The end of the American century? Slow erosion of the domestic sources of usable power

PETER TRUBOWITZ AND PETER HARRIS

The United States has done more than any other country to define the contours of contemporary international politics. Yet America's ability to *continue* shaping the international landscape is increasingly doubted by foreign policy analysts. In this article, we contribute to the discussion over America's future global role by arguing that the debate has suffered from an almost exclusive focus on the concept of relative power—that is, the balance of material capabilities between the United States and its potential peer competitors. From this international-level vantage-point, understanding America's ability to effect meaningful change abroad is primarily a question of whether it is losing geopolitical ground to rising and resurgent powers such as China and Russia and, if so, how it should adjust its international commitments and force posture.

We challenge this approach. We argue here that the question of US decline is best understood in terms of the 'usable power' available to foreign policy decision-makers.[1] While not dismissing the significance of external constraints on US power, we suggest that the most immediate challenges facing the United States when it comes to exercising international leadership today come not from foreign challengers or the size of the US arsenal, but rather from domestic politics. Indeed, on matters ranging from nuclear proliferation to international trade to climate change, it is already the case that US leadership on the world stage has been constrained by fractious domestic politics, even though almost all analysts agree that on the international stage the United States at present faces no peer competitor.[2] The focus on relative power obscures this essential point.

We identify three interrelated factors that have weakened US leaders' ability to act programmatically in foreign policy—that is, in accordance with a coherent and overarching policy programme: (1) the rise of hyper-partisanship in Washington, which erodes public confidence in the president and reduces the ability of the

[1] The phrase 'usable power' was first used by Stanley Hoffmann. See his 'Obstinate or obsolete? The fate of the nation-state and the case of Western Europe', *Daedalus* 95: 3, Summer 1966, pp. 862–915, and 'A view from at home: the perils of incoherence', *Foreign Affairs* 57: 3, 1978, p. 474.

[2] Even China's potential to rival the US should not be overstated. See Thomas J. Christensen, *The China challenge: shaping the choices of a rising power* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2015); Xiaoyu Pu and Chengli Wang, 'Rethinking China's rise: Chinese scholars debate strategic overstretch', *International Affairs* 94: 6, Sept. 2018, pp. 1019–36; David Shambaugh, *China goes global: the partial power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Susan Shirk, *The fragile superpower: how China's internal politics could derail its peaceful rise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

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executive branch to convey resolve to friends and adversaries alike; (2) the absence of a compelling foreign policy narrative, which makes it hard to mobilize disparate domestic constituencies around a shared vision of US international purpose; and (3) the erosion of the domestic social contract and the increasing vulnerability of working Americans to the changes wrought by globalization and trade liberalization, which have raised the costs to politicians of pursuing an internationalist foreign policy. America's divided constitutional order allows programmatic and sustained foreign policy initiatives to succeed and endure only when they are underwritten by bipartisanship and support from a broad cross-section of the voting public. The three developments in US politics outlined above, the interrelationships of which have been explored in literatures on US politics and social policy since the 1980s, have had the combined effect of eroding that domestic political base.

While the waning of America's usable power is most evident today in the collapse of support for liberal internationalism,[3] we argue that US leaders who prefer alternative grand strategies will also find it difficult to implement a coherent foreign policy agenda so long as domestic-level dysfunction in the form of fractious politics goes unattended. This, we contend, is already evident in the case of Donald Trump's 'America First' strategy; but other programmatic strategies proposed today, such as 'offshore balancing' and 'strategic restraint', would encounter similar difficulties.[4] This is because these strategic responses address only the international side of the problem—that is, America's international commitments and forward presence. Yet, as we argue here, America's ability to sustain even a much reduced geopolitical footprint will require wide domestic support that is rooted in a new domestic contract with those whom US foreign policy is ostensibly meant to serve and protect: the American people.

The article is organized as follows. First, we sketch out the debate among International Relations (IR) scholars between the so-called declinists and anti-declinists, who argue over whether the United States is in decline owing to a loss of relative power. We suggest that this is the wrong question. The right question is how much *usable power* US leaders have at their disposal, and whether such power can be harnessed to programmatic policies. In the second part, we develop the argument that usable power is largely a function of domestic-level factors. We argue that the relationship between usable power and domestic politics is threefold: it lies in the link between bipartisanship and credible commitments, the effects of the presence or absence of popular mobilization around a common foreign policy purpose, and the connection between public support for foreign policy and the domestic distributive and redistributive effects thereof.

This argument rests on theoretical and empirical support from the IR and foreign policy literatures, as well as work on the politics of US foreign policy-making and the political and economic geography of US domestic politics. We use both historical case material and quantitative data on inequality in the United

[3] Joseph S. Nye, Jr, 'The rise and fall of American hegemony from Wilson to Trump', *International Affairs* 95: 1, Jan. 2019, pp. 63–80.

[4] Peter Dombrowski and Simon Reich, 'Does Donald Trump have a grand strategy?', *International Affairs* 93: 3, Sept. 2017, pp. 1013–38.

States, patterns of US economic globalization, party polarization in Congress and public trust in Washington. Finally, we discuss the implications of our analysis for restoring America's usable power. We briefly consider two possible strategic responses: international retrenchment and domestic renewal. We argue that a strategy of renewal holds greater promise for addressing the shortfall in America's usable power and bringing ends and means into better balance.

The 'relative power' debate over America's decline

Few analysts dispute that the ongoing rise and resurgence of powers such as China, Russia and India will have dramatic implications for international politics in the twenty-first century.[5] Yet there is substantial disagreement over just what these implications will be for the future of US leadership. Will shifts in the international distribution of power choke off US freedom of action abroad, or will America retain the capacity to act programmatically in foreign policy? Some IR scholars argue that if the United States can bolster the amount of material power at its disposal, or apply its existing power using more efficient military and diplomatic strategies (e.g. 'offshore balancing' or 'strategic restraint'), then it will be able to compensate for relative gains made by other states.[6] Others insist that there is more than enough potential power at America's disposal to maintain international preponderance, provided the country's leaders do not invest it unwisely in the pursuit of unattainable goals.[7]

Both camps focus on America's comparative position *vis-à-vis* other (would-be) Great Powers. In this debate, the things that matter are (a) the size of the gap in power (or in purpose) between the United States and its geopolitical competitors and (b) whether that gap can be most effectively dealt with by adjusting commitments or by clarifying strategic goals.[8] Such arguments share a common shortcoming: they overlook the domestic-level factors that might prevent the United States from exercising influence in world politics *regardless of its relative power position*. Whether America's leaders can boost national power or check potential competitors does not depend only on US power assets relative to those of other countries. Rather, the capability to act programmatically in foreign policy also depends greatly on the country's *usable power*—that is, its domestic political capacity to translate those power assets into international influence.[9]

[5] Yuen Foong Khong, 'Power as prestige in world politics', *International Affairs* 95: 1, Jan. 2019, pp. 119–42; Wu Xinbo, 'China in search of a liberal partnership international order', *International Affairs* 94: 6, Sept. 2018, pp. 995–1018.

[6] John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, 'The case for offshore balancing', *Foreign Affairs* 95: 4, July–Aug. 2016, pp. 70–83; 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, pp. 5–48; Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: a new foundation for US grand strategy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014).

[7] See Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *America abroad: the United States' global role in the 21st century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[8] See e.g. Christopher Layne, 'The US–Chinese power shift and the end of the Pax Americana', *International Affairs* 94: 1, Jan. 2018, pp. 89–111.

[9] For a pessimistic take on the capacity of US political institutions to bring coherence to foreign policy, see Dombrowski and Reich, 'Does Donald Trump have a grand strategy?'.

The concept of usable power was first put forward by Stanley Hoffman, who distinguished between 'available, usable, and effective power'.[10] Whereas 'available power' refers to the latent (potential) power at a state's disposal, 'usable power' refers only to those resources that can actually be mobilized, given domestic constraints.[11] Hoffman's insight that domestic-level factors can detract from a leader's ability to muster national resources animates a strain of IR scholarship that discusses how domestic-level variables shape statecraft.[12] Francis Fukuyama, for example, captured the notion of 'usable power' in his idea of a nation's political 'discount rate', or the difference between a nation's relative power and its institutional capacity to act. Fukuyama defined the latter as 'state strength', which in turn is determined by the extent of centralization of its political institutions.[13] He argued that highly centralized China had a lower discount rate (that is, could act more quickly and 'cheaply' in terms of domestic political cost) in the foreign policy domain than the United States, which is constrained by its fragmented institutions and the separation of powers. In what follows, we expand this point to argue that in the American case, usable power is influenced by both institutional and non-institutional features of domestic politics.

Domestic politics and usable power

Domestic political processes can both impede (weaken) and facilitate (strengthen) the exercise of American power abroad. The first of these effects has been well documented by IR scholars, but the second can be just as important.[14] That is, domestic politics can act as a force multiplier—domestic political factors can *strengthen* a leader's ability to project power and influence in a programmatic fashion. We develop this argument here. We conceptualize the usable power at a president's disposal as a function of the extent to which his policies enjoy congressional support, set the parameters of the national debate over foreign policy and are economically inclusive. We argue that presidents have historically relied upon three closely related tools to mobilize these sources of usable power in the foreign policy domain: bipartisanship, heresthetics and (re)distributive politics.[15] We draw

[10] Hoffmann, 'A view from at home', p. 474. See also Hoffmann, 'Obstinate or obsolete?'.

[11] Hoffmann used the concept of 'effective power' to draw attention to international-level impediments to influencing others' behaviour.

[12] This is particularly true of neo-classical realist scholarship. For representative examples, see Randall L. Schweller, *Unanswered threats: political constraints on the balance of power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, eds, *Neoclassical realism, the state, and foreign policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Fareed Zakaria, *From wealth to power: the unusual origins of America's world role* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

[13] Francis Fukuyama, 'The domestic basis of American power', *Lawfare*, 9 March 2014, https://www.lawfareblog.com/foreign-policy-essay-domestic-basis-american-power. (Unless otherwise noted at point of citation, all URLs cited in this article were accessible on 14 March 2018.)

[14] In addition to the scholarship noted above (in n. 12), see George F. Kennan, *American diplomacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012; first publ. 1951), p. 190; Stephen D. Krasner, *Defending the national interest: raw materials investments and US foreign policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, *The Israel lobby and US foreign policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007).

[15] Presidents are successful when they can wield these three tools to build support for a programmatic foreign policy among the political elite and the general public. Bipartisanship, heresthetics and redistributive politics are interdependent strategies for strengthening a president's hand in foreign policy. The term heresthetics is

on clearly observable contrasts between Cold War and post-Cold War foreign policy-making to track the declining role and effectiveness of these domestic-political tools and resources of American statecraft.[16] In developing these arguments, we draw upon research by IR and foreign policy scholars, as well as work on party politics, public opinion and the effects of economic globalization.

Bipartisanship, credibility and credible commitment

George Washington's farewell address of 1796 is remembered for its admonition to 'steer clear of permanent alliances'. Yet Washington's message conveyed a second warning, too: that partisanship at home invites trouble abroad. Washington wrote at a time when overseas events threatened to destroy the Republic. Although presidents today do not worry about foreign coercion to the same extent, they have shared Washington's view that in foreign affairs, bipartisanship is preferable to partisanship. One important reason for this is that bipartisanship enhances presidents' credibility and, by extension, their capacity to exert influence abroad.[17]

Both foreigners and US citizens have reason to worry about the ramifications of partisan rivalry and party turnover for US commitments. Foreign leaders worry that any proposed change in US strategy that is favourable to their interests might be reversed or soft-pedalled if (when) the opposing party gains control of the White House. To assuage such fears, presidents have historically employed various means to bolster the credibility of their foreign policy decisions. Bipartisanship is one tool for doing so.[18] Efforts to build consensus across party lines may involve appeasement, concessions, power-sharing, splitting the opposition, tying of hands, logrolls or the appointment of opposition politicians to cabinet-level positions. Most commonly, efforts at bipartisanship involve policy concessions to the opposing party, moves that help to alleviate fears of foreign policy inconsistency by signalling that the president's commitment is likely to endure even if the president's party loses office.[19]

A substantial literature on public opinion shows that domestic voters also find bipartisanship reassuring.[20] While US voters are prepared to grant presidents wide

closely associated with William Riker. See William H. Riker, *The art of political manipulation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986).

[16] In the process, we find little evidence that alternative domestic-level explanations—a president's party affiliation, the presence of unified or divided government, macroeconomic conditions, or presidential style and personality, for example—can account for the secular decline in programmatic foreign policy-making.

[17] Bipartisanship is not a substitute for hard power or good policy judgement, but it does signal political purpose and enhances credibility. See Eric A. Posner and Adrian Vermeule, *The executive unbound: after the Madisonian Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[18] Embedding foreign policy decisions in multilateral agreements is another mechanism that can enhance credibility by raising the threshold for successful presidential action and raising the costs of defection or reneging. See Joseph M. Grieco, Christopher Gelpi, Jason Reifler and Peter D. Feaver, 'Let's get a second opinion: international institutions and American public support for war', *International Studies Quarterly* 55: 2, June 2011, pp. 563–83.

[19] See Kenneth A. Schultz, 'Perils of polarization for US foreign policy', *Washington Quarterly* 40: 4, Oct. 2017, pp. 7–28. See also John Talton Lewis III, *United Nation: bipartisanship as signaling in the fight for international institutions*, Honors Thesis, Department of Government, University of Texas at Austin, May 2010.

[20] See Celia Paris, 'Breaking down bipartisanship: when and why citizens react to cooperation across party lines', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 81: 2, Summer 2017, pp. 473–94; Brandon Rottinghaus and Kent L. Tedin, 'Presiden-

discretion in foreign affairs, especially during national security emergencies, they also worry about executive capriciousness and adventurism.[21] Because they do not have access to reliable information to judge the likelihood of such negative outcomes, they rely on cues to gauge the president's commitment and trustworthiness. Bipartisanship is an especially valuable information cue because it signals that the president's policies are not motivated by narrow partisan interest. Robison and Mullinix follow a long tradition of research showing that voters do not recoil from bipartisan messaging but rather respond positively to it, with voters on each side likely to follow the (bipartisan) policy endorsements put forward by their respective preferred parties.[22]

Bipartisanship also helps to commit the party that is not in power. When members of the opposing party sign up to the president's policy, they are betting that the political benefits of sharing credit for the policy's success will outweigh any political reward (in the form of, for example, media visibility or campaign donations) they might hope to gain from opposing the president. They also sacrifice a good deal of political flexibility. Signing up to the president's strategy today makes it harder for opposition figures to switch to opposing it should the strategy prove to be unpopular tomorrow, or should they win power in the next election.

A classic example of bipartisanship from the early Cold War years is Harry Truman's agreement to Republican demands that he limit the scope and duration of the Marshall Plan. By securing the support of key Republicans such as Arthur Vandenberg, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and once a leading voice on the isolationist wing of the Republican Party, Truman sought to reassure the nations of western Europe that the US programme to support European economic regeneration would not be subject to the vicissitudes of American politics. Meanwhile, by gaining the support of fiscally conservative Republicans such as the Senate Majority Leader, Robert Taft, Truman sent a reassuring signal to voters who worried about burdensome taxation, US economic imperialism and creeping 'New Dealism'. Bipartisanship helped Truman enhance his credibility with both foreign *and* domestic publics.[23]

From 1945 to 1975 bipartisanship in US foreign policy was the norm. Republican presidents were able to exploit North–South divisions within the Democratic

tial "going bipartisan" and the consequences for institutional approval', *American Behavioral Scientist* 56: 12, Dec. 2012, pp. 1696–717; Laurel Harbridge and Neil Malhotra, 'Electoral incentives and partisan conflict in Congress: evidence from survey experiments', *American Journal of Political Science* 55: 3, July 2011, pp. 494–510. By contrast, voters seem to find partisan rhetoric to be alienating and off-putting. See Jonathan Morris and Marie Witting, 'Congressional partisanship, bipartisanship and public opinion: an experimental analysis', *Politics and Policy* 29: 1, March 2001, pp. 47–67.

[21] These fears informed the public debate even during the Cold War, when Americans were more worried about national security than about executive power. See Michael J. Hogan, *A cross of iron: Harry S. Truman and the origins of the national security state, 1945–1954* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Aaron L. Friedberg, *In the shadow of the garrison state: America's anti-statism and its Cold War strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

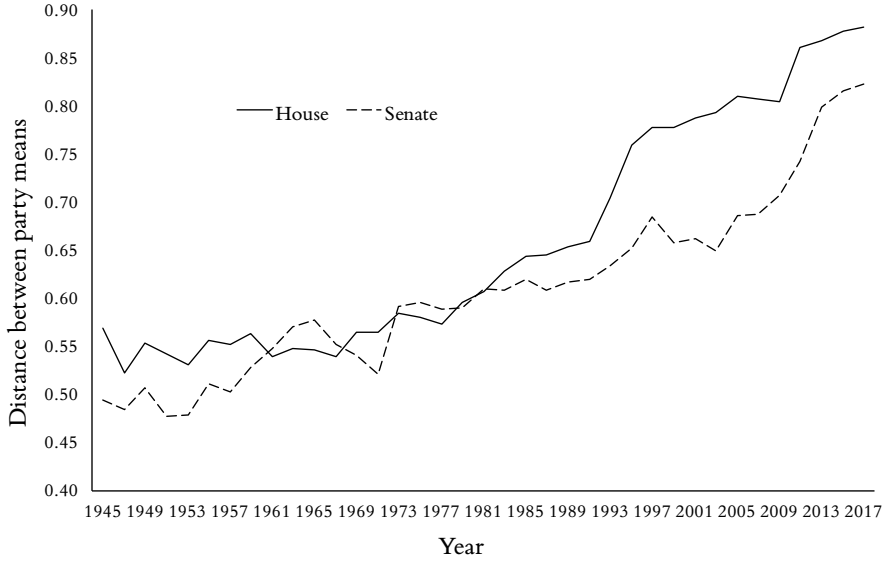
[22] Joshua Robison and Kevin J. Mullinix, 'Elite polarization and public opinion: how polarization is communicated and its effects', *Political Communication* 33: 2, April 2016, pp. 261–82.

[23] See Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan: America, Britain, and the reconstruction of western Europe, 1947–1952* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 381–2; Benjamin O. Fordham, *Building the Cold War consensus: the political economy of US national security policy, 1949–1951* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998).

party over military spending to win substantial across-the-aisle support for their foreign policies, while Democratic presidents were able to exploit East–West divisions within the Republican Party over internationalism to build foreign policy coalitions that were strikingly bipartisan in character.[24] This bipartisanship worked to stabilize the US grand strategy of liberal internationalism in the three decades after the end of the Second World War.

In recent decades, presidents have found it harder to fashion bipartisan compromises over foreign policy. As the two parties have become more internally homogeneous, unified and distinctive, and the moderate centre has become increasingly marginalized by the growing strength of the party extremes, partisanship has intensified on Capitol Hill.[25] According to one widely used measure of partisan polarization, the ideological distance between the parties has risen sharply since the early 1990s (see figure 1). As a result, members of Congress have had less incentive to publicly align themselves with the White House when it is held by the opposing party. This leaves presidents with much less political room for manoeuvre than they had during the Cold War.

Figure 1: Partisan polarization in Congress, 1945–2017



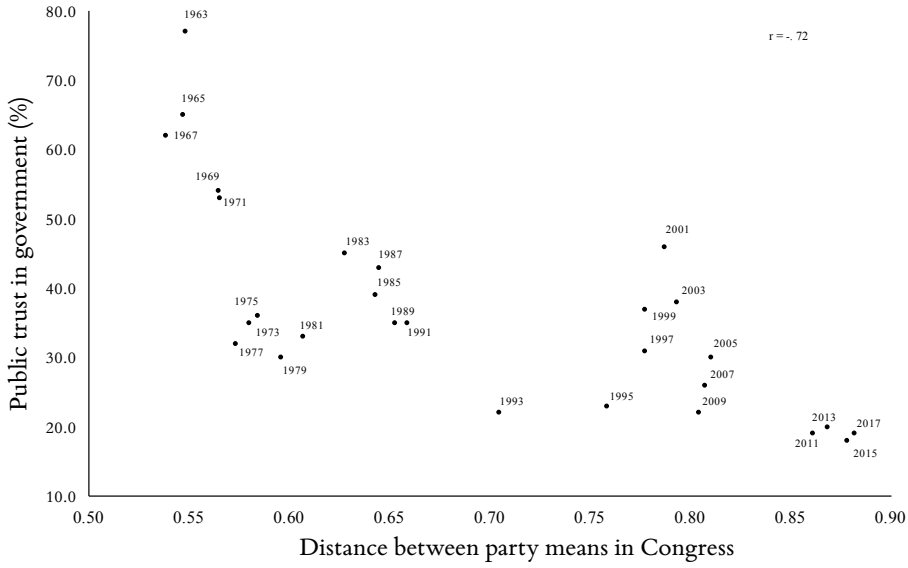
Note: The measure of partisan polarization (vertical axis) used here is DW-Nominate, which uses congressional roll-call votes to calculate the ideological distance between the two parties in a Euclidian space. The higher the score, the farther apart the parties are on policy matters.
Source: See Jeffrey B. Lewis, Keith Poole, Howard Rosenthal, Adam Boche, Aaron Rudkin and Luke Sonnet, Voteview: congressional roll-call votes database, 2017, https://voteview.com/.

[24] See Peter Trubowitz and Nicole Mellow, 'Going bipartisan: politics by other means', *Political Science Quarterly* 120: 3, Fall 2005, pp. 433–53.

[25] Michael Barber and Nolan McCarty, 'Causes and consequences of polarization', in Jane Mansbridge and Cathie Jo Martin, eds, *Political negotiation: a handbook* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016), pp. 19–53.

In Congress, party polarization has meant less bipartisan support for presidential uses of military force and for international treaties negotiated by the White House.[26] Party polarization has also been closely associated with the well-documented decline in public trust in government. Figure 2 draws on public opinion data to show that, as partisanship has intensified in Washington, the credibility of national leaders in the eyes of the public has declined. While a number of factors have contributed to the erosion of public confidence in Washington, a substantial body of political science research indicates that partisan polarization in Congress is not only a correlate of but also a contributor to this outcome.[27] This extends to the foreign policy domain.

Figure 2: Partisan polarization and public trust in government, 1963–2017



Source: Partisan polarization (horizontal axis) is based on House data at https://voteview.com (see figure 1). Data on public trust are from http://www.people-press.org/2017/05/03/public-trust-in-government-1958-2017/.

The collapse of bipartisanship in Washington has been accompanied not only by a decline in the perceived credibility of US leaders (including presidents) in the eyes of domestic audiences, but also by a decline in the credibility of US commitments overseas. Recent presidents have bypassed legislative approval for even some of their most important and consequential foreign policy initiatives, relying

[26] Schultz, 'Perils of polarization'.

[27] See Marc Hetherington and Thomas J. Rudolph, *Why Washington won't work: polarization, political trust, and the governing crisis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); David R. Jones, 'Declining trust in Congress: effects of polarization and consequences for democracy', *The Forum* 13: 3, Oct. 2015, pp. 375–94; Eric M. Uslaner, 'Congressional polarization and political trust', *The Forum* 13: 3, Oct. 2015, pp. 361–73.

instead on unilateral action and presidential directives.[28] These same signature foreign policies have frequently attracted criticism from the party out of power. Predictably, this trend has been matched by the new tendency of incoming presidents to undo their predecessors' legacies upon entering office.[29] George W. Bush withdrew from the Kyoto Protocol and opposed the Rome Statute. Barack Obama sought to end US involvement in Iraq. Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Iran nuclear deal. These dramatic reversals are possible because policies undertaken without secure legislative underpinning can be undone with a stroke of a presidential pen. The net effect is to make US foreign policy commitments less reliable than they were when bipartisan legislative actions were the norm.[30] US *relative* power may not have changed much since the tail end of the Cold War era, but American pronouncements about how it will be used in the medium to long term, or about the conditions under which it will be used, are worth less on the international stage. The usability of US power is diminished.

Heresthetics and the mobilization of public opinion

Bipartisan coalitions in favour of ambitious foreign policies do not emerge automatically in response to international exigencies.[31] On the contrary, their construction and maintenance require both propitious domestic conditions and adroit political leadership. Among other things, consensus on programmatic foreign policies requires big animating ideas and compelling guiding principles to secure the support of those who might otherwise worry about potential costs in terms of executive power, national sovereignty or economic opportunity. Crucially, these ideas must be powerful enough to discourage political opponents from challenging the status quo, or to diminish the effectiveness of any attempt to do so. As William Riker argues, leaders can actively cultivate such domestic buy-in through the strategic manipulation of issues, or 'heresthetics'.[32] The introduction of a new policy alternative in the collective choice set can redefine the terms of debate, thereby

[28] This was especially true in the Obama administration, which implemented the Paris climate accord and Iran nuclear deal, among other policies, via executive action rather than treaty: see Schultz, 'Perils of polarization', p. 15. It is also true of President Trump's so-called 'Muslim ban' and his executive order to construct a physical barrier along the southern border (which, although arguably a domestic policy, was framed in national security terms).

[29] Treaty commitments are much more durable than executive agreements. See Julian Nyarko, 'Giving the treaty a purpose: comparing the durability of treaties and executive agreements', *American Journal of International Law* 113: 1, 2018, pp. 54–89, https://ssrn.com/abstract=3133833.

[30] The sweeping rejection of international treaties and agreements was rare in the Cold War era. Not a single treaty between the US and USSR—and not a single treaty obligation to a US ally—was overturned by an incoming US president during the Cold War, despite significant controversy over the terms of agreements such as the ABM Treaty and the two Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) agreements. Even SALT II, which was very unpopular among Republican hard-liners and was never considered by the Senate for fear that it would not be ratified, was honoured by the Reagan administration for a full five years despite Reagan's condemnation of the SALT process during the 1980 election campaign.

[31] Peter Trubowitz and Nicole Mellow, 'Foreign policy, bipartisanship and the paradox of post-September 11 America', *International Politics* 48: 2–3, March 2011, pp. 164–87.

[32] See Riker, *The art of political manipulation*. See also Ronald R. Krebs, *Narrative and the making of US national security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

improving the chances of outflanking opposition and building a winning coalition. Presidents use heresthetics to set the parameters of acceptable political debate among political elites, as well as to win over the hearts and minds of electors. At the elite level, heresthetics can thus be considered a form of agenda-setting power, a way of structuring the political conversation in ways that aim to deprive the opposition of potential allies and otherwise promising lines of attack.

Some presidents have been more successful than others at structuring the terms of foreign policy debate.[33] Woodrow Wilson famously failed to secure domestic buy-in for his vision of a 'society of nations' that would guarantee national self-determination, international economic openness, and peace and security for all nations. By not establishing sufficient support for overseas activism, Wilson opened the door to a Republican Party promising 'normalcy' over novelty. Franklin Roosevelt succeeded where Wilson failed. He fused Wilson's communitarian vision of universal rights, free and open trade, and collective security with more familiar principles of Great Power politics (e.g. the balance of power and spheres of influence) and enhanced prosperity at home for industry and agriculture.[34] Roosevelt was thus able to secure the support of core Democratic constituencies in the manufacturing north-east and agricultural south while breaking the vice-like grip that midwestern and western isolationists had held on the Republicans' foreign policy platform.[35] FDR defined the terms of the foreign policy debate in a way that won over key constituencies while forcing his political opponents into a minority position. He thus strengthened his hand in foreign policy-making.

In the years following the end of the Second World War, Harry Truman expanded America's commitment to internationalism by creating new institutions to regulate the world economy and new military tools to keep the peace. At a time when conservatives controlled the purse strings in Congress, Truman framed the case for a more expansive (and expensive) American-led international order in terms of national security and anti-communism.[36] Truman's heresthetic move contributed to some forms of extremism (notably McCarthyism), but it did put internationalism on a firm bipartisan footing and gave his successors, Republican and Democratic alike, considerable latitude to advance internationalist causes.[37] To be sure, as historian John Lewis Gaddis points out, during the first decades

[33] On this dimension of foreign policy-making, see John Gerard Ruggie, 'The past as prologue? Interests, identity, and American foreign policy', *International Security* 21: 4, Spring 1997, pp. 89–125.

[34] Stephen Wertheim, 'Instrumental internationalism: the American origins of the United Nations, 1940–3', *Journal of Contemporary History*, publ. online Feb. 2019, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009419826661; Ruggie, 'The past as prologue?', pp. 97–102; G. John Ikenberry, 'The end of liberal international order?', *International Affairs* 94: 1, Jan. 2018, pp. 7–23.

[35] See Peter Trubowitz, *Defining the national interest: conflict and change in American foreign policy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 96–168.

[36] See Fred Block, 'Economic instability and military strength: the paradoxes of the 1950 rearmament decision', *Politics and Society* 10: 1, Jan. 1980, pp. 35–58; Melvyn P. Leffler, *A preponderance of power: national security, the Truman administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992). On the dramatic shift in ideas that accompanied America's embrace of internationalism, see Jeffrey W. Legro, 'Whence American internationalism?', *International Organization* 54: 2, Spring 2000, pp. 253–89.

[37] Meanwhile, potential critics of Truman's strategy of 'containment', from Henry Wallace on the left to Robert Taft on the right, found it difficult to muster support lest they be viewed as 'soft' on communism and national security.

of the Cold War Keynesian internationalists such as John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson embraced this national security frame more fully than fiscally conservative internationalists such as Dwight Eisenhower.[38] But it was not until the 1970s that isolationist pressures began to resurface.

At that point, after two decades of consensus, political fissures over the purposes of American power opened up. Mounting social tensions triggered by the Vietnam War and the civil rights movement, and the rapidly diverging economic fortunes of, respectively, the older economies of the north-east and the rapidly growing south and west, made it difficult for America's leaders to mobilize and sustain bipartisan support for an expansive internationalist agenda. In the 1970s, the resurgence of isolationism and nationalism led all three presidents—Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter—to look for ways to trim America's international sails, not extend them. However, strategic retrenchment proved to be poorly suited as a heresthetic move to lock in the support of the dynamic 'sunbelt' states of the south and west. 'Detente' with the Soviet Union—perhaps the closest that Cold War era retrenchers came to a strategic vision—was never able to secure lasting support within the Republican Party, which increasingly dominated these regions of the country electorally, and supported more assertive and militarized foreign policy agendas.

In the 1980s Ronald Reagan reversed a decade of strategic retrenchment by seizing on the possibilities for coalition-building between west and south. He did so by grafting the Republicans' longstanding commitment to anti-communism onto a 'new' foreign policy agenda that favoured liberalized trade, a strong national defence, and bolder, more assertive American leadership. Reagan called this 'peace through strength'.[39] By playing on these and other issues (such as racial tensions in the United States), Reagan was able to appeal to a broad swathe of the electorate—in existing Republican heartlands in the midwest and west to be sure, but also in territory previously dominated by the Democratic Party (especially in the south). Though less transformative than Truman's foreign policy heresthetic, Reagan's would continue to shape debates over US foreign policy even after the Cold War ended. Reagan's strategic offering made it difficult for Democrats and any Republican dissenters to launch successful attacks on his brand of internationalism.

Presidents who succeeded in securing domestic buy-in for their foreign policy agendas were able to 'expand the collective choice set' by convincing voters that their preferred international policies would strengthen national security and increase economic opportunity. In Riker's terms, those presidents succeeded in redefining the structural context of debate in ways that boosted domestic support for international engagement and made it harder for their political opponents to mount an effective campaign against it (by arguing for retrenchment, for

[38] John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of containment: a critical appraisal of American national security policy during the Cold War*, rev. edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005; first publ. 1982).

[39] Thomas J. McCormick, *America's half century: United States foreign policy in the Cold War and after* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995; first publ. 1989), pp. 216–36; Daniel Wirls, *Buildup: the politics of defense in the Reagan era* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992); Fareed Zakaria, 'The Reagan strategy of containment', *Political Science Quarterly* 105: 3, Autumn 1990, pp. 373–95.

example). They did so by taking some of the earlier arguments for retrenchment (e.g. that greater cooperation with Moscow would lead to less instability in the Third World; that the US could no longer sustain heavy defence expenditures) off the table. In the 1990s John Ruggie presciently warned that if US leaders could not make a similar case in the post-Cold War era, America's commitment to internationalism would languish.[40]

This seems to be what happened over the course of the 1990s. In the absence of a 'clear and present danger' to national security, a 'new apathy' took hold.[41] While most Americans remained attached to the core principles of internationalism, the intensity of that attachment waned dramatically. Meanwhile, for growing numbers of working- and middle-class Americans, protecting jobs had become the most important foreign policy issue.[42] In the face of these new constraints, Bill Clinton sought to restructure the public debate in terms of globalization, which he linked to a 'Third Way' of expanding economic opportunity.[43] Clinton emphasized his commitment to using foreign policy as a lever to expand the economic opportunities available to all Americans via the creation of new overseas trading relationships.[44] The problem was that ever fewer Americans actually *felt* that globalization was serving their economic interests.[45]

The attacks of 11 September 2001 allowed George W. Bush and the Republicans to reframe the foreign policy debate in strictly national security terms. That the public viewed Republicans as stronger and more competent than Democrats on national security only made this narrative easier to frame and sell politically.[46] So did the fact that prevailing popular and media narratives had already identified international terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as serious threats to national security.[47] However, as Jack Snyder, Robert

[40] Ruggie, 'The past as prologue?', p. 91.

[41] James M. Lindsay, 'The new apathy: how an uninterested public is reshaping foreign policy', *Foreign Affairs* 79: 5, Sept.–Oct. 2000, pp. 2–8.

[42] Pew Research Center, *America's place in the world*, Nov. 1993, http://www.people-press.org/1993/11/02/americas-place-in-the-world/, and *America's place in the World II*, Oct. 1997, http://www.people-press.org/1997/10/10/americas-place-in-the-world-ii/.

[43] Flavio Romano, *Clinton and Blair: the political economy of the Third Way* (New York: Routledge, 2006); James Shoch, *Trading blows: trade policy and US trade policy in a globalizing era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), pp. 161–254.

[44] Clinton's was a highly activist foreign policy, and his commitment to expand the NATO alliance has led some analysts to classify his foreign policy as one of 'primacy'. However, most treatments of Clinton stress his commitment to keeping costs in check and relying more heavily on foreign economic policy to promote US interests. See e.g. Stephen M. Walt, 'Two cheers for Clinton's foreign policy', *Foreign Affairs* 79: 2, 2000, pp. 63–79; Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Second chance: three presidents and the crisis of American superpower* (New York: Basic Books, 2007); Colin Dueck, *Reluctant crusaders: power, culture, and change in American grand strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

[45] As one careful analysis of public opinion at the time concluded: 'There is substantial skepticism about whether the net effects of economic globalization are positive, with pluralities or majorities of US citizens opposing policies to further liberalize trade, immigration, and foreign investment.' See Kenneth F. Scheve and Matthew J. Slaughter, *Globalization and the perception of American workers* (Washington DC: Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2000), p. 44.

[46] This was certainly true at the beginning of the Bush presidency, but the Republican advantage in this regard weakened considerably in the wake of the invasion of Iraq. See Hannah Goble and Peter M. Holm, 'Breaking bonds? The Iraq War and the loss of Republican dominance in national security', *Political Research Quarterly* 62: 2, Sept. 2008, pp. 215–29.

[47] The Bush administration is a good example of how presidents can use international events to bolster a domestic narrative, and how a compelling foreign policy narrative can allow them to control the domestic interpre-

Shapiro and Yaeli Bloch-Elkon showed, the global 'war on terrorism' ultimately proved incapable of securing lasting domestic support for Bush's foreign policy.[48] Especially as the US military effort in Iraq turned from a relatively successful invasion into a costly occupation and counter-insurgency operation, partisan divisions over the purposes of American power and the economic costs of power projection deepened, and public pressure to 'do less internationally' mounted. Initial bipartisan support for the war on terrorism dissipated. Public dissatisfaction with the administration's handling of Iraq contributed to the Democrats' triumph in the 2006 midterm elections and played an important role in the election of President Obama two years later.[49]

By the time Barack Obama took office, America's stock of 'usable power' was clearly limited by domestic dissension and ideological deficit.[50] Pressure to pull back from using American power abroad intensified in the wake of the 2008 economic collapse. In response, Obama pursued a strikingly different foreign policy heresthetic from that of his predecessor by reasserting American respect for international law and liberal values while reducing the costs of America's military footprint. The first of these two themes found expression in Obama's 'values as security' speech of May 2009; the second was on display later that year in a West Point speech in which he declared that it was time for 'nation-building here at home'.[51] Despite early signs that he might succeed in reshaping public perceptions of American purpose, Obama's heresthetic manoeuvre ultimately left many Americans frustrated and dissatisfied.[52] Instead of rendering alternative strategies politically unviable, Obama's foreign policy legacy offered his critics political ammunition with which to attack the administration for both weakness and overreach. By the end of Obama's two terms in office, there was no shared vision of foreign policy purpose even within the Democratic Party.[53]

Figure 3 depicts responses over the period 1987–2017 to Pew's public opinion survey questions on whether military strength is the best way to ensure peace. The widening of the partisan gap is stark. As the spike after 2002 suggests, Bush and Obama suffered from a common problem in the international arena: failure

tation of the international environment. See Jon Western, 'The war over Iraq: selling war to the American public', *Security Studies* 14: 1, Jan. 2005, pp. 106–39; Ronald R. Krebs and Jennifer K. Lobasz, 'Fixing the meaning of 9/11: hegemony, coercion, and the road to war in Iraq', *Security Studies* 16: 3, Aug. 2007, pp. 409–51.

[48] Jack Snyder, Robert Y. Shapiro and Yaeli Bloch-Elkon, 'Free hand abroad, divide and rule at home', *World Politics* 61: 1, Jan. 2009, pp. 155–87.

[49] Gary C. Jacobson, 'Referendum: the 2006 midterm congressional elections', *Political Science Quarterly* 122: 1, Spring 2007, pp. 1–24 at pp. 5–9.

[50] On political dissension in the early Obama years, see Charles A. Kupchan and Peter L. Trubowitz, 'The illusion of liberal internationalism's revival', *International Security* 35: 1, Summer 2010, pp. 95–109. For a nuanced discussion of Obama's attitude towards US leadership and how this intersected with America's hard power during the early years of his presidency, see Adam Quinn, 'The art of declining politely: Obama's prudent presidency and the waning of American power', *International Affairs* 87: 4, 2011, pp. 803–24.

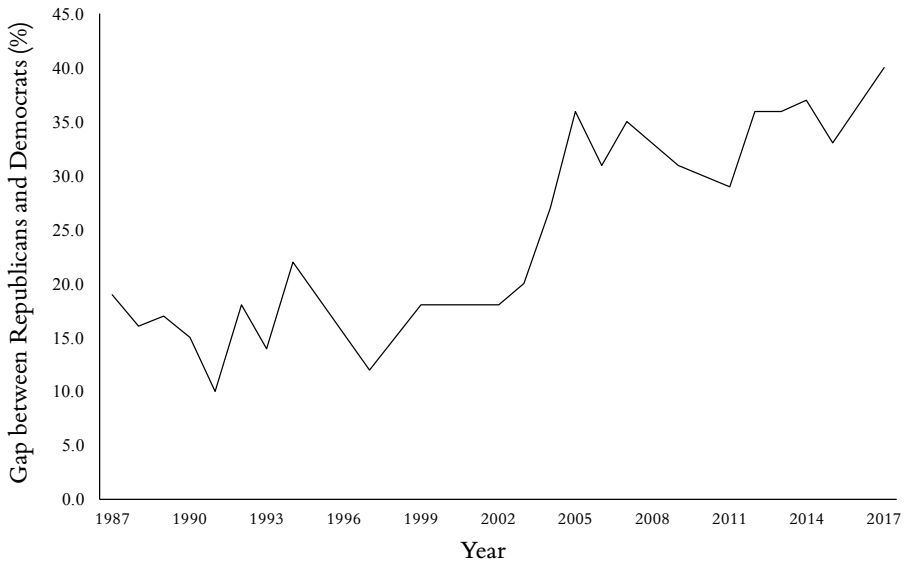
[51] The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 'Remarks by the President on national security', 21 May 2009, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-national-security-5-21-09; The White House, 'The new way forward', 1 Dec. 2009, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2009/12/01/new-way-forward-presidents-address.

[52] Richard C. Eichenberg, 'Public opinion and foreign policy in the Obama era', *Politique Américaine* 14: 2, Fall 2009, pp. 11–14.

[53] During the 2016 Democratic primaries, for example, both main candidates for the party's nomination came out against ratification of the TPP, in a significant repudiation of Obama's internationalist programme.

to build a broad base of domestic support. After 9/11, Bush enjoyed some obvious success at mobilizing American power in the service of an expansionist foreign policy that clearly broke with both the Clinton and George H. W. Bush administrations. Yet over the long term, neither he nor Obama was able to close the ideological gap between Republicans and Democrats over how best to promote American interests internationally. Bush's response to 9/11, including the Iraq War, might have rallied the Republican faithful to his side. But over time, the war alienated many voters.[54] President Obama, too, could count on solid backing from his own party on most foreign policy issues—although not always for his free-trade agenda, as noted above. But his emphasis on diplomacy over military power attracted bitter criticism from across the aisle.[55] Like Bush, Obama adopted an approach to foreign affairs that failed to reposition the existing line of cleavage in the domestic arena in such a way as to yield a stable bipartisan majority.[56] Both

Figure 3: Ideological divide over 'peace through strength', 1987–2017



Note: The partisan gap (vertical axis) refers to the percentage difference between Republicans who agreed and Democrats who disagreed: the greater it is, the further apart Republicans and Democrats were on the question.
Source: Based on data from opinion surveys by Pew Research Center and, for 2005, German Marshall Fund. Data is available at the Roper Foundation Center for Public Opinion Research, https://www.ropercenter.cornell.edu. Interpolated for missing data in 1995, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2008, 2010 and 2016.

[54] Philip A. Klinkner, 'Mr Bush's war: foreign policy in the 2004 election', *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36: 2, June 2006, pp. 281–96; Jeffrey M. Jones, 'War through partisan lenses', Gallup, 15 Nov. 2015, http://www.gallup.com/poll/19924/war-through-partisan-lenses.aspx.

[55] Pew Research Center, *Public uncertain, divided over America's place in the world*, April 2016, http://www.people-press.org/2016/05/05/public-uncertain-divided-over-americas-place-in-the-world/.

[56] Polarization has not prevented presidents such as Bush or Obama from enacting legislation in support of their preferred foreign policies, but such domestic achievements are more vulnerable to being undone than bipartisan legislation would be.

presidents' foreign policies ultimately proved to be electoral liabilities. Instead of cementing domestic support, their policies fuelled divisive electoral strategizing within both parties. This eroded their usable power in the foreign policy arena.

Redistribution, economic inclusiveness and foreign policy

As the experiences of Woodrow Wilson, George W. Bush and Barack Obama show, presidents cannot necessarily persuade domestic publics to back their preferred foreign policy agenda over the long term—even when external events would appear to lend credibility to domestic calls for international activism. One lesson to be drawn from this reflection is that voters' support for ambitious international agendas must be self-reinforcing and resilient in the face of rival or alternative foreign policy frames. One common way of giving the public an enduring self-interested stake in ambitious international policies is by making sure the grand strategy pays economic dividends for average Americans—and, where it fails to do so, provides adequate social protections or compensatory measures.[57]

For more than half a century, liberal internationalism served the interests of ordinary Americans by offering such opportunities and protections. But it is now conventional wisdom that growing numbers of Americans have lost faith in the idea that deeper international engagement means greater economic opportunity and security for them.[58] As the progressive distributive pay-out of US foreign policy has diminished, due in part to the pursuit of neo-liberal policies both domestically and internationally, the domestic bases of support for internationalism have narrowed.[59] There is considerable evidence of this for the post-1990 period.[60] This era is not unique, however, and structural parallels with earlier eras lend support to the argument that the positive relationship between inclusive growth and public support for international engagement is a more generic phenomenon. The key point is that presidents must craft their international policies in ways that are perceived to serve a broad base of Americans instead of enriching narrow sectional, class or partisan interests. Otherwise, domestic actors may conclude that their self-interest is best served not through international openness and interdependence, but through economic nationalism and political isolationism.[61]

[57] The argument here draws on Peter Trubowitz, 'Shared purpose: US foreign policy in an age of anxiety', manuscript in progress.

[58] Support for economic globalization has always been an elite-driven phenomenon, but economic openness has been at least tolerated by the broader electorate. See Bastiaan van Apeldoorn and Naná de Graaf, *American grand strategy and corporate elite networks: the open door since the end of the Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2016). See also Inderjeet Parmar, 'The US-led liberal order: imperialism by another name?', *International Affairs* 94: 1, Jan. 2018, pp. 151–72.

[59] Ikenberry, 'The end of liberal international order?'; Doug Stokes, 'Trump, American hegemony and the future of the liberal international order', *International Affairs* 94: 1, Jan. 2018, pp. 133–50.

[60] See Brian B. Burgoon, Tim Oliver and Peter Trubowitz, 'Globalization, domestic politics, and transatlantic relations', *International Politics* 54: 4, July 2017, pp. 420–33; Ronald Ingelhart and Pippa Norris, *Trump, Brexit, and the rise of populism: economic have-nots and cultural backlash*, working paper (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Kennedy School, 19 July 2016); Dani Rodrik, 'Populism and the economics of globalisation', *Journal of International Business Policy* 1: 1, June 2018, pp. 12–33.

[61] Whether sectors of the domestic economy benefit from economic openness will depend upon their relationship to the world economy and is largely out of the control of national governments. But presidents can pursue economic integration (or any other foreign economic policy) in ways that are more or less redistribu-

Theodore Roosevelt's 'Square Deal' and Franklin Roosevelt's 'New Deal' both linked grand strategic ambitions abroad to benefit-sharing policies at home. In the early twentieth century, Teddy Roosevelt broke with America's longstanding tradition of self-isolation and set the country on an internationalist course, albeit one quite different from the liberal internationalism of the later twentieth century. He was in the White House at a time when the biggest threats to America emanated from the domestic rather than the international environment.[62] In the face of deep social unrest over the uneven economic effects of rapid industrialization, Roosevelt's expansionist turn was coupled with a progressive agenda of economic and social reform designed, as he put it, 'to subordinate the big corporations to the public welfare'.[63] By putting government on the side of the common man, Roosevelt's 'Square Deal' made it easier for workers and farmers to support his efforts to modernize the military, open foreign markets and extend the nation's strategic reach.

Thirty years later, Franklin Roosevelt faced an even more daunting domestic challenge—the havoc unleashed by the Great Depression. Building on Teddy Roosevelt's progressive-era efforts to put a brake on predatory business practices, FDR's sweeping New Deal policies and programmes committed the federal government to guaranteeing the economic security of working Americans. By making that commitment, Roosevelt made it possible for America to embrace what James Kurth aptly called a 'national project of international expansion'—the rise of a Pax Americana that rested on an interlocking network of international economic, political and military institutions led and dominated by the United States.[64] Open trade, influxes of low-cost labour and extensive security commitments worked for the United States, economically and strategically. For decades after the Second World War, tight labour markets, a corporate culture of civic responsibility, and a bipartisan commitment to progressive taxation, social protection and affordable education spread the benefits of internationalist policies and thus made such policies agreeable to a broad cross-section of Americans.[65]

FDR's legacy meant that his successors, each intent on pursuing expansive foreign policies to a greater or lesser degree, could do so knowing that most sectors of the American economy stood to benefit from internationalism. Most lawmakers could vote in favour of internationalist foreign policies—military preparedness, free trade, foreign aid and so forth—safe in the knowledge that a preponderance of their domestic constituents would benefit from their actions.[66] Yet even before

tive and egalitarian. Only those policies that serve a broad base of interests will endure over the long term.

[62] See Christopher McKnight Nichols, *Promise and peril: America at the dawn of a global age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

[63] Cited in Sidney M. Milkis and Michael Nelson, *The American presidency: 1776–1998*, 3rd edn (Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1999), p. 198.

[64] James Kurth, 'American grand strategy: a pattern of history', *The National Interest*, no. 43, 1996, pp. 3–19.

[65] It is important to note that the benefits of international engagement were not *universally* distributed, however. As Ira Katznelson demonstrates, support for the New Deal and FDR's liberal internationalist foreign policy was contingent on the preservation of racial segregation: Ira Katznelson, *Fear itself: the New Deal and the origins of our time* (New York: Norton, 2013).

[66] Meanwhile, Cold War fears of Soviet-style communism tempered whatever misgivings Americans still harboured about the domestic costs of greater international openness, interdependence and engagement.

the Berlin Wall came down, support for internationalism had started to weaken. From the 1980s on, less regulation, lower taxes, de-unionization and higher profits for the few meant less economic security for the many.[67] Meanwhile, for those expecting a 'peace dividend', the end of the Cold War brought no windfall. As a result, many of those who viewed themselves as losing out from elite-led internationalist policies would soon come to make harsh judgements about NAFTA, the WTO, other multilateral trade arrangements, and the broader contours of the globalized (American-led) world economic system.

The costs to working Americans of the neo-liberal agenda continued to mount in the 1990s and 2000s, even as the geopolitical rationale for bearing the burdens of global leadership became less compelling.[68] Financialization and the expansion of consumer debt helped buffer the negative impact on average Americans to some degree—until the 2008 financial crash. Yet for many middle- and working-class Americans, globalization was no longer seen as a means to easy household credit, but rather as a source of growing income inequality, economic insecurity and social uncertainty. Many economists at the time insisted that the correlation between globalization and inequality evident in figure 4 was simplistic and misleading.[69] However, to 'globalization's losers' the interrelationship was clear. This was not lost on Donald Trump or Bernie Sanders, both of whom stressed the link between globalization and inequality.[70]

Trump's 'America First' and Bernie Sanders's brand of economic populism appealed to voters who had soured towards globalization and were no longer convinced that Washington had their interests at heart.[71] Many of those voters also wonder why their leaders are not insisting that wealthy democracies such as Germany and Japan put a larger share of their income towards collective defence,[72] and why Congress has looked the other way as millions of factory workers have seen their jobs outsourced to China and other emerging econo-

[67] Jacob S. Hacker, *The great risk shift: the new economic insecurity and the decline of the American dream*, rev. edn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Such neo-liberal reforms cut against the 'embedded liberal' compromise that defined the postwar economic order. See John Gerard Ruggie, 'International regimes, transactions, and change: embedded liberalism in the postwar economic order', *International Organization* 36: 2, Spring 1982, pp. 379–415.

[68] Carla Norrlof, 'Hegemony and inequality: Trump and the liberal playbook', *International Affairs* 94: 1, Jan. 2018, pp. 63–88.

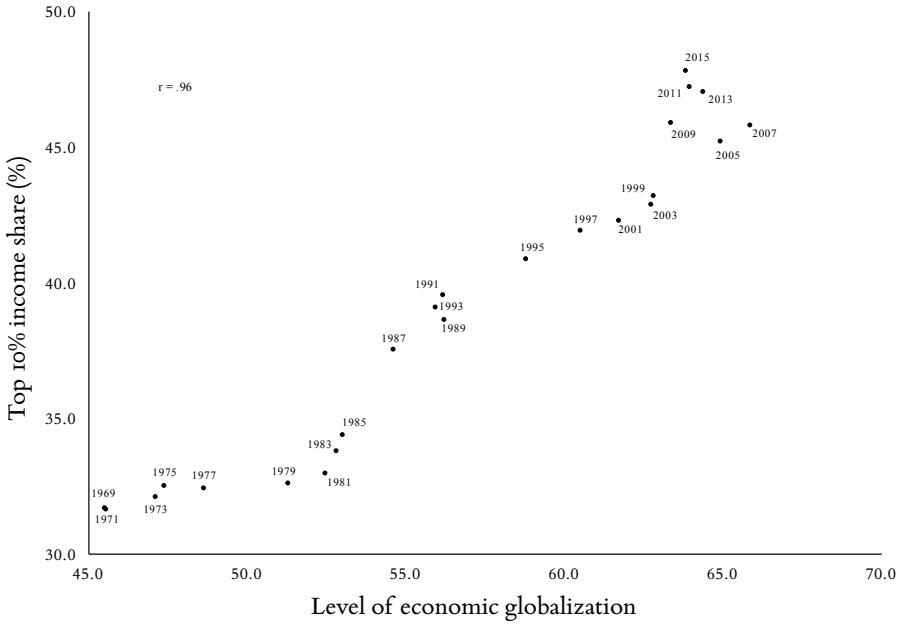
[69] Economists disagree about the importance of globalization in explaining inequality within (and between) countries. See e.g. Martin Ravallion, 'Inequality and globalization: a review essay', *Journal of Economic Literature* 56: 2, 2018, pp. 620–42.

[70] See Donald Trump, 'Declaring America's economic independence', 28 June 2016, https://www.politico.com/story/2016/06/full-transcript-trump-job-plan-speech-224891; Bernie Sanders, 'Democrats need to wake up', *New York Times*, 28 June 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/29/opinion/campaign-stops/bernie-sanders-democrats-need-to-wake-up.html.

[71] By the time of the 2016 election, conditions were ripe for political candidates to capitalize on these sentiments. It is not that economic inequality did not matter in previous election cycles, just that it mattered differently in 2016. See Diana C. Mutz, 'Status threat, not economic hardship, explains the 2016 presidential vote', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 115: 19, May 2018, pp. E4330–E4339.

[72] William Jordan, 'Could NATO be a wedge issue in 2016?', *Economist*/YouGov, 21 July 2016, https://today.yougov.com/topics/politics/articles-reports/2016/07/21/nato-could-be-wedge-issue-2016. On public support for Germany taking on more 'strategic responsibilities', see Pew Research Center, *Germany and the United States: reliable allies but disagreement on Russia, global leadership, and trade*, 7 May 2015, http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/05/07/germany-and-the-united-states-reliable-allies/.

Figure 4: Globalization and inequality in the US, 1969–2015



Notes: Economic globalization refers to trade and financial flows across borders. See Axel Dreher, 'Does globalization affect growth? Evidence from a new index of globalization', *Applied Economics* 38: 10, 2006, pp. 1091–110; Savina Gygli, Florian Haelg and Jan-Egbert Sturm, *The KOF Globalization Index – revisited*, KOF working paper no. 439 (Zurich, 2018), http://globalization.kof.ethz.ch/.
Source: Economic globalization based on KOF (Swiss Economic Institute) Index of Globalization at http://globalization.kof.ethz.ch/. Income inequality data are from Emmanuel Saez, *Striking it richer: the evolution of top incomes in the United States*, University of California, Berkeley, 30 June 2016, http://elsa.berkeley.edu/~saez/TabFig2015prel.xls.

mies.[73] Many wonder, too, why the two parties cannot find common ground on a new immigration policy, and blame the immigration status quo for driving down wages for low-skilled labour in the service sector and some trades, and for straining social services, especially for those on low and middle rungs of the socio-economic ladder.[74]

Whether or not these perceptions match economic reality, the links between declining middle- and working-class fortunes, on the one hand, and the erosion of US 'usable power', on the other hand, are clear. Why should ordinary Americans be expected to support their tax dollars being used to underwrite an international architecture they no longer view as being in their economic self-interest? And why would elected representatives support internationalist foreign policies

[73] See David H. Autor, David Dorn and Gordon H. Hanson, *The China shock: learning from labor market adjustment to large changes in trade*, working paper 21906 (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, Jan. 2016), http://www.nber.org/papers/w21906.

[74] Research suggests that Americans' personal economic fortunes significantly influence their attitudes on immigration. See Judith L. Goldstein and Margaret E. Peters, 'Nativism or economic threat: attitudes toward immigrants during the Great Recession', *International Interactions* 40: 3, April 2014, pp. 376–401; Kenneth F. Scheve and Matthew J. Slaughter, 'Labor market competition and individual preferences over immigration policy', *Review of Economics and Statistics* 83: 1, Feb. 2001, pp. 133–45.

that are likely to invite punishment from unhappy constituents? In the absence of a clear, convincing and comprehensive domestic pay-off, internationalism has become highly charged and politicized.[75] Once a unifying, common endeavour that bound the public and the political class together, internationalism is now an electoral liability for increasing numbers of lawmakers. That Donald Trump was able to win the presidency in November 2016 on an avowedly anti-internationalist platform is evidence enough that large numbers of Americans now believe that economic protectionism is a viable pathway to national prosperity, and that international leadership has become a cause of the country's economic troubles instead of a solution to them.[76]

Conclusions: retrenchment or renewal?

In the case of the United States, international leadership depends crucially on a president's ability to build and maintain domestic political support. This is true no matter what sort of international agenda a president wishes to pursue; but it is especially true of grand strategies such as liberal internationalism that require huge investments of national resources. Today, public confidence in deep international engagement (and the leaders who advocate it) has demonstrably weakened in the absence of bipartisanship, a compelling foreign policy narrative and economic inclusiveness. The result is that America's usable power will continue to languish even if the United States retains its position as the world's predominant power. This is a crucial point often missed in the contemporary debates about what the future of US foreign policy should be.

The issues raised here are pressing ones. Although America's usable power was already highly constricted when Trump was elected, it seems to have eroded further since then. Under Trump, partisanship in Washington has increased, not decreased.[77] And while his 'America First' narrative might have tapped into a widespread feeling that the United States is in decline *vis-à-vis* its rivals, its heresthetical value is limited; there is little realistic chance that Trump's vision will bridge the chasms that separate Republicans and Democrats, conservatives and liberals, internationalists and nationalists.[78] Trump's harsh stance on immigration has proved to be very unpopular with the majority of voters, even if it strongly appeals to his base.[79] His embrace of protectionism and economic nationalism is

[75] Jeff D. Colgan and Robert O. Keohane, 'The liberal order is rigged: fix it now or watch it wither', *Foreign Affairs* 96: 3, May–June 2017, pp. 36–44.

[76] We are not suggesting that foreign policy was the most important factor in Trump's election. However, it is clear that his policies on trade, in particular, did contribute to his (narrow) victories in states such as Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania, and thus to his overall victory in the electoral college. According to one analysis, Hillary Clinton would have won the 2016 presidential election if the United States had faced half as much import competition from China alone. See David Autor, David Dorn, Gordon Hanson and Kaveh Majlesi, *A note on the effect of rising trade exposure on the 2016 presidential election*, working paper (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 16 Nov. 2016).

[77] See Pew Research Center, *The partisan divide on political value grows even wider*, 5 Oct. 2017, http://www.people-press.org/2017/10/05/the-partisan-divide-on-political-values-grows-even-wider/.

[78] Norrlof, 'Hegemony and inequality'.

[79] John Gramlich, *Trump voters want to build the wall, but are more divided on other immigration questions*, Pew Research Center, 29 Nov. 2016, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/29/trump-voters-want-to-build-the-

more popular, but its contribution to economic inclusiveness is limited: Trump's most fervent supporters are the ones most likely to bear the brunt of protectionist policies. Indeed, none of President Trump's domestic policies appear designed to build inclusive support for a coherent foreign policy agenda.

Can the US put its foreign policy house in order? Realists argue that the best way to restore solvency to US foreign policy is to bring international commitments back into line with what domestic politics will allow. They blame internationalism's failures on the strategy itself, arguing that a leaner and more selective foreign policy such as retrenchment or 'offshore balancing' would be less risky and more cost-effective. Internationalists counter by arguing that such strategies are neither safer nor cheaper, and risk throwing the baby out with the bathwater.[80] They argue that America's alliances and forward presence in Europe, Asia and the Middle East reduce the danger of Great Power competition and are cheaper to maintain than to rebuild once dismantled.

What analysts on both sides of this critical debate about America's role in the world miss is that the decline in the efficacy of the country's foreign policy has deep roots in domestic politics. Attacking the problem solely from the international side, either by sharpening commitments or by shedding them, will not restore America's *domestic* capacity to balance ends and means. Realists, for example, may be right in insisting that Washington should engage more selectively internationally. But retrenchment will not reduce the level of partisanship or the level of public frustration over job displacement and income loss caused by globalization and trade liberalization. As such, retrenchment would fail to ensure that the United States could muster enough usable power to sustain even the circumscribed set of international commitments that realists advocate.

From the perspective of all who wish to see the United States capable of acting in a more programmatic fashion—liberal internationalists, offshore balancers, even advocates of 'America First'—a better approach is to build a case for a foreign policy on the basis of a renewed social contract. Such a contract would connect achievements in the foreign policy realm to recognizable benefits for a broad cross-section of Americans. This would require political leaders to be explicit about the short- and long-term distributional consequences of their preferred international strategy for different domestic sectors and groups. This was less essential when middle- and working-class Americans had confidence in Washington, there was a credible connection between America's international purpose and its power, and the economic benefits of international engagement outweighed the costs. One of the principal lessons of Donald Trump's unexpected victory in 2016 is that those days are over.

wall-but-are-more-divided-on-other-immigration-questions. See also Niraj Chokshi, '75 percent of Americans say immigration is good for country, poll finds', *New York Times*, 23 June 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/23/us/immigration-polls-donald-trump.html; Daniel Cox, *Growing divide on immigration and America's moral leadership*, Public Religion Research Institute, 26 June 2018, https://www.prri.org/research/growing-divide-on-immigration-and-americas-moral-leadership/.

[80] See e.g. Brooks and Wohlforth, *America abroad*.

Our analysis suggests that ignoring the problem of domestic politics will only further erode America's ability to act decisively in foreign affairs. Moreover, it would be wrong-headed to assume that a domestic coalition in favour of international activism will surface in automatic response to a serious international threat such as the emergence of an aggressive peer competitor. Restoring America's usable power will require political spadework on the home front: bipartisan bridge-building, an inclusive political vision to connect national priorities with foreign policy, and a sustained commitment to more equitable redistributive policies. This will be a tall order, to be sure; but presidents have successfully navigated such troubled waters in the past.