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THE RETURN OF **GREAT POWER RIVALRY**

**DEMOCRACY
VERSUS
AUTOCRACY
FROM THE
ANCIENT WORLD
TO THE U.S.
AND CHINA**

**MATTHEW
KROENIG**

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***The Return of Great Power Rivalry:
Democracy versus Autocracy from the Ancient
World to the US and China***

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Question and Answer

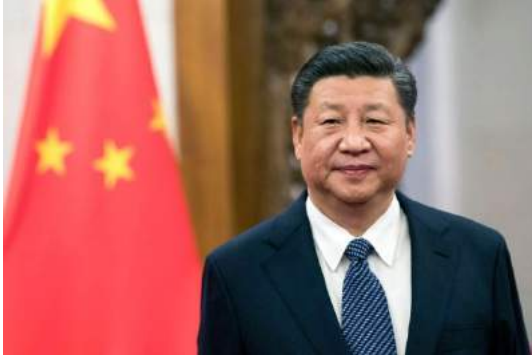
Questions:

- Will the United States retain its position as the leading state in the international system?***
- Why are some states able to achieve enduring international leadership and others are not?***

Answer:

- Democracies have a built-in advantage in the struggle for global mastery.***
- The United States will remain the leading state in the international system for the foreseeable future.***

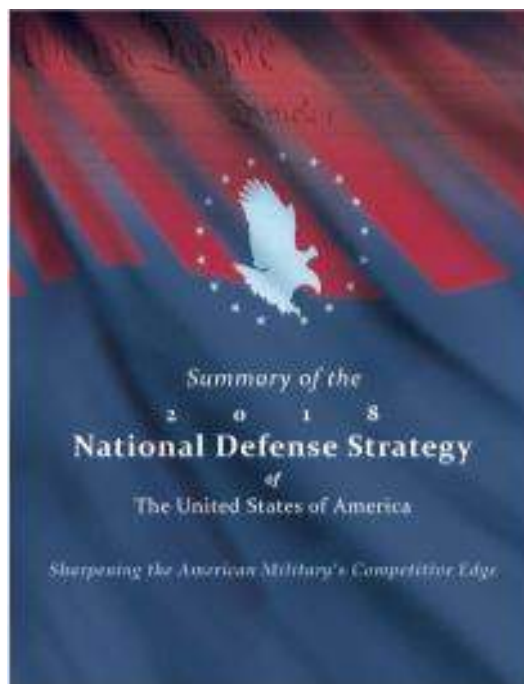
The Return of Great Power Rivalry



The Return of Great Power Competition

“The central challenge to U.S. prosperity and security is the reemergence of long-term, strategic competition...with Russia and China.”

–James Mattis, U.S. Secretary of Defense, January 19, 2018



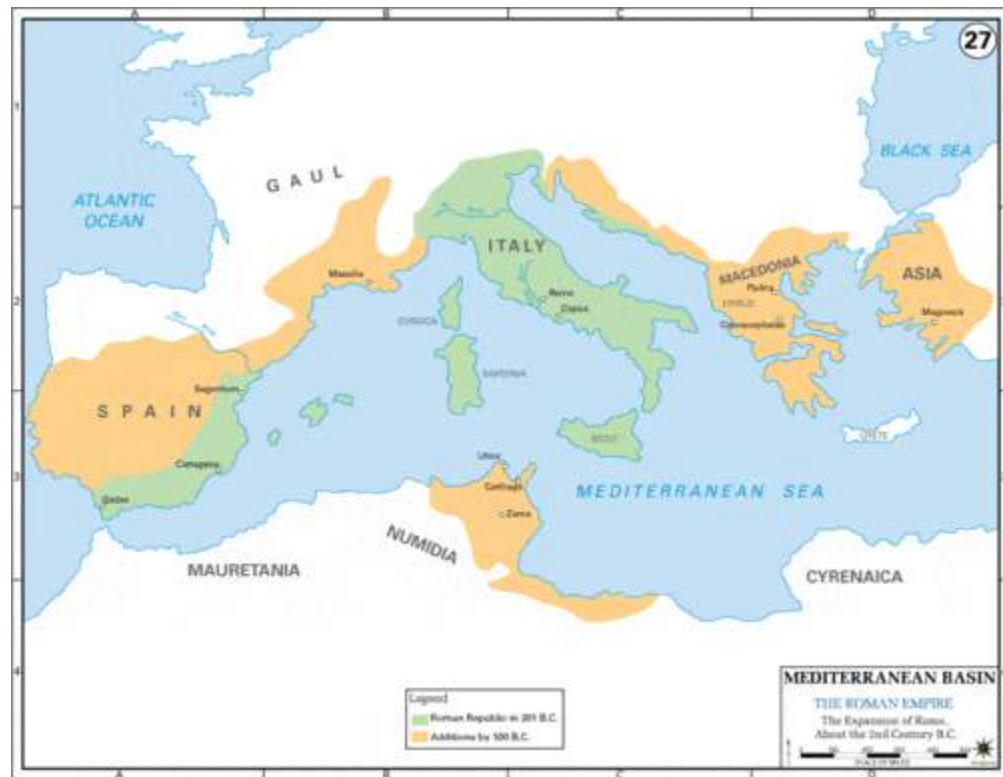
Existing Scholarship

- ***Much related literature, but little that answers this precise question:***
 - ***Power transition theory (e.g., Allison 2017) predicts that transitions result in conflict, but does not problematize causes of transition.***
 - ***“Long cycle theory” (e.g., Gilpin 1981) describes cycle of rise and fall of great powers, but does not provide simple theoretical explanation.***
 - ***There are many studies on American resilience (e.g., Lieber 2012, Beckley 2018) and decline (e.g., Kupchan 2012) and on the challenge from China (e.g., Friedberg 2011) and Russia (e.g., McFaul 2018), but these studies do not develop broader theories about great power competition or explicitly employ the comparative historical method.***
 - ***There is much recent research on a “democratic advantage” in discrete issue areas (e.g., Acemoglu and Robinson 2012, Reiter and Stam 2002), but these findings are not aggregated up into a broader argument about democratic advantages in great power competition.***

Theory: The Democratic Advantage

▪ *The Democratic Advantage in the Political Theory Canon:*

- *Polybius*
- *Montesquieu*
- *Machiavelli*



Theory: The Democratic Advantage

- ***To amass power and influence internationally a state must be strong:***
 - ***Economically***
 - ***Diplomatically***
 - ***Militarily***

Theory: The Democratic Advantage

The Democratic Advantage in Contemporary Social Science

▪ Economic

- ***Higher long-run rates of economic growth (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012).***
 - ***Good economic institutions***
 - ***Innovation***
- ***More open to international trade (Milner and Kobuta 2005).***
- ***Better able to raise debt (Schultz and Weingast 2003).***
- ***More open and, therefore, benefit from positive brain drain.***
- ***Fewer capital controls (Eichengreen and Leblang 2008).***

Theory: The Democratic Advantage

The Democratic Advantage in Contemporary Social Science

▪ Diplomatic

- Larger, more enduring and reliable alliances (e.g., Leeds 2003).***
- More likely to keep international commitments (e.g., Simmons 2010).***
- Greater “soft power” resources (e.g., Nye 1990).***
- Less likely to generate counter-balancing coalitions.***
- Better foreign policy decision-making.***

Theory: The Democratic Advantage

The Democratic Advantage in Contemporary Social Science

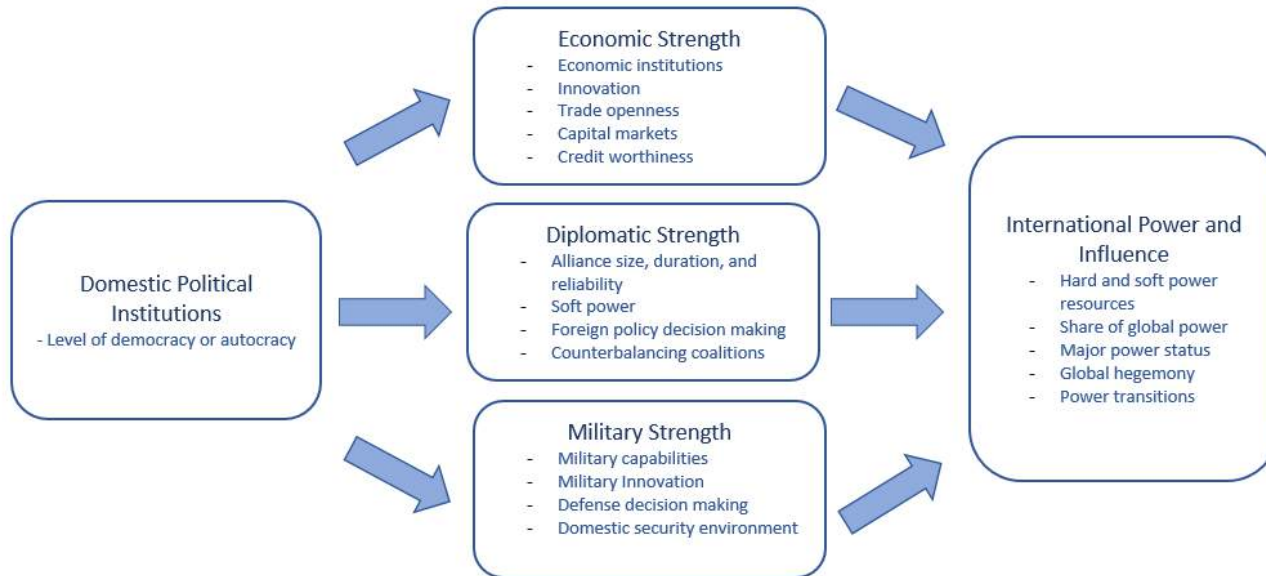
▪ Military

- ***More likely to win the wars they fight (Reiter and Stam 2002)***
 - ***Better decision-making and more effective officers.***
- ***More innovative for operational concepts and developing strategic technologies.***
- ***Can focus on foreign threats. Do not need to “omni-balance” (David 1991) or “coup-proof” (Talmage 2015).***

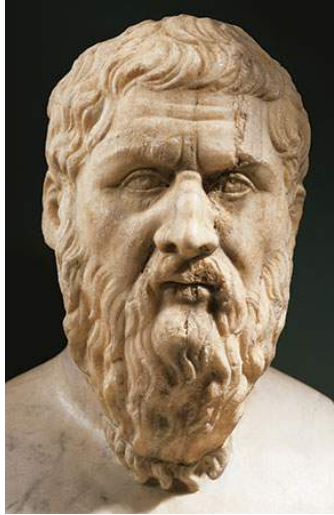
3) Theory: The Democratic Advantage

- ***Toward a broader theory of domestic political institutions and competitiveness in great power rivalry.***
- ***States that excel in key economic, diplomatic, and military matters will perform better than states that do not.***
- ***Democracies appear to perform better in a range of key areas.***
- ***Democracies enjoy a built-in advantage in long-run great power competitions.***

A Schematic of the Argument



3) *Theory: The Autocratic Advantage?*



3) Theory: The Autocratic Advantage

- ***Autocracies can make bold and rapid decisions.***
- ***Autocracies can engage in long-run strategic planning.***
- ***Autocracies are not constrained by legal or normative concerns. They can maintain secrecy and better engage in deception.***
- ***Autocratic politics are clean and efficient***

Theory: Democracy versus Autocracy

No Difference

- ***Realist-domestic politics do not matter***
- ***Recent criticisms of democratic advantage literature (e.g., Gartzke and Weisiger 2013, Weeks, Weiss, etc.)***

4) Evidence: Qualitative Judgement of System Leader

- ***System leader, according to Rasler and Thompson (1985):***
 - *the Dutch Republic (1609–1713)*
 - *Great Britain (1714–1945)*
 - *the United States (1945–1985)*
- ***The system leader for the past four centuries has also been among the most open.***

4) Evidence: Quantitative Evidence

- ***Dataset on all states from 1815- 2010.***
 - ***CINC Scores, 0-1, least to most powerful.***
 - ***Polity Scores, -10 to +10 most autocratic to most democratic.***

- ***At least one percent of global power:***
 - ***Democracies, 28%; Autocracies, 20%.***

- ***Among the major powers:***
 - ***Democracies 16%; Autocracies 7%.***

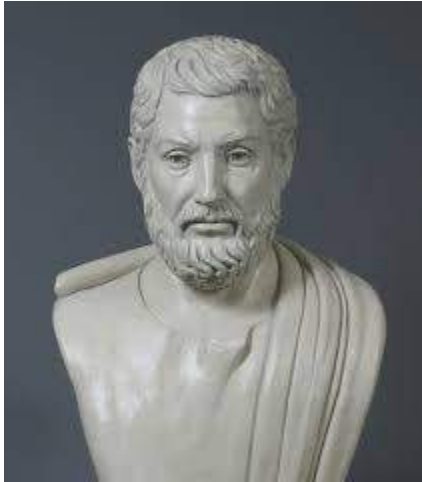
- ***The leading power:***
 - ***Democracies 84%; Autocracies 16%.***

4) Evidence: Case Studies

- ***Paired Comparisons of more autocratic and more democratic competitors from ancient world to the present:***
 - ***Athens, Sparta, and Greece, 499 BC-404 BC***
 - ***Roman Republic, Carthage, and Macedon 496 BC-146 BC***
 - ***Venetian Republic, Byzantine Empire, Genoa and Duchy of Milan, 697AD-1559AD***
 - ***Dutch Republic and Spanish Empire, 1568-1713***
 - ***Great Britain, France, and Germany 1688-1945***
 - ***The United States and the Soviet Union, 1945-1991***

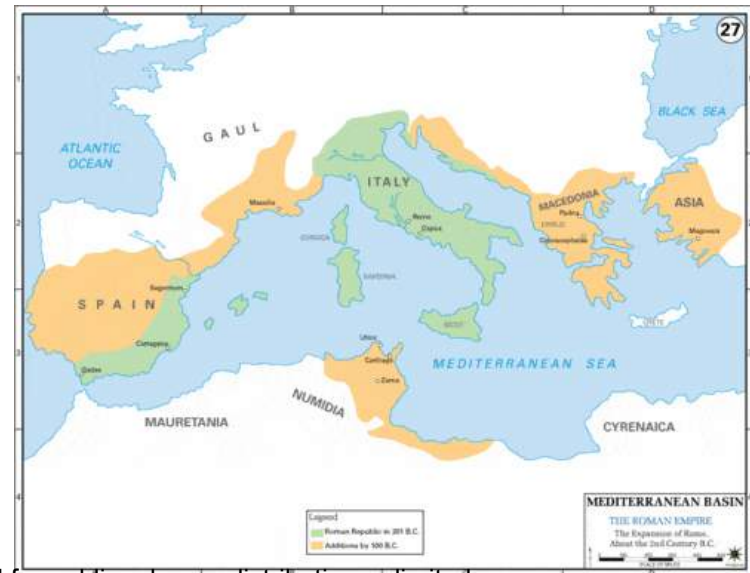
4) Evidence: Case Studies

▪ Athens 431 BC



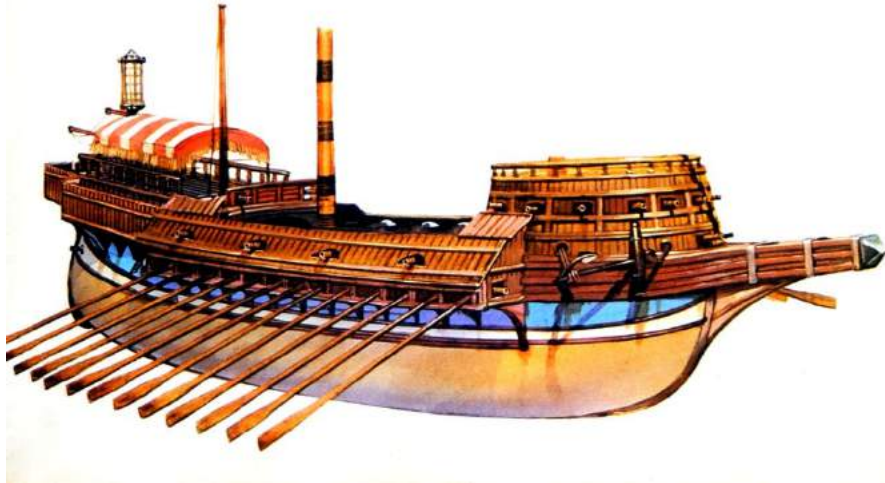
4) Evidence: Case Studies

- **Roman Republic, 264 BC-146 BC**



4) Evidence: Case Studies

- *Venetian Republic, 13th Century*



4) Evidence: Case Studies

- *Dutch Republic, 17th Century*



4) Evidence: Case Studies

- *British Empire, 18th and 19th century*



4) Evidence: Case Studies

- *United States of America*



4) *Russia*



▪ *Economic*

- *Poor and corrupt economic institutions.*
- *Economy smaller than Italy's.*
- *Dependent on natural resource exports.*

▪ *Diplomatic*

- *Small and weak alliance structure.*
- *Disinformation and interference in Western democracies.*

▪ *Military*

- *Spends more on domestic security than on military.*
- *Struggles to compete in high-end strategic technologies.*
- *“New Generation Warfare” and interventions in Ukraine and Syria?*

4) China



▪ ***Economic***

- ***World's second largest economy.***
- ***Unwilling to make necessary economic reforms.***
- ***Questions about innovation.***

▪ ***Diplomatic***

- ***One formal ally, North Korea.***
- ***Increasing influence globally.***
- ***OBOR and “sharp power” winning friends, but also provoking backlash.***
- ***Counter-balancing coalitions forming in Asia.***

▪ ***Military***

- ***Spends more on domestic security than on military.***
- ***Major investments, but questions about effectiveness.***
- ***Can't compete in high-end strategic technologies.***



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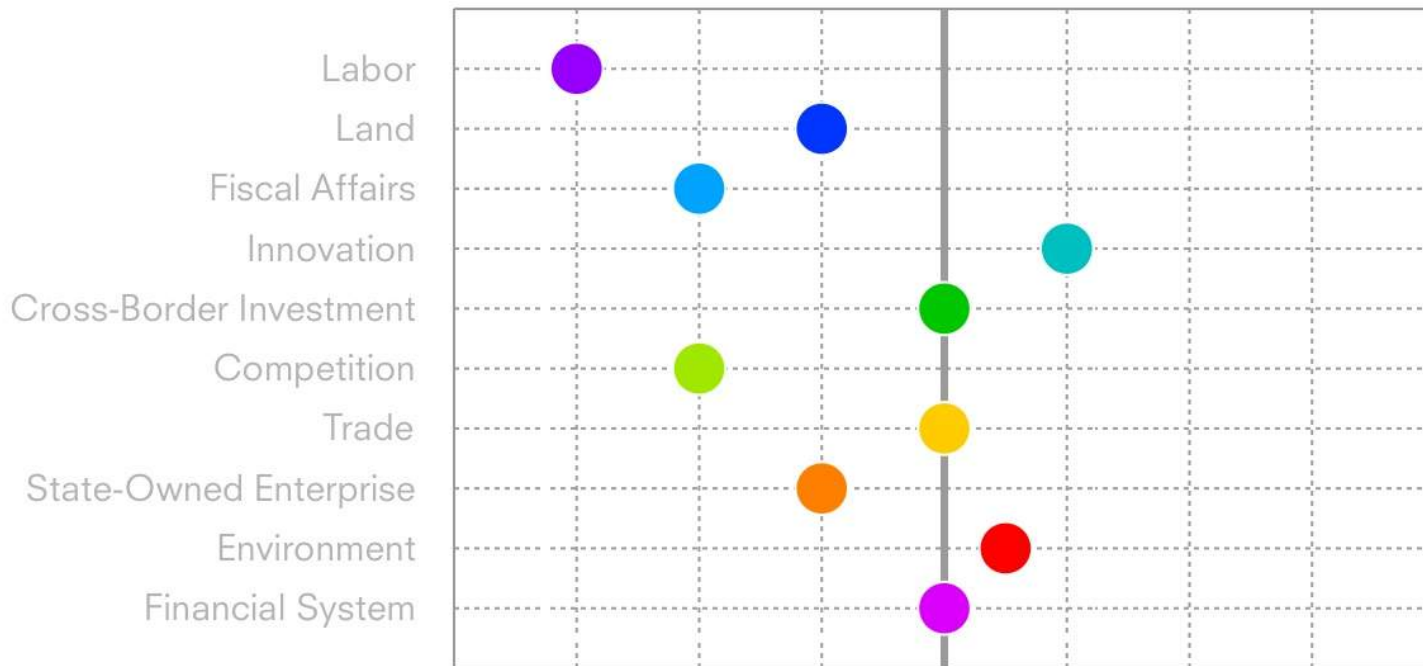
China's Economic Reforms



Backslide

Neutral

Progress





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4) *The United States*



▪ *Economic*

- *Sound economic institutions.*
- *World's largest economy.*
- *Center of global finance.*
- *Innovation leader.*

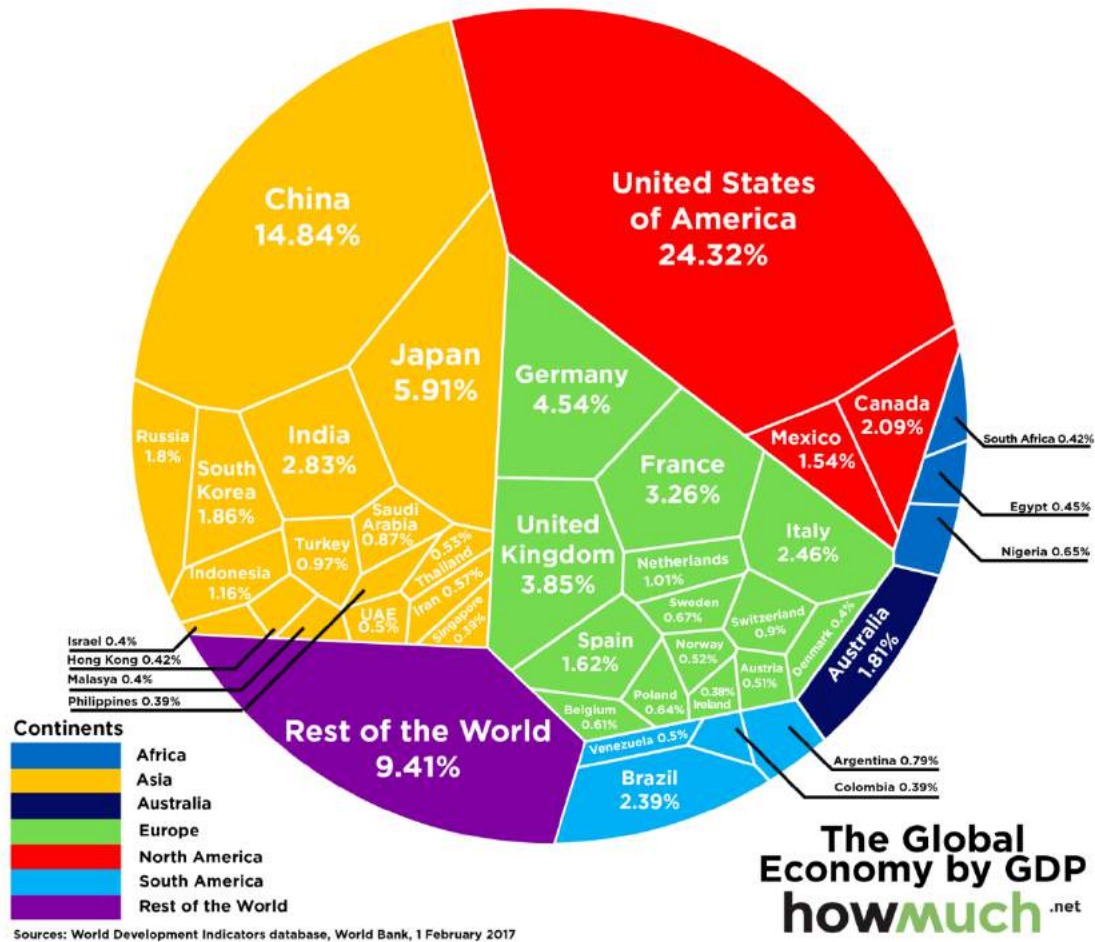
▪ *Diplomatic*

- *Allied with over 30 of the wealthiest and best-governed states, combined possess 59% of world GDP.*
- *No counter-balancing coalition.*

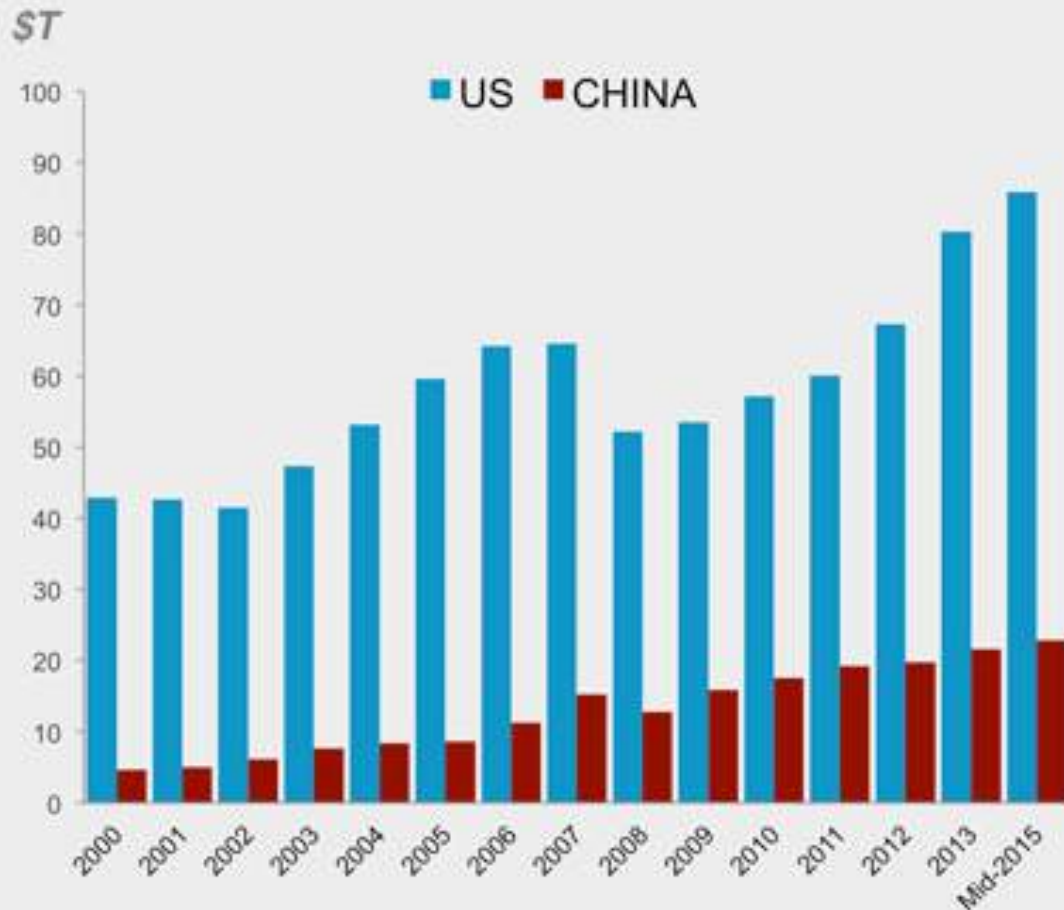
▪ *Military*

- *Only global power-projecting military.*
- *Spends 2x more on military than domestic security.*
- *Leader in strategic military technology.*

Share of Global GDP



Private Wealth: US v. China

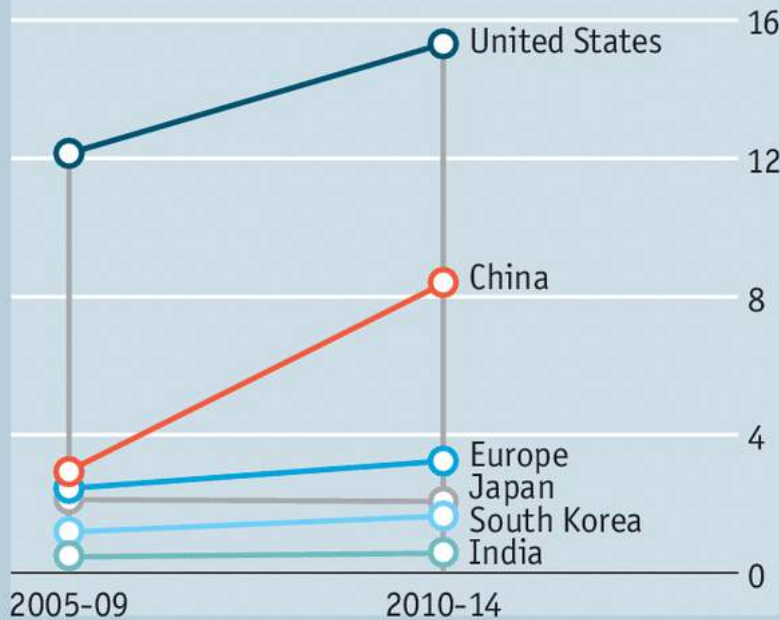


Source: Credit Suisse, *Global Wealth Databook*, at <http://publications.credit-suisse.com/tasks/render/file/index.cfm?fileid=C26E3824-F869-55E0-CCA04D48B0B9ADD5> (Note: the survey date changed to mid-year in 2014.)

Chinese Innovation

Race of the machines

Number of artificial-intelligence patent applications
'000



Sources: Press reports; Wuzhen Institute

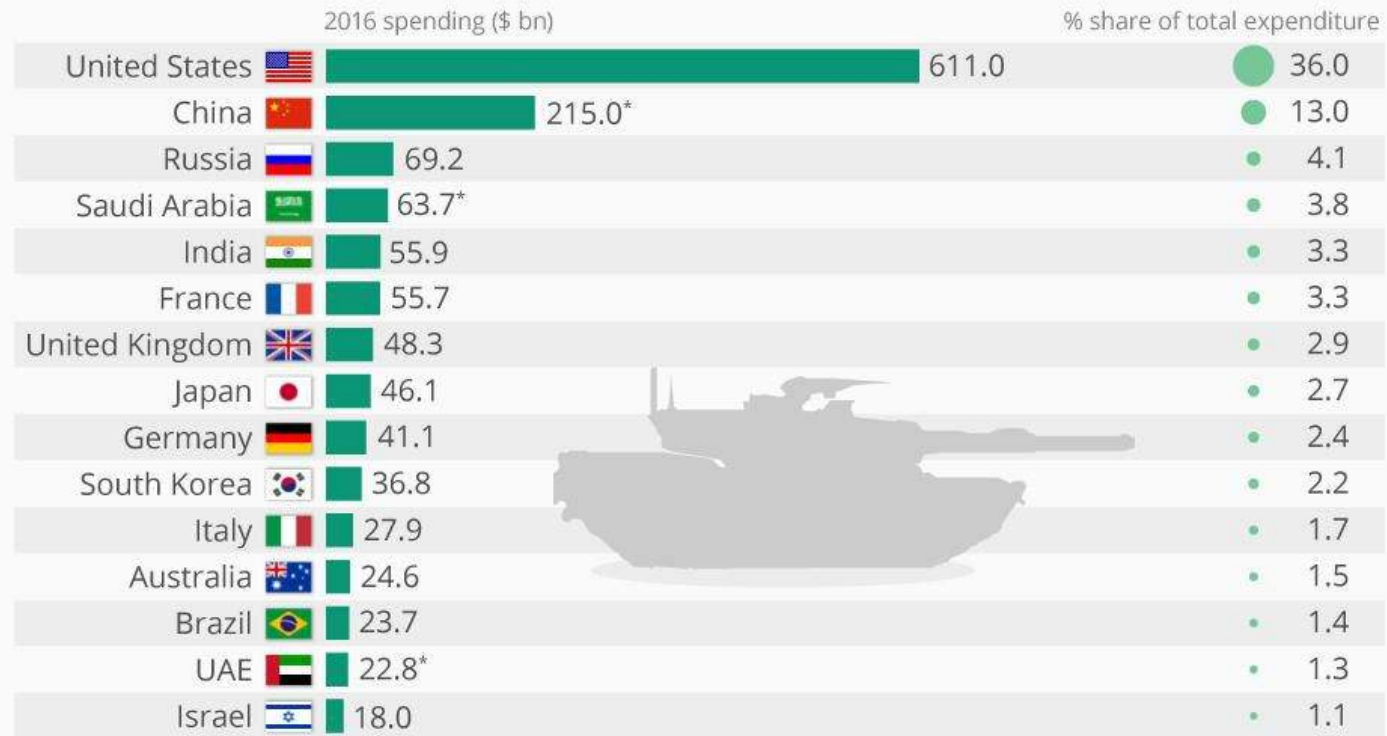
Number of artificial-intelligence companies
Selected countries, 2016, '000



Economist.com

The Top 15 Countries For Military Expenditure in 2016

2016 military expenditure by country and share of global total



* Estimate
Source: Sipri

Forbes **statista** 

Implications for Theory

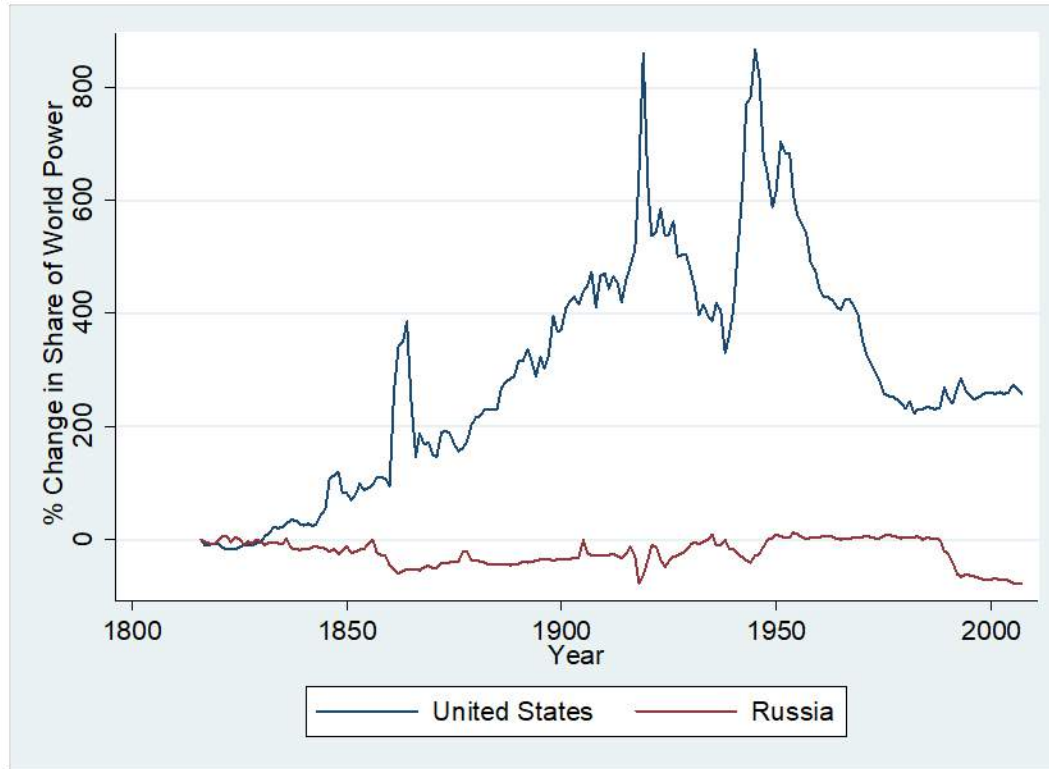
- ***Theorizes the institutional sources of international power.***
- ***Novel theory of democratic advantages in long-run great power rivalries.***
- ***The hard power case for democracy.***

Implications for Practice

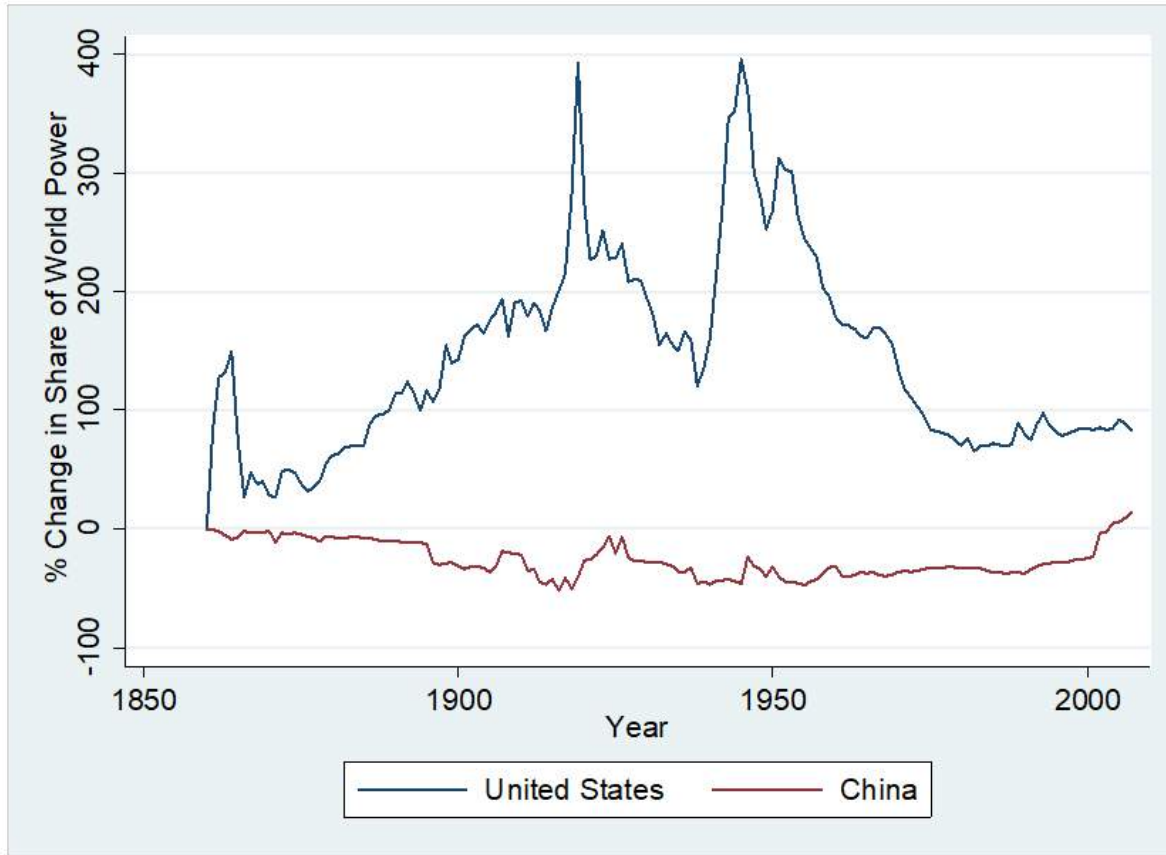
- ***The United States will remain the system's leading state for the foreseeable future.***
- ***The United States must defend against serious threats, including ideological, from second-rate powers.***
- ***The United States must get its own house in order.***
- ***Revitalize, adapt, and defend the rules-based international order.***
- ***Towards a competitive strategy with Russia and China.***
- ***True policy dilemma rests with leaders in Moscow and Beijing.***

Questions?

4) Evidence: Statistics



4) Evidence: Statistics



4) Evidence: Statistics

