁵

None of these observations are meant to take away from the lucid and forward-looking strategic vision laid out in *An Open World*. Lissner and Rapp-Hooper have done an enormous service to the foreign policy community by soberly reflecting upon America's current position in the world, identifying with analytical precision the core global governance challenges it will face, and advancing a coherent and principled agenda about how to best position American power to effectively manage these security and economic trends over the long term.

⁵³ Kristina Stoeckl, "The Rise of the Russian Christian Right: the case of the World Congress of Families." *Religion, State & Society* 48:4 (2020): 223-238.

⁵⁴ Philip Zelikow, Eric Edelman, Kristofer Harrison, and Celeset War Gventer, "The Rise of Strategic Corruption: How States Weaponize Graft," *Foreign Affairs* 99, no 4 (2020): 107-120.

⁵⁵ Alexander Cooley and Daniel Nexon, *Exit from Hegemony: The Unraveling of the American Global Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).