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The Fleet in Being: An Alternative US Strategy

Kenneth Weisbrode

While American global leadership has been far from perfect, to many Americans and others throughout the world it does appear preferable to the strategic alternative of ceding direction to illiberal, authoritarian regimes – in particular, China and, to a limited extent, Russia. Designing and implementing a new and appropriately assertive American foreign policy should start with a view of the United States as a power with enduring responsibilities in multiple regions with the goal of making the world safe for democracy. A successful policy must also align aims and resources, including human resources.

American responsibilities can be fulfilled only in cooperation with other nations and with an understanding of their interests, views and vulnerabilities vis-à-vis their own neighbours and other powers. A consensus is forming around a strategy of constructive US disengagement from international commitments, especially those that anticipate the use of force. This understanding does not include many specific plans to implement policies, or to consider many consequences, one of which is likely to be a more contested and possibly diminished US influence in certain regions, chiefly Central Europe, Southeast Asia and Southwest Asia.

One possible, promising approach would be a strategy inspired by the early-modern concept of a ‘fleet in being’ to advance US interests

Kenneth Weisbrode is assistant professor of history at Bilkent University and author of *The Year of Indecision, 1946* (Viking, 2016).

by promoting regional security communities and cooperative security within and among those communities, which include the United States. A strategy based on this concept could reconcile a preference for military disengagement and the enduring need for political engagement. The ‘fleet’ – a force held in reserve in order to influence others’ strategic choices – would substitute multilateral institutions in which the US preserves and augments its important role for more direct projections of its power.

The fleet in being would make for a more coherent and effective strategy than the three putative alternatives: unipolar hegemony, spheres of influence and offshore balancing. Greater political engagement would reduce the demand and the temptation to use force and therefore could allow for the reduction of the defence and security infrastructure designed for projecting military power with the potential use of force in mind. The deliberate combination of such engagement with gradual military disengagement would also help mitigate the uncertainty and possible conflicts that the latter might entail.

Conceptual and historical underpinnings

The fleet in being is originally a naval concept, nominally dating from the turn of the eighteenth century. It involves a naval force that exerts influence by being held in port or otherwise away from a main theatre of battle rather than being deployed directly against an enemy, thus compelling the enemy to redirect its own force. In other words, it operates indirectly by diversion. It can do this in several ways, the most common one being by posing an implicit threat that ‘causes or necessitates counter-concentrations and so reduces the number of opposing units available for operations elsewhere’.¹ It also may be used to harass and evade, or to protect a weaker set of assets against a more formidable force in a naval facsimile of guerrilla warfare.² As such, the fleet in being operates to stage holding actions – that is, to buy time. In practice, however, it is not a purely defensive device, but rather an ‘offensive–defensive’ one requiring active operations to be credible. It is so designed to thwart an adversary’s strengths by directing them away from one’s most vulnerable positions, to preserve an element of unpredictability and therefore to improve the capacity to shape overall conditions to one’s advantage.

The term was reportedly coined by the Earl of Torrington, the English admiral, in 1690.³ Commanding his nation's fleet in the English Channel during the War of the League of Augsburg, Torrington resisted fighting against a superior French force until his own could be reinforced. He proposed keeping his fleet 'in being' in order to affect the positioning of the French fleet without drawing it fully into battle. This did not work as hoped, mainly because Torrington was ordered to attack the French fleet anyway.⁴ Whether or not he actually invented the term, the concept was not new. The Roman navy employed something like a fleet in being, although the rationale had to do with the political needs of its allies, who manned many of its ships.⁵ Torrington's Dutch allies also made use of a similar force posture and strategy.

Traditional American naval strategy has not looked favourably upon the concept. Alfred Thayer Mahan emphasised direct action. Although he conceded the importance of psychological effects in wartime, which may include peripheral raids, Mahanian strategy generally abjures indirect approaches. For him, the fleet in being would have utility only as a temporary measure to keep rivals 'on edge'.⁶

Other strategists have been more sympathetic. For example, while Julian Corbett shared Mahan's view that the ultimate aim of any naval force is command of the sea, he recognised that the fleet in being could advance this aim so long as it is kept '*actively* in being – not merely in existence, but in active and vigorous life'. Thus it 'avoid[s] decisive action ... till the situation develops in our favour'.⁷ It is, in other words, both a way of hovering in order to keep the enemy in check and also an element of strategic depth, or part of a containment strategy in multiple theatres. It served this function for Britain during the eighteenth century, when the navy could not maintain a large presence at once in the Mediterranean and the West Indies, and blockades of important routes in both areas were not feasible.⁸

Fleets in being have generally been deployed to compensate for weakness or vulnerability. It should follow that stronger powers could make use of the fleet in being in reverse, that is, as a deterrent.⁹ N.A.M. Rodger has written that 'arguably', in some instances, 'the Navy was a more effective deterrent when it did not often fight, for real battles ... might expose the

limitations as well as the strengths of sea power'.¹⁰ A fleet in being has never been the decisive factor in defeating an enemy, or in gaining mastery of the ocean. But at the right places and at the right times, it has paid off well.

In peacetime, the navy's main objective was to keep important trading routes open and secure, but it could not do so everywhere at once. A mobile fleet in being thus constituted a deterrent in the sense that it redirected the resources and attention of adversaries. In wartime, when fleets in being may be combined with more active operations, as in William Pitt's 'amphibious' policy in the Seven Years' War – which was meant as 'a strategic lever to multiply the value of small bodies of troops' – they can play an important composite role.¹¹ In this context, they augment the leverage of armies by redirecting supply chains, challenging the status of allies and neutrals, and forcing greater outlays beyond the main theatre of battle, much as a blockade does but at less expense. Especially in more covert applications – involving German U-boats, for example – tactical, operational and even strategic benefits of the fleet in being can exceed the costs for the side that wields it.¹²

During the First World War, several navies possessed something akin to a fleet in being. Britain controlled the North Sea, for example, largely through the use of a fleet in being, as almost a mirror image of the Germans' own 'risk fleet' constituted just before the war, which sought to challenge British dominance simultaneously in multiple places.¹³ The Italian and Austrian navies during the war promoted the use of fleets in being as well, but doing so was more likely an excuse for refusing battle, making them 'not so much defensive as inert'.¹⁴

The Italians pursued a similar naval strategy in the Second World War, with a similar lack of success. The German navy, by contrast, was effective in threatening and diverting British naval forces with an aggressive combined operation off the coast of Norway. Another good example of a successful fleet-in-being rationale was US Admiral Ernest King's initial Pacific strategy, summed up by his famous line: 'hold what you've got and hit them when you can'.

The fleet-in-being concept has been applied to non-maritime forces, albeit with difficulty. Union General George McClellan's inaction during the US

Civil War is not a strong endorsement of an army force in being. Air forces present a somewhat different case. The advent of airpower was seen as a critical factor vitiating the strategic potential of the fleet in being as a force immobiliser.¹⁵ But airpower itself, particularly bombers (and, by extension, the nuclear triad), may function as a fleet in being in some circumstances.¹⁶ Something comparable may be imagined for satellites and hypersonic weapons. Such assets may serve as a kind of insurance policy by exerting minimal deterrence against like forces. In either case, actual deployment in battle would represent a fundamental failure of the policy.

The Pentagon may have applied the concept more flexibly by orienting US forces as forward-deployed, 'supported' geographic combatant commands sustained, as regional circumstances require, by 'supporting' commands, especially in the context of increasing diplomatic roles for geographic combatant commanders. Arguably, the United States has a fleet-in-being maritime strategy today given its limited deployments of carrier strike groups and area support groups.

The value of the fleet in being has been in the eye of the beholder. Its golden age was the eighteenth century, which featured, as noted, multiple powers having alternately to deter one another and to draw one another into battle in multiple naval theatres (the Mediterranean and Caribbean seas, and the Atlantic and Indian oceans). Add to this the fluctuating politics on the European continent, and the fleet in being begins to appear like an essential strategy for managing regional security. Despite today's very different complexities and interrelationships, the fleet in being, regardless of its plausibility in any particular military scenario, always possesses an important psychological quality in aiming to influence the calculus of an adversary. Both nuclear deterrence and reassurance involve similar calculi.¹⁷ The important point is that, like any concept, the fleet in being does not have independent or intrinsic value. It must be part of a broader strategy.

Contemporary relevance

The American geopolitical mindset of Mahan's time divided the world into three parts: Europe, the Americas and the Pacific. The prevailing view was that US interests demanded isolation (understood as neutrality) from the

first, hegemony in the second and a balance of power in the third. Each component relied on the successful management of the others.

The tripartite American mind perhaps was inherited from, or at least related to, that of the British. For them, the relevant trio comprised the European continent, the overseas empire and the home islands. It was unlikely that Britain could preserve a balance of power on the first while fully defending the other two, so British strategic doctrine emphasised optimal rather than maximal arrangements of resources and political align-

Geographic vulnerabilities became assets

ments. Each arrangement was the subject of regular, passionate debate over operational questions of emphasis and allocation, as well as adjustments to the underlying strategic principle: how much did the three elements enhance or diminish one another? Still, the doctrine's inherent flexibility, along with a certain British tendency for decisive action, or what some may see as reversing course, transformed geo-

graphic vulnerabilities into assets, at least for as long as it lasted – arguably, to the end of the 1950s.

The contemporary analogy is the United States' need to defend its own hemisphere, protect allies and defend interests farther afield, notably in Northeast Asia and the Middle East. However, it is important to recall that a major shift in US strategic thinking took place between Mahan's time and the present day.¹⁸ By the middle of the twentieth century, the US was no longer a continental power at home and a maritime power abroad, as it had been for Mahan's generation. It had become a superpower, sharing borders with other major powers in Asia and Europe, with an approach to the air and the sea that reinforced regional interdependence. Neither the end of the Cold War in the 1980s nor the subsequent disappearance of the Soviet Union changed that composite orientation for the United States. They may have exacerbated it.

Thirty years seems like a very long time in politics, but geopolitical mentalities take a while to evolve. Another shift in the Mahanian direction appears to have taken place. It is the result of the assertiveness of other major powers, namely China and Russia, and of the weariness of the American

people with the costs of poorly conceived and badly executed military interventions during the past two decades. It is too soon to tell how lasting this shift will be, or whether it will be replaced by a counter-shift involving either doctrinaire non-intervention or something else dictated by emergent events. In the meantime, the United States has adopted an official strategic doctrine based on a traditional concept of great-power competition, which presumably allows for selective intervention. It appears to take for granted the American people's willingness to continue to pay the costs of competition, whatever it entails; but what it entails, in terms of cost and geopolitics, remains vague.

Neither competition nor greatness is a geopolitical given. They demand choice. Thus, it is not clear how much of this strategic reorientation, either for the United States or for its presumed adversaries and competitors, is rhetorical. Do they seek to weaken the United States everywhere? To overtake it economically? To acquire its allies? To make it a vassal or tributary power? To expel it from certain regions? What do they want, exactly? During the Cold War, the best strategic minds engaged in similar thought experiments over the putative capabilities and intentions of the Soviet Union and other powers.¹⁹ Yet most people now accept that the Cold War did not end because one side defeated the other, as would occur in a traditional war. It is more convenient to say one won a competition when the other forfeited. The nature and extent of the competition – or, really, multiple competitions in different regions – are still the subjects of intense debate.²⁰

To participate in this debate is also a choice. The more important question to revisit is how the Cold War ended so peacefully, and why in its aftermath there was no war of succession among the world's major powers, numerous violent conflicts notwithstanding. One possible answer to both questions is that the preponderance of US power remained a strong deterrent. Another is that regional integration mitigated conflicts between historic adversaries to the extent that many people in several regions came to understand their interests, and themselves, collaboratively – and in some places even as members of a community.

The question facing US strategists today is how best to advance and defend the country's interests in several regions while helping them to

become, or remain, peaceful. There are at least 15 regions to consider spanning Africa (Central, East, South and West), America (Central, North and South), Asia (Central, Northeast, South, Southeast and Southwest), Europe (Central/South/West and Eastern) and Australasia. The Arctic and Antarctic may someday join the list, depending how intense the geopolitical contest over these places becomes. The United States is still unique in having important interests and a political and economic presence in every one.

The ranking of these interests is complicated, variable and subjective. However, any systematic effort to rank them must begin on the principle that no region is separable from its neighbours. All regions overlap to some degree. And superpowers – defined not only by their size but also by their capacity to mobilise resources from one part of the globe to another – therefore have interests that intersect regions. This principle is important because policies must account for the reality of regional interpenetration and interdependence, especially where policymakers identify an aim to deny regional mastery to any single power. If policymaking works to counter that reality, or if it seeks to impose a preferred hierarchy of interests and interest groups, it will be more likely to encounter resistance than alternatives that set community-building as their primary aim.

To imagine the world organically as a set of interlocking and interdependent regions is rather different than seeing it as a chessboard of greater and lesser powers. But either way, the operational elements of strategy must have an important regional dimension because they must align domestic preferences with interests.²¹ Great-power competition does not take place exclusively on a bilateral basis. Lesser powers and their own interests matter – and are, to a significant degree, indivisible from great powers and their interests. The reasons for that are familiar: people, goods, ideas, loyalties and enmities traverse borders; geography exerts power in a manner that blurs the distinction not only between greater and lesser powers but also between their military and non-military relations; these relations are themselves indivisible from the mental maps and other forces in economics, society, culture and ideology that frame international politics. The recognition of indivisibility is the real basis for asking if the fleet-in-being concept is more viable than other concepts because it rests on the belief that no power

– large or small – has the luxury of repudiating geography or human nature, both of which tend to be connective as well as divisive.

The fleet in being versus other strategies

Once again in conscious or unconscious imitation of the British, strategic debate in the US today presents two opposing attitudes that have acquired the trappings of doctrine: hegemonic and restrained. Both are programmatic, hierarchical and implicitly imperialistic in their conception, with the US cast as the subject and the rest of the world as the object. The British once called them ‘forward’ and ‘backward’. The distinction is quite simplistic and to some extent false, as some hegemonic policies have been restrained in their execution. Yet the debate has had relatively little to do with most realities outside the United States, or with external US interests. Debaters are not necessarily unmindful of those realities, but regional interests are again the object, rather than the subject, under discussion.²²

The utility of the fleet-in-being concept is that it overcomes the limitations of this hierarchy by flipping the subject–object relationship on its head. A fleet in being by definition is restrained. Translated from a naval to a general policy, it is also counter-hegemonic. Its aim is to combine particular interests at certain places and times, not to design or dictate circumstances on principle. It shapes regional circumstances by adapting itself to them. Just as Torrington defended his decision to hold back his force after having noted the size and location of the opposing force, and as later war planners offered a similar justification for the repositioning of naval and related assets, contemporary American statecraft should be based empirically on the existence of a polycentric world and the role of multilateral institutions in it.

The fleet in being is not a passive or reactive strategy, however. It is active yet inductive, seeking power through the influence over others in concert. Its maxim is not ‘use it or lose it’ or ‘you don’t lose if you don’t play’, but instead ‘collaborate and gain’. That is another way of saying that US power ‘in being’ is not an end in itself, but rather is wielded – or withheld, as the case may warrant – to serve US interests. It is an indirect strategy that serves to redirect US power through the enhancement of the collective power of

other nations whose interests align actively or potentially with those of the United States. Or, as the late Fred Iklé once described a similar approach, it is 'that the US preserve and improve its various capabilities to help its friends defend themselves'.²³ That is different from the wishful supposition that a superpower's unilateral disengagement will compel other powers to develop and use such capabilities responsibly on their own.

In practice, today's fleet in being may be distinguished from three principal alternative concepts that have been advanced in what has become a hoary and at times narcissistic debate over whether or not US power is a force for good: unipolar hegemony, spheres of influence and offshore balancing. The first is a blanket strategy of power for its own sake: imposing or renouncing it, no matter what. The second is a more parsimonious version of the first strategy, but probably impossible to enact in the twenty-first century because of economic and related interdependence. The third is an even more parsimonious version of the first, and probably a less parsimonious version of the second, vaguely akin to the British continental commitment with the entire world standing in for Europe. Unlike the first and second, it confuses the ends and means of a policy of limited liability; conflates non-intervention with neutrality as well as disengagement; and neglects some hard lessons about interdependence and collective security inasmuch as it presumes an ability to programme the minds of regional actors and underrates the chance that military and non-military engagement (or disengagement) are understood as two sides of the same coin.

Here, too, it is hard to see how such a strategy could work today, starting with the difficulty in identifying what lies 'offshore' and in determining what actually constitutes a balance of power. Even if all that were possible for military and other planners to do with a degree of certainty, the strategy, like the other two, is based on the direct use or non-use of power, and has little to do or say about how to make optimal use of the combined or indirect use of power, allied or otherwise, in specific regions. The underlying basis for all three models is partition or rivalry, not cooperation or collaboration. If their aim is peace, it is hard to imagine it being anything other than an oppressive order that is unlikely to garner much support from the American people even if it could be made to serve US interests.

By contrast, the exercise of a fleet-in-being strategy is indirect and works through collaboration with regional powers. Multilateral institutions, and the cooperative behaviour and confidence they engender, constitute the 'fleet' in the strategy. The aim of such collaboration is to build security communities. A security community aligns power relationships among large, middle and small powers with the interests and aims of these powers, and with the overall health of the community. The history of the western hemisphere and of Western Europe demonstrate that fostering alignment is arduous, contentious and frustrating, but also that, if done well, a security community can emerge even in the most fractious of regions. There has been no major international war in either place for many decades, and none appears likely. There is no inherent reason why this cannot be true in other regions. That is not to deny the existence of rivalry in today's world, but rather to advance an approach to regional politics that does not have rivalry as its basis.

Such an approach cannot rely exclusively upon the artistry of a particular leader or government. It must gain institutional life. Much as a naval fleet in being is mobilised from place to place in order to make optimal use of its strength while diverting and dividing that of its adversaries, the energetic participation in multilateral institutions – political alliances such as NATO as well as non-governmental bodies of many shapes, colours and sizes from region to region – must continue as a renewed, collaborative form of American leadership 'in being' rather than in nominal authority. The aim of this fleet is not to 'lead from behind' or to cloak American power, but instead to give it a more lasting and versatile influence consistent with American values. Institutions are the repositories and magnets of both latent and active power. They can act to limit and proscribe the power of nation-states, including superpowers like the United States, but over time they enlist and enhance it. The more the United States works with and through such institutions, the greater and more beneficial its world position probably will be. Such a view has recently returned to official favour.²⁴ But unless these entities have roots in the local soil, sustaining them would likely be a major task for US diplomacy and continue to involve significant costs up front for benefits that appear at the present time to be rather distant.

* * *

The United States can no longer presume to govern nearly every part of the world. Nor can it afford to withdraw its attention from certain parts of the world. The United States is still too big, too powerful and too necessary, and the world has become too small. Because regional cooperation is not likely to work if it is imposed from the outside, and not likely to happen on its own from the inside, it is the responsibility of the world's major powers, including the United States, to encourage it in both places by assisting regional powers with their efforts to strengthen and extend the remit of multilateral institutions. Such assistance is self-interested and important. It can be furthered by viewing contemporary geopolitics as a naval strategist would conceptualise a fleet in being: an active but indirect force summoned by circumstances in order to stimulate, diversify, fortify and defend the efforts of others in ways that favour the national interest.

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Notes

- ¹ US Department of Defense, *Dictionary of Military Terms* (New York: Skyhorse, 2009), p. 207.
- ² See Geoffrey Till, *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-first Century* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), pp. 160–2.
- ³ For a good summary, see John B. Hattendorf, 'The Idea of a "Fleet in Being" in Historical Perspective', *Naval War College Review*, vol. 67, no. 1, Winter 2014, pp. 43–61.
- ⁴ Torrington was subsequently tried by court martial and acquitted.
- ⁵ See H.H. Scullard, 'Roman Sea-power', *Classical Review*, vol. 7, no. 2, June 1957, pp. 144–7; and Graham Bower, 'National Policy and Naval Strength', *Journal of Comparative Legislation and International Law*, third series, vol. 10, no. 4, 1928, p. 342, which restates the words of Quintus Silo to Marius: 'If you are a great general, Marius, come out and fight a battle.' Marius: 'If you are one, make me do it.'
- ⁶ See J.C.M. Ogelsby, 'Spain's Havana Squadron and the Preservation of the

- Balance of Power in the Caribbean, 1740–1748', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 49, no. 3, August 1969, pp. 473–88, 481.
- ⁷ Quoted in Clark G. Reynolds, 'The U.S. Fleet-in-Being Strategy of 1942', *Journal of Military History*, vol. 58, no. 1, January 1994, pp. 103–18, 104 (Reynolds's emphasis). See also Hattendorf, 'The Idea of a "Fleet in Being"' in Historical Perspective', pp. 45–6.
 - ⁸ See G.S. Graham, 'The Naval Defence of British North America 1739–1763', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 30, December 1948, pp. 95–110. Maintaining a flexible and mobile emphasis between the two theatres foreshadowed the kind of calculus that later became famous with the British 'continental commitment'.
 - ⁹ See, for example, Paul van Hooft, 'Don't Knock Yourself Out: How America Can Turn the Tables on China by Giving Up the Fight for Command of the Seas', *War on the Rocks*, 23 February 2021, <https://warontherocks.com/2021/02/dont-knock-yourself-out-how-america-can-turn-the-tables-on-china-by-giving-up-the-fight-for-command-of-the-seas/>; and Shi Xiaoqin and Liu Xiaobo, 'Chinese Assessment of New U.S. Naval Strategy', *USNI News*, 19 February 2021, <https://news.usni.org/2021/02/19/chinese-assessment-of-new-u-s-naval-strategy>.
 - ¹⁰ N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain 1649–1815* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2005), p. 231. Rodger added: 'though the deterrence was successful, it was also costly. It needed large fleets and skilful leadership.'
 - ¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 270–1.
 - ¹² For German and British consideration of the fleet in being and new naval technologies at the turn of the twentieth century, see Keith Bird, 'The Tirpitz Legacy: The Political Ideology of German Sea Power', *Journal of Military History*, vol. 69, no. 3, July 2005, pp. 821–5; and Nicholas A. Lambert, 'Admiral John Fisher and the Concept of Flotilla Defence, 1904–1909', *Journal of Military History*, vol. 59, no. 4, October 1995, pp. 639–60.
 - ¹³ See R.B. McCallum, review of A.J. Marder's *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, vol. III, in *English Historical Review*, vol. 83, no. 326, January 1968, pp. 216–17; and Bird, 'The Tirpitz Legacy'.
 - ¹⁴ Rhodri Williams, review of Paul G. Halpern's, *The Naval War in the Mediterranean, 1914–1918*, in *English Historical Review*, vol. 103, no. 409, October 1988, p. 1,011.
 - ¹⁵ See Andrew Gyorgy, 'The Geopolitics of War: Total War and Geostrategy', *Journal of Politics*, vol. 5, no. 4, November 1943, p. 358.
 - ¹⁶ See McGeorge Bundy, 'Nuclear Weapons and the Gulf', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 4, Fall 1991, pp. 83–94.
 - ¹⁷ It probably will do for the foreseeable future. See Walter Pincus, 'A Glimpse of the U.S.' New Nuclear Posture', *Cipher Daily Brief*, 23 March 2021, https://www.thecipherbrief.com/column_article/a-glimpse-of-the-u-s-new-nuclear-posture.
 - ¹⁸ See Alan K. Henrikson, 'The Map as an "Idea": The Role of Cartographic Imagery During the Second World War', *American Cartographer*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1975, pp. 19–53.

- ¹⁹ See, for example, W. Scott Thompson, *Power Projection: A Net Assessment of U.S. and Soviet Capabilities* (New York: National Strategy Information Center, 1978).
- ²⁰ Lorenz Luthi, *Cold Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020) is a recent example.
- ²¹ See Samuel P. Huntington, *The Common Defense: Strategic Programs in National Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), esp. chapter five.
- ²² See Elbridge Colby and Walter Slocombe, 'The State of (Deterrence by) Denial', *War on the Rocks*, 22 March 2021, <https://warontherocks.com/2021/03/the-state-of-deterrence-by-denial/>; and Miranda Priebe et al., *Implementing Restraint: Changes in U.S. Regional Security Policies to Operationalize a Realist Grand Strategy of Restraint* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2021), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA739-1.html.
- ²³ Fred C. Iklé, 'Discriminate Deterrence: A Response to Critics', *National Interest*, no. 13, Fall 1988, p. 134.
- ²⁴ See, for example, Matthew P. Goodman, 'Variable Geometry Takes Shape in Biden's Foreign Policy', Center for Strategic and International Studies, 19 March 2021, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/variable-geometry-takes-shape-bidens-foreign-policy>.