



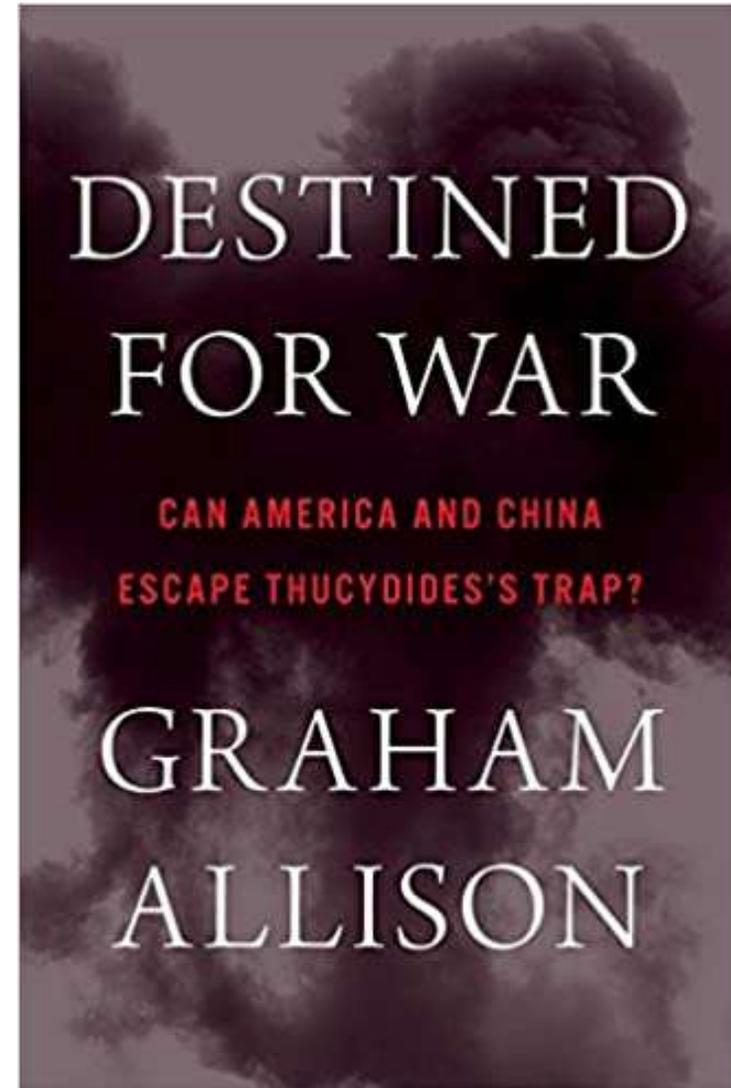
China: the *Thucydides's trap*?

The U.S. strategy in the Indo-Pacific region

The “*Thucydides’s Trap*”

Concept introduced by **Graham Allison** (U.S. specialist in political sciences) in 2012 (*Financial Times*)

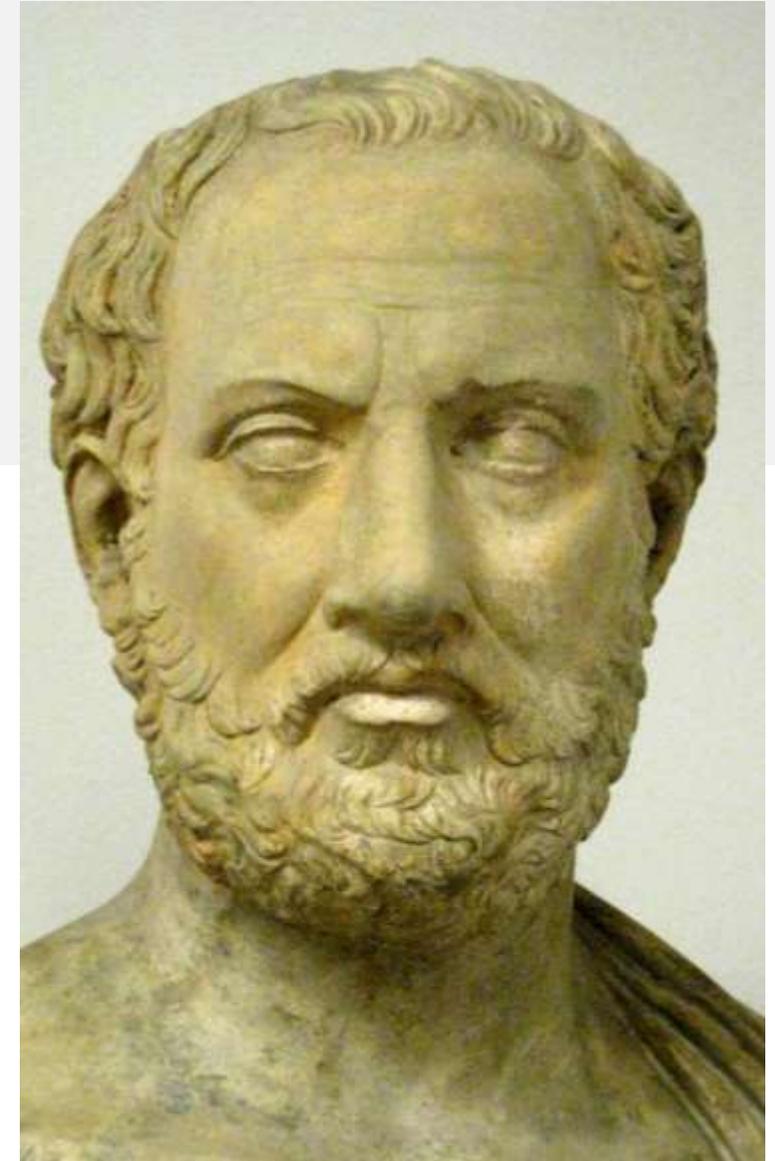
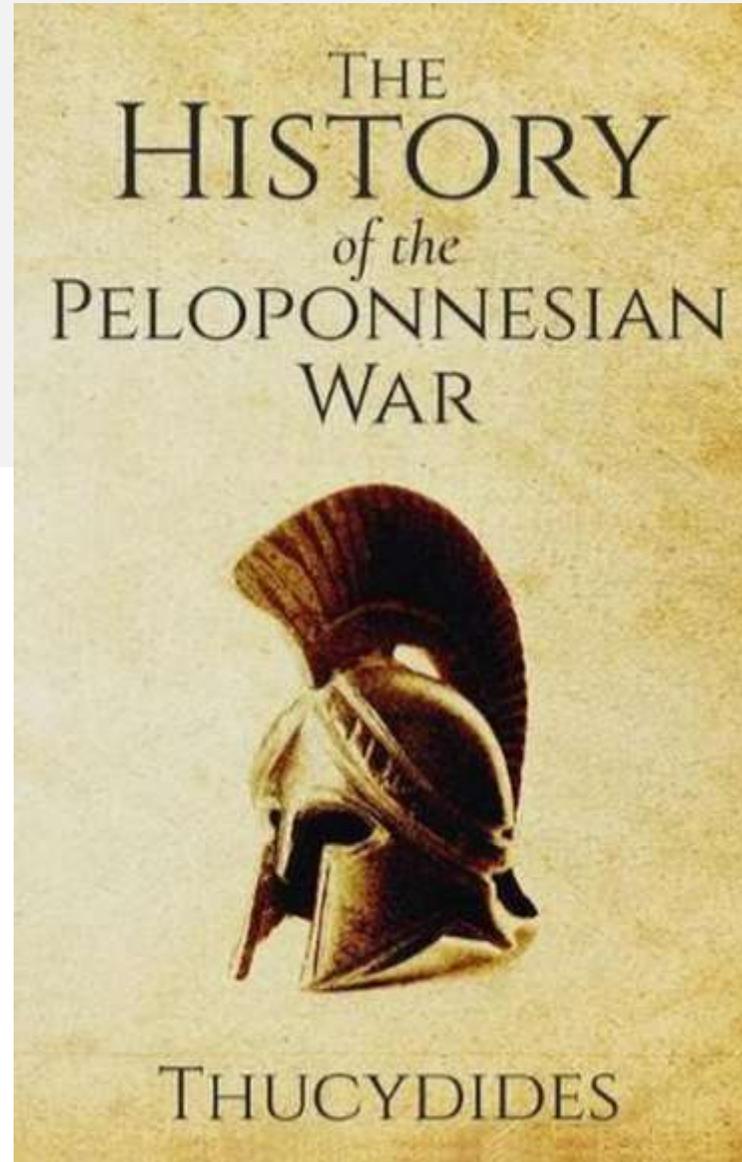
Definition: the choice a dominant power to enter war with an emerging power for fear of being overshadowed





Thucydides
(Athenian historian)

Sparta attacked Athens,
for fear of Athens's
growing power in Greece



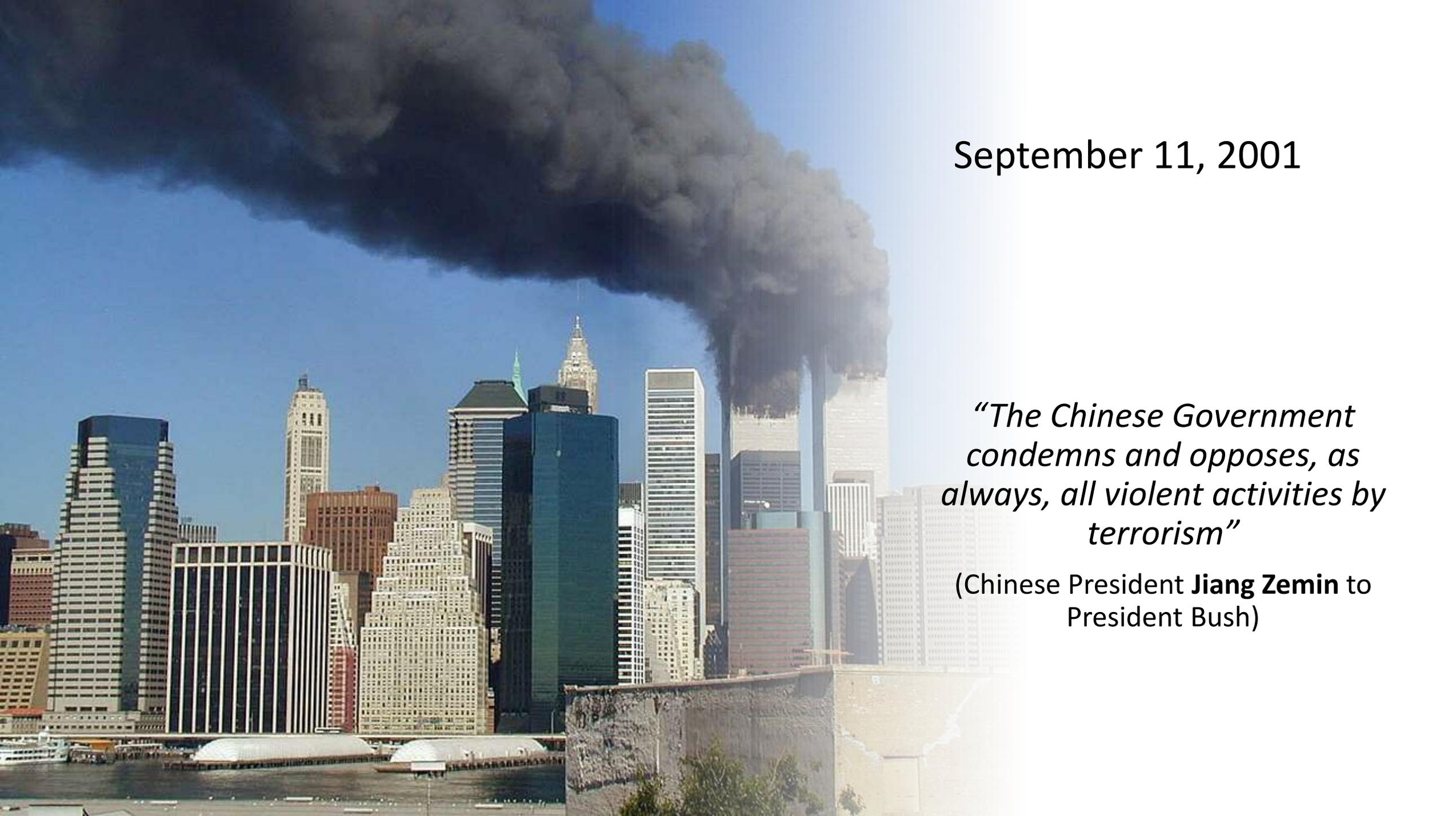


China-U.S. relations

From a **short-lived honeymoon** to
Containment (2001-2022)

Was the U.S. **naive** in its relations with
China?

What U.S. strategy in the Indo-Pacific?
Is it working?



September 11, 2001

*“The Chinese Government
condemns and opposes, as
always, all violent activities by
terrorism”*

(Chinese President **Jiang Zemin** to
President Bush)

18 October 2001

President Bush in Shanghai to attend
the **Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation**
forum

*“China is **a great power**, and America
wants a constructive relationship with
China. We welcome a China that is a
full member of world community, that
is at peace with its neighbors. We
welcome and support China's accession
into the **World Trade Organization**”*



China's support to the
U.S. *War on Terror*

22 February 2002: visit to Beijing
(30 years to the day after Nixon's
visit to China)





February 1972

Nixon's visit to China – **Open dialogue** with China



Deng Xiaoping in the U.S.

28 January – 5 February 1979

A new **beginning**: the establishment of **formal diplomatic relations** between the U.S. & the People's Republic of China



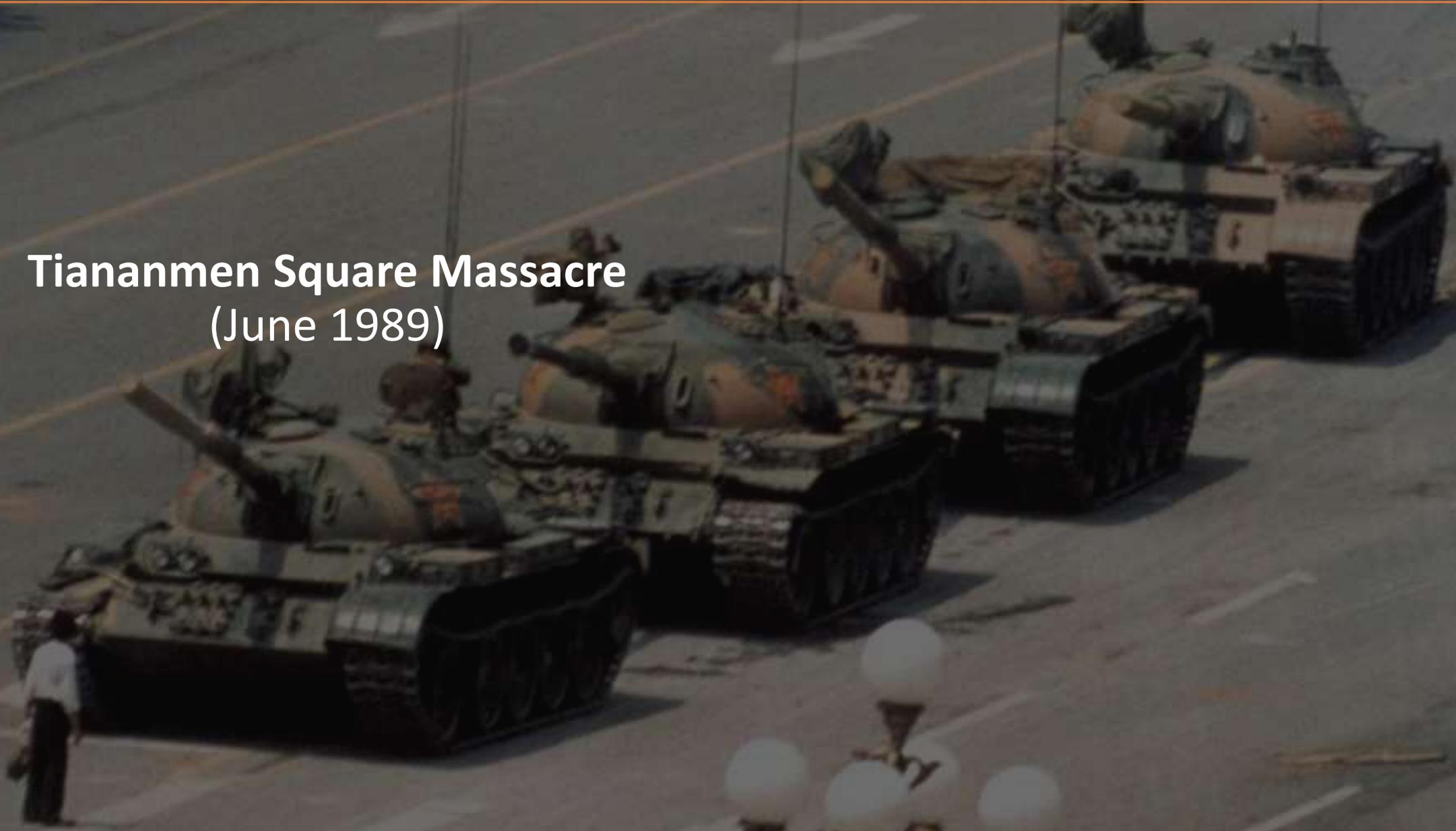
China: a quasi-ally to the U.S. (last years of the Cold War)

A short-lived honeymoon

China **instills fear** like never before

U.S. distrust towards China associated
with China's growing power

Tiananmen Square Massacre
(June 1989)





U.S. main concern: Japan's rise as the world's second largest economy



Significant tension in the U.S.-Japanese relationship

Japan accused of cheating its way into a **trade surplus** with the U.S.

Japan: a **key U.S. ally** in the Asia



1995

Decision: trade exchanges with China no longer conditioned to human rights issues



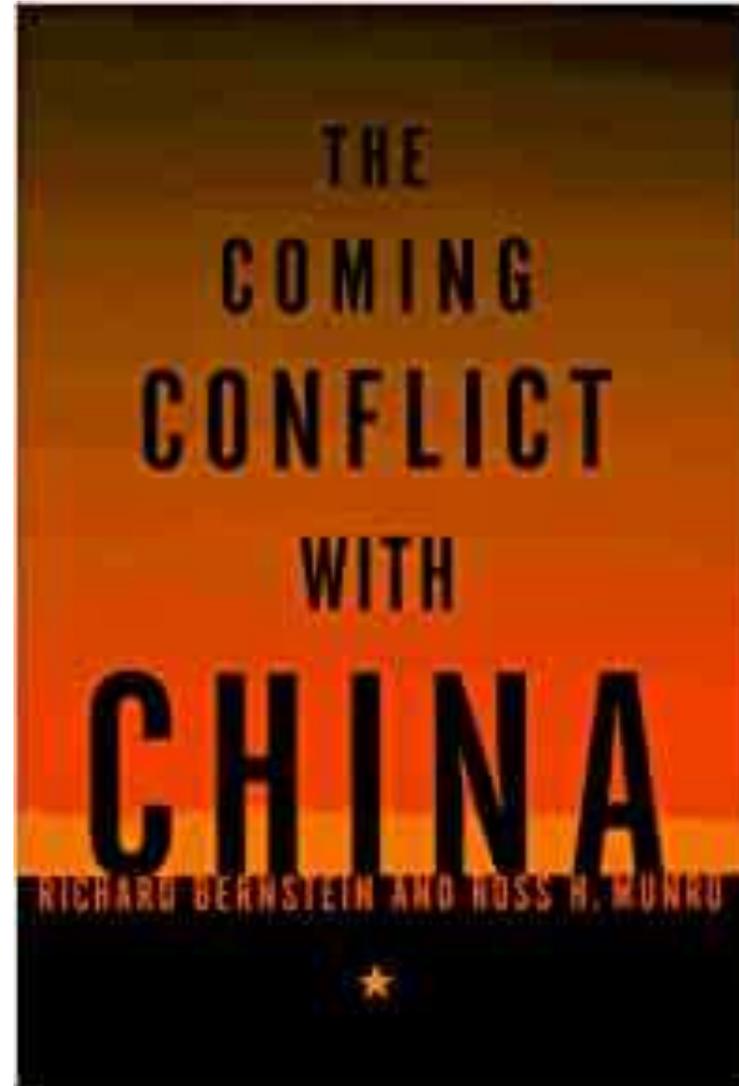
U.S.-China Strategic Engagement

A wide range of **interaction** (economic cooperation, diplomacy, military) between the U.S. and China

1990's: a change of perception in the U.S.

China compared to imperial Germany prior to WW1

Pre WW1 balance of power destabilized by Germany's growing ambitions on the global stage



Third Taiwan Strait Crisis (1995-1996)

A series of missile tests conducted by China in the waters surrounding Taiwan



1999

U.S. aerial bombing of Chinese
embassy in Belgrade
(Kosovo War)

A error?

U.S. official apologies





China increasingly perceived
as a **strategic challenge** for
the U.S.

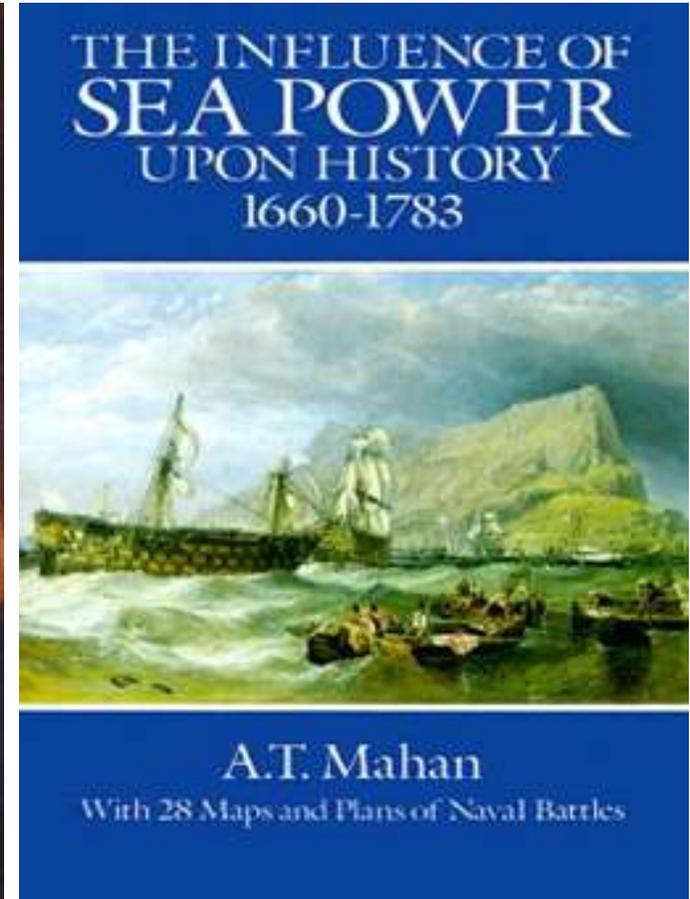
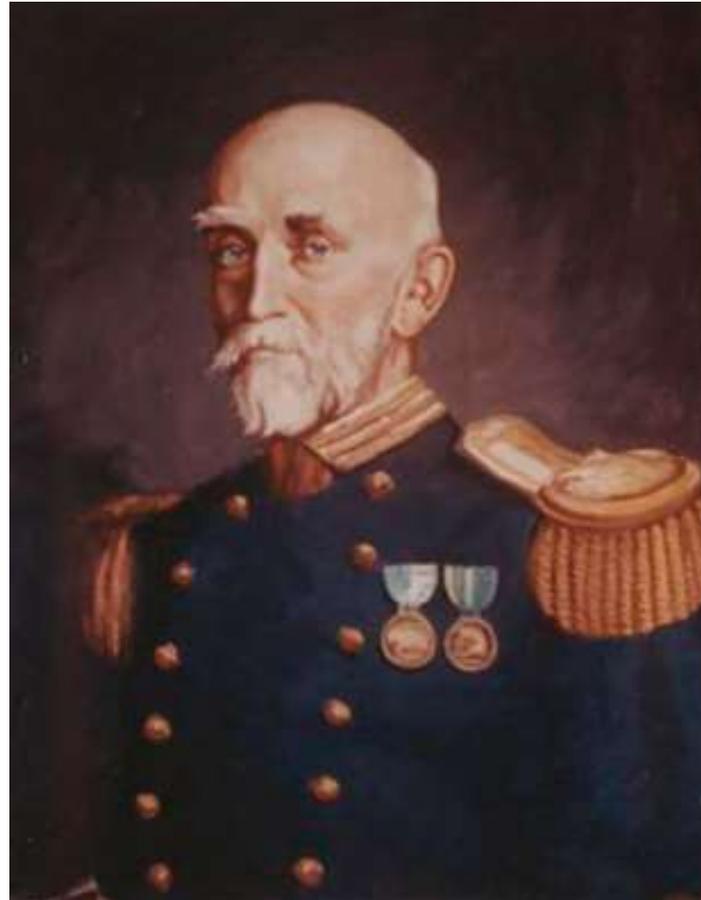
The lessons of U.S. History (19th century):

The rise of the U.S.: from economic to
military power

A sphere of influence

A global navy

“Whether they will or no, Americans must now begin to look outward”
(Captain Mahan – The Atlantic Monthly, 1890)



THE WORLD, 1898 - 1902

RESULTS DIRECTLY FROM
THE SPANISH - AMERICAN WAR



RUSSIA

CHINA

Beijing

Boxer Rebellion, 1900

JAPAN

Hong Kong

PHILIPINES

Manila Bay, 1898

GUAM

San Francisco

UNITED STATES

Norfolk

ATLANTIC OCEAN

ASIA

PACIFIC OCEAN

Hawaii (U.S.)

MEXICO

Tampa

CUBA

PUERTO RICO

Martinique

Curacao

AFRICA

SOUTH

AMERICA

AUSTRALIA

1 May 1898: the **Spanish-American War** began... in the **Philippines**

AFTERMATH

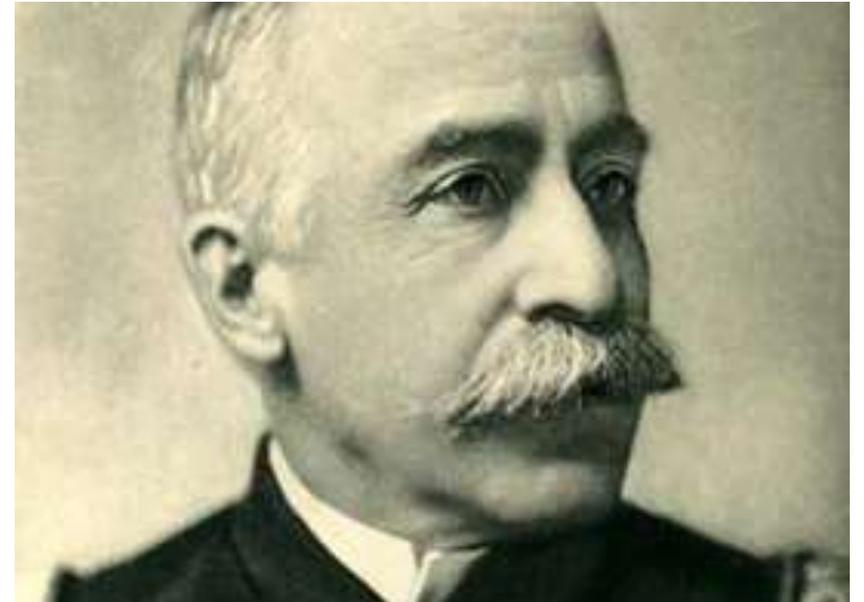
Guam, Philippines, and Puerto Rico were Spanish possessions ceded or sold to the United States after the War.

The United States also forces fought in the Philippine Insurrection 1898 - 1902 and in the Boxer Rebellion in 1900.

Commodore Dewey's victory at Manila Bay over Spanish fleet

Highly symbolic victory: the birth of a U.S.
foreign imperialism

The U.S. on track to become a **global
power**



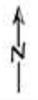
10 December 1898: **Treaty
of Paris**

**The Philippines, Puerto
Rico & Guam ceded to the
U.S.**



THE WORLD, 1898 - 1902

RESULTS DIRECTLY FROM
THE SPANISH - AMERICAN WAR



AFTERMATH

Guam, Philippines, and Puerto Rico were Spanish possessions ceded or sold to the United States after the War.

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2000 Pentagon report on
China's military

China as a potential rival

China not deemed a priority
(even less following 9-11)



2001: a turning point

December 2001: China became a member of **WTO** (organization that regulates and facilitates international trade)

A **revenge** for China: remember the “century of humiliation”?



Hong Kong & Macau (1997 & 1999)

The last symbols of 19th
century Western imperialism



MADE IN
CHINA

1999: *“Going Global”*
economic policy

To take advantage of global trade and
financial opportunities

July 2001: China awarded the 2008
Summer Olympic Games

China well **integrated** and **respected**
within the international community

China's **focus**: its economic development

Growing influence in Asia-Pacific
China as the **world's factory** (14% of world exports in 2014)

Number 1 foreign buyer of U.S. debt





The U.S.' hope: to transform China into a *“responsible stakeholder”*

Economic globalization & global governance

2008 financial & economic crisis: China's **economic stimulus** limited the scope of the global recession

China as the world second most powerful economy

**NEW SILK ROAD
ECONOMIC BELT**

**MOSCOW
RUSSIA**

**URUMQI
CHINA**

**BEIJING
CHINA**

**ISTANBUL
TURKEY**

**XI'AN
CHINA**

**FUZHOU
CHINA**

**VENICE
ITALY**

**NEW MARITIME
SILK ROAD**

**NAIROBI
KENYA**

**KUALA LUMPUR
MALAYSIA**



Power balance in the Indian Ocean

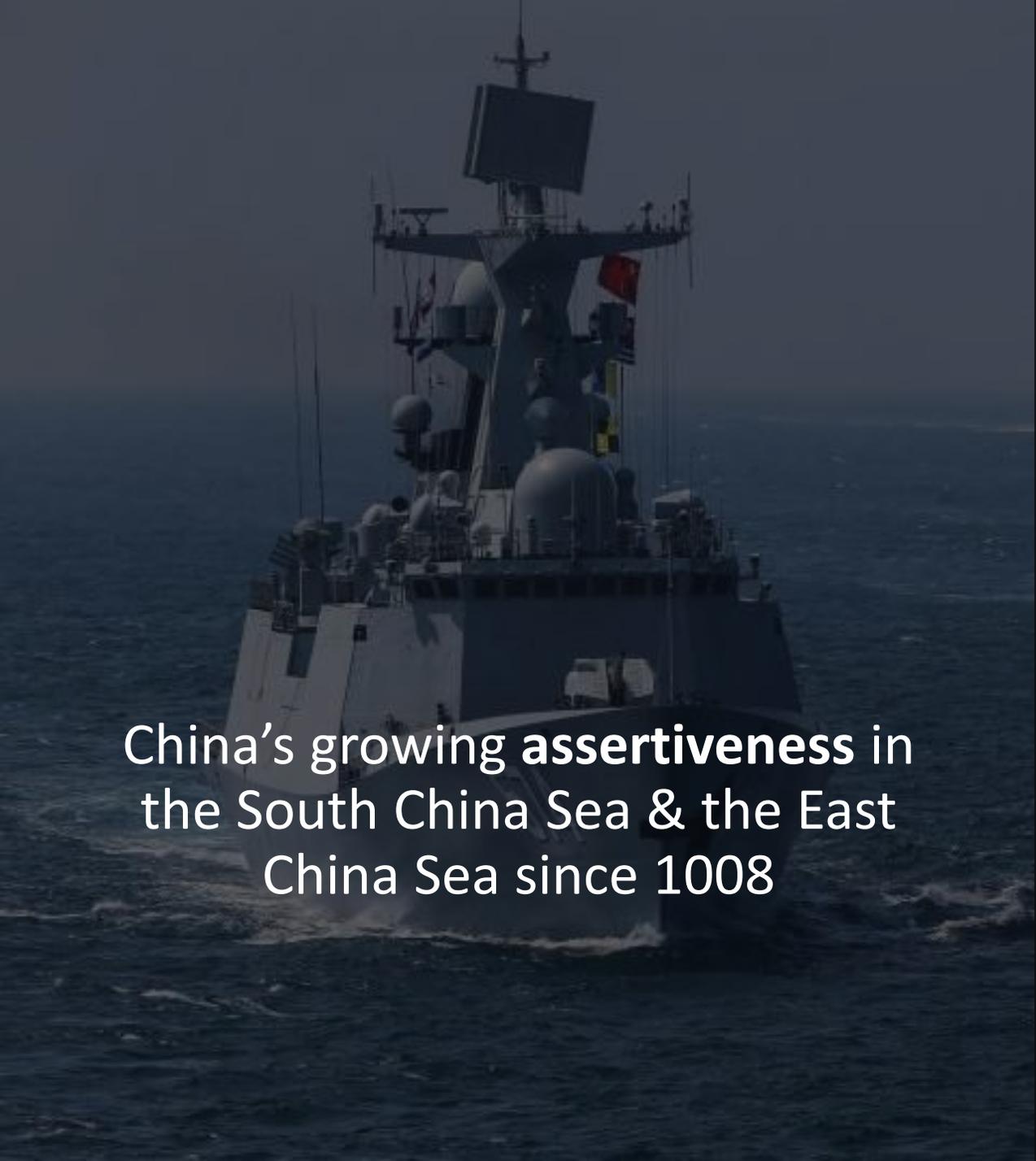




**Growing maritime rivalry
China-India in the Indian
Ocean**



2015: U.S.-India Joint Strategic Vision for Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region
A closer **partnership** aimed at *“promoting peace, prosperity and stability”*



China's growing assertiveness in the South China Sea & the East China Sea since 1008





Japan-China confrontation

Sovereignty over a group of uninhabited islands since late 1970s



Barack Obama's foreign policy in 2011: a **"pivot"** to Asia

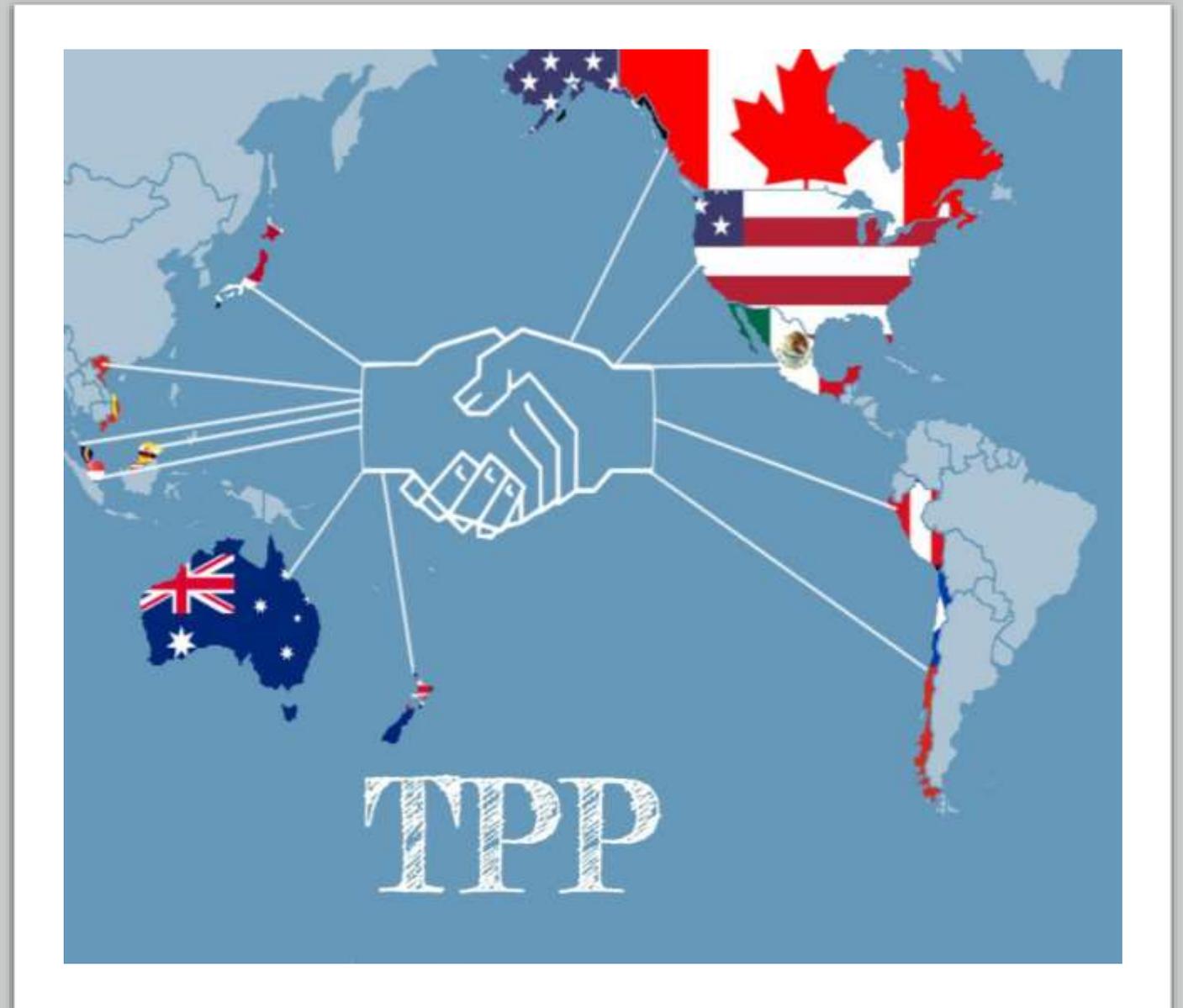
To bolster the U.S. presence in Asia

Tightening relationships with Asian countries to contain China

Obama's Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement

A **cornerstone** of Obama's strategy in Asia

To reassert **U.S. influence & balance** China's growing influence



TPP abandoned by Trump

23 January 2017: **presidential decree** cancelling the U.S. participation to TPP

"Trump has single-handedly given away an enormous source of leverage over China. The first rule of negotiating is don't give away something for nothing, and he's done that right off the bat." Council on Foreign Relations

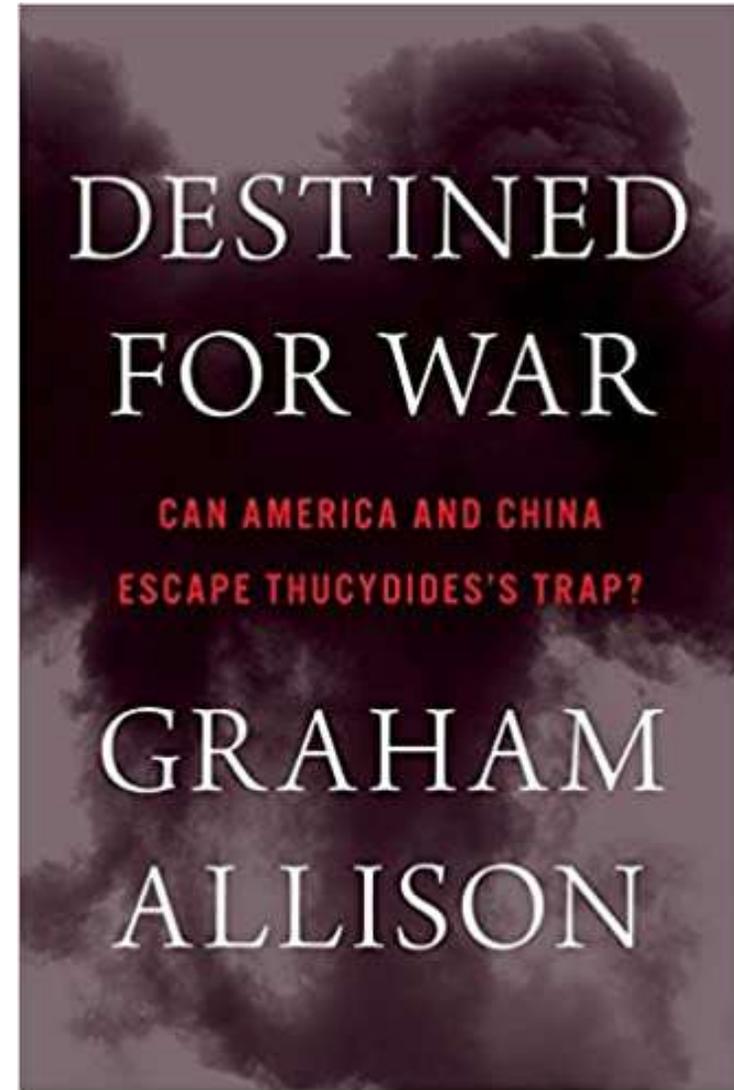
U.S. "pivot" perceived in Beijing as a policy of encirclement



Growing concerns in the U.S.

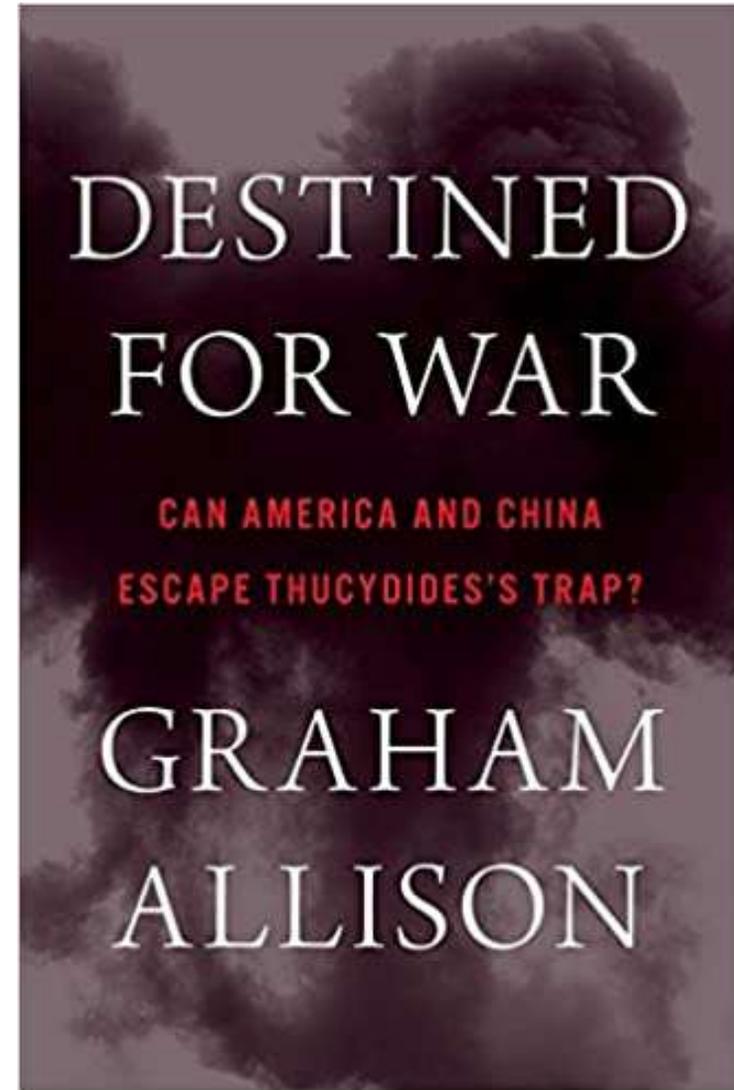
China compared to Japan in the 1930s (policies to exclude the U.S. from the Asia-Pacific zone)

Asia-Pacific increasingly seen as the engine of global economic growth



Growing concerns in the U.S.

The U.S. absorbed by the Iran's
nuclear program, the war in Syria
& the rise of the Islamic State
(2013-2014)



2012: Xi Jinping in power

“The **great renewal** of the Chinese nation”

China to regain its rightful place on the global stage following a “**century of humiliation**” (1842-1949)



Xi Jinping's signature foreign policy

The *Belt & Road Initiative* (BRI)

Massive increase of Chinese
investments in the world
(infrastructure)



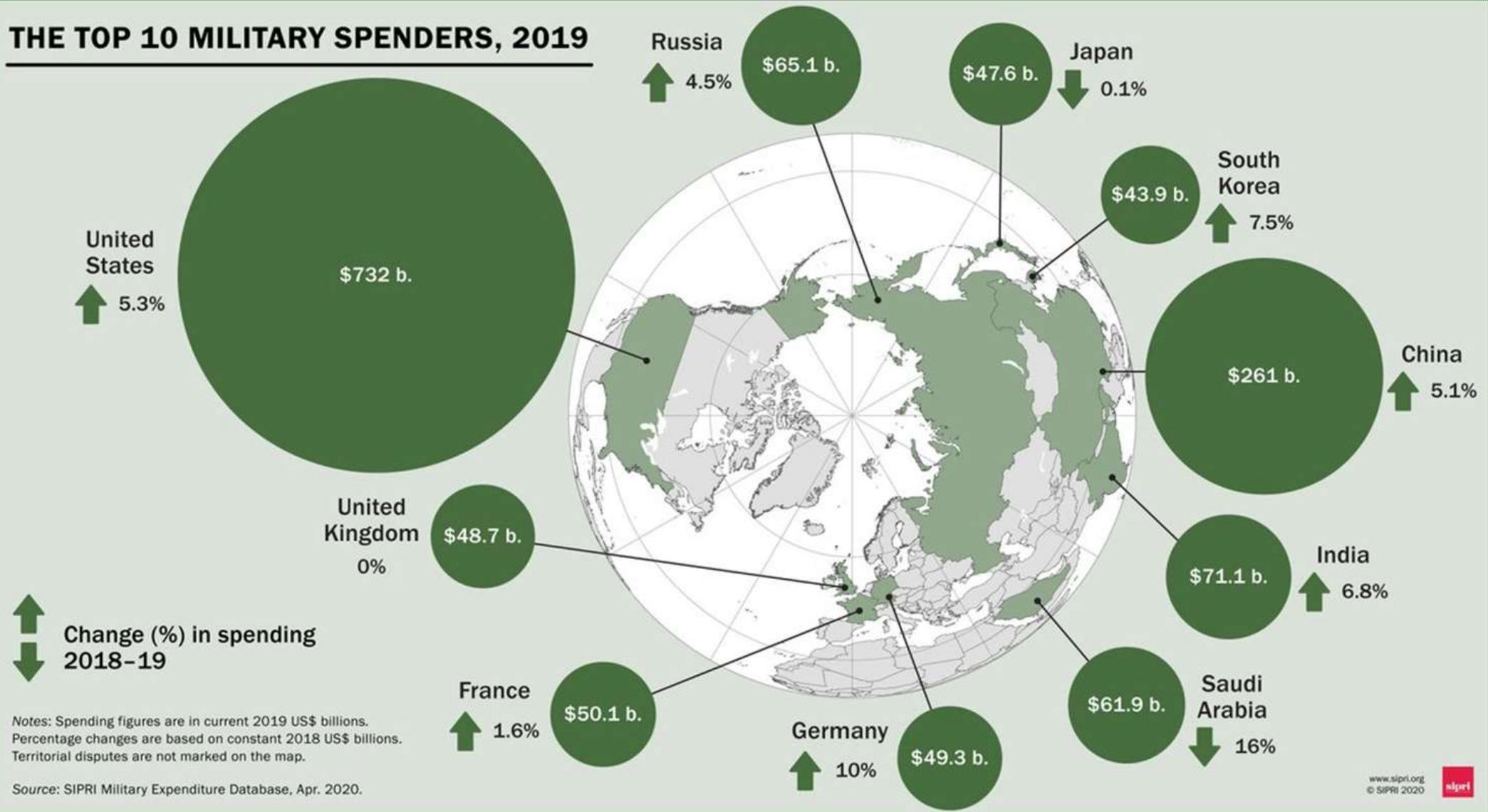
“The **great renewal** of the
Chinese nation”

=

*“The construction of a
prosperous country and of
powerful army” (Xi Jinping)*



THE TOP 10 MILITARY SPENDERS, 2019





China's "superiority" over the West
The CCP's efficiency (COVID-19)

First centennial goal tied to the celebration of the **CCP centennial** (1921-2021)

The **legitimacy** of the CCP

The **greatness of China's ruling party** (and its leaders) as China's economy is bouncing back from the pandemic

中国共产党第十八次全国代表大会





中国共产党第十八次全国代表大会

The next step: to make
China a “*great modern
socialist country*” by
2049

中国共产党
第十八次
全国代表大会

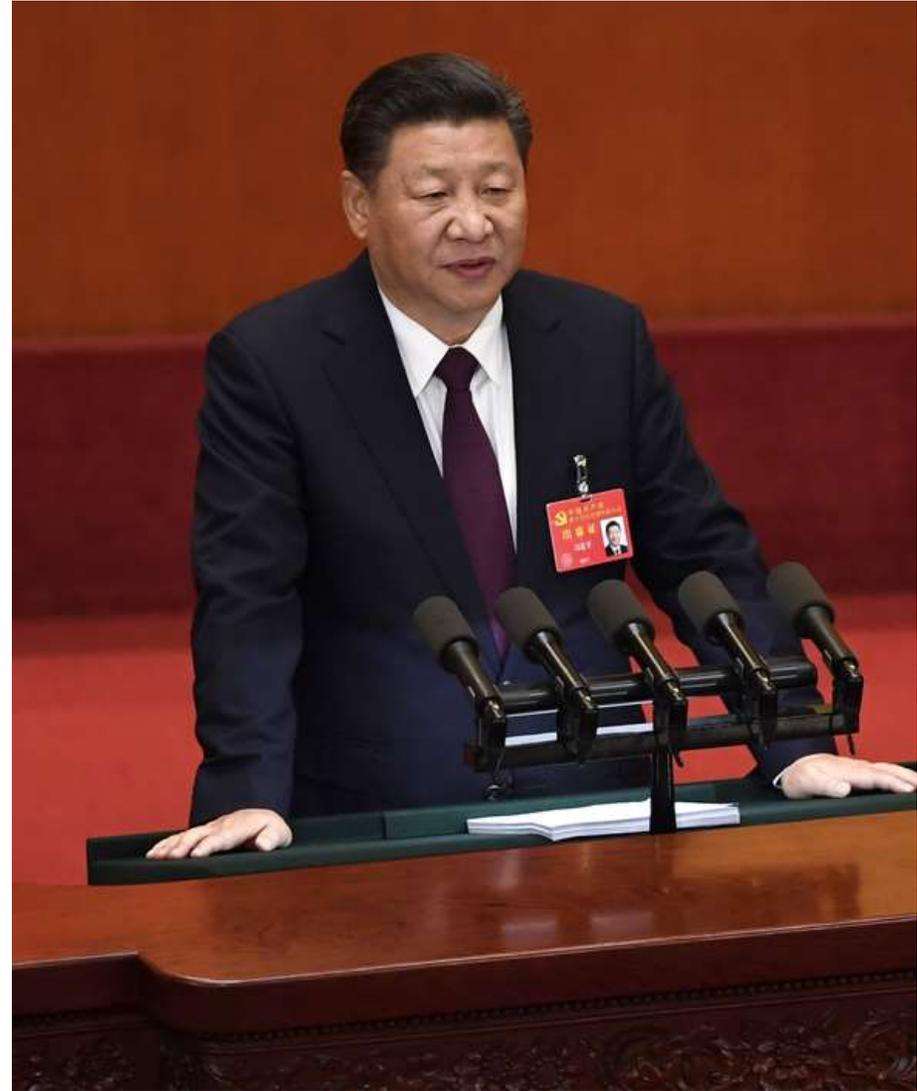


Explicit warnings to the U.S.

“The United States is the biggest threat to our country’s development and security”

“The grand trend is that the East is rising while the West is declining”

Praise for “the orderly rule of China and the chaos of the West”





China: the *Thucydides's* trap?

The U.S. strategy in the Indo-Pacific region

Growing criticisms towards China

Absence of reciprocity (access to the
Chinese market)

Economic espionage (technologies)

Gigantic trade deficit with China

The “*rape*” of America (Donald Trump,
2016)



2014 annexation of Crimea



UKRAINE

■ **KIEV**

RUSSIA

LUHANSK

DONETSK

**CRIMEA
PENINSULA**

**BLACK
SEA**

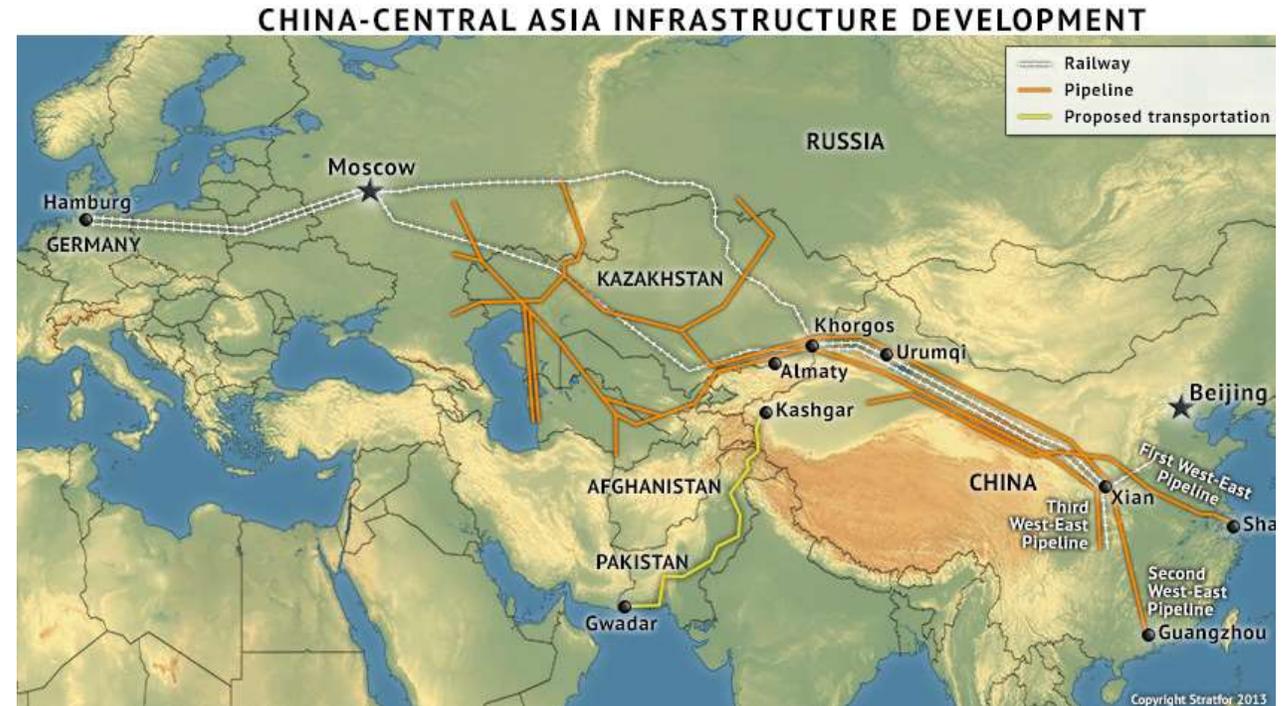


An emerging **Moscow-Beijing axis (partnership)**
Perceived in Washington as a **threat** to the stability of democracies

China's ongoing support to Russia (China's "*Chief strategic partner*")

"The friendship between the two peoples is ironclad"
(Wang Li, 7 March)

The War in Ukraine: a **significant impact** for the "*New Silk Roads*" (BRI)





Ukraine

A "door" (railway & road network) needed by China to develop its trade with Europe

What of Chinese investments in Ukraine?

Sanctions

Growing criticisms towards China

The U.S. obsessed with China since
2016

China took advantage of the U.S.
involvement in the Middle-East

The rise of China globally: a challenge
to the U.S.



Was the U.S. political establishment **naive** towards China?

Short-lived optimism (end of the Cold War)

The U.S.: the engine behind globalization

Globalization = China's political & economic transformation





China has become an industrial & **technology powerhouse**

From “the World’s Factory” to a world leader in engineering

China has cleverly **reinvested** its gains associated with low-cost products into **high-end products**

China is now able to **compete** with U.S. & European high-end products





China becoming a member of
WTO: an error?

A photograph of Xi Jinping, the leader of China, speaking at a podium during a formal event. He is wearing a dark suit and a red tie, and has his right fist raised in a gesture of emphasis. He is wearing a red identification badge on his lapel. The background shows a large assembly hall with many other people seated at desks, and large red curtains on the walls.

China more communist than ever...

No movement towards democracy

China: an alternative to democratic values

Donald Trump vs. Xi Jinping

A **trade war** to obtain a “good”
trade agreement with China

Sanctions against Chinese
technology companies

The battle for semiconductors



Xi Jinping as “champion”
of multilateralism & free
trade

Globalization irreversible
Protectionism not the
solution

Fight against global warming



The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)



The first trade agreement concluded between the **three main regional economies** (China, Japan & South Korea)

Japan, South Korea, Australia & New Zealand: key U.S. allies

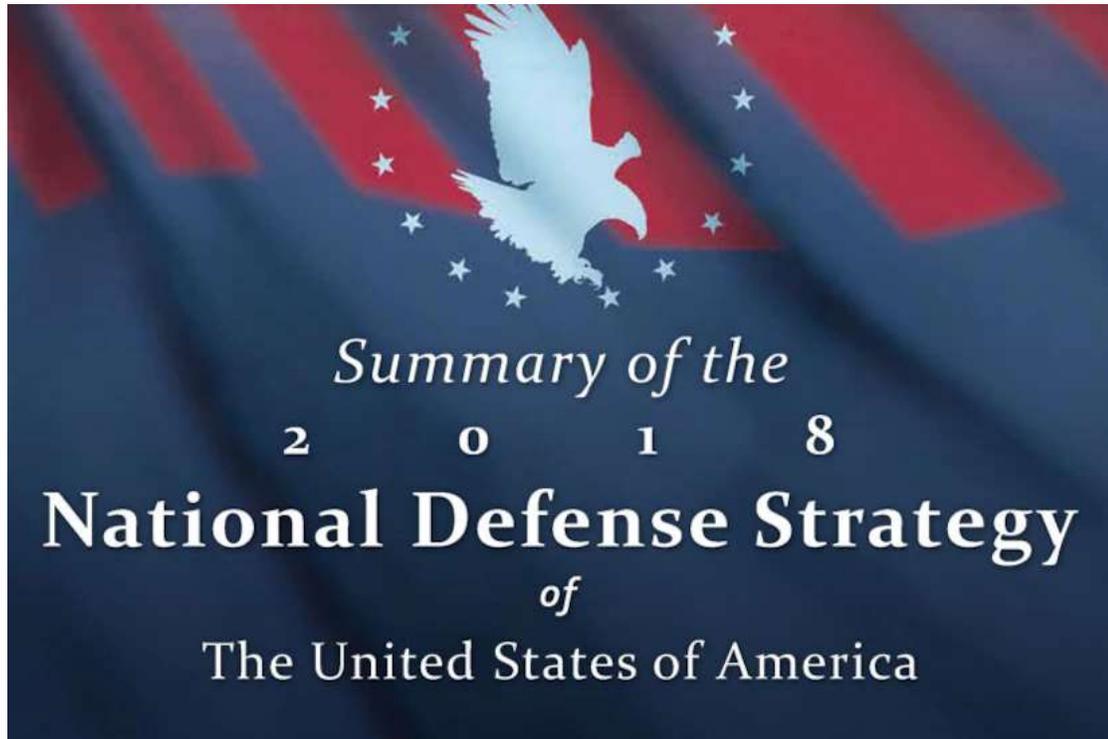




An **Indo-Pacific strategy** to neutralize China (perceived as a **global threat**)

An “*Indo-Pacific free and open*”

The Trump administration fully embraced the concept of *Indo-Pacific*



The U.S. defines itself as a key player in the Pacific region since the 19th century

Remember the **Spanish-American War of 1898**

**Trade U.S.-Indo-Pacific countries:
2,300 US\$ billion**

1,300 US\$ billion in direct investments



Focus on U.S. **military strength**

370 000 soldiers

2000 aircrafts

200 warships & submarines

Vast network of alliances and
defence partnerships

Anti-Chinese discourse



Patrick Shanahan (Acting
U.S. Defence Secretary)



Military power alone
insufficient
A *“Multi-dimensional strategy”*
(vague concept)

Trump’s *“America First”*
No alternative to China’s BRI

Joe Biden: a new approach

Strengthening existing alliances and partnerships in the region

Promoting multilateralism and the rule of law

Indo-Pacific concept: **central** to U.S. foreign policy under Biden





Global shipping routes

80% of global trade via
maritime routes

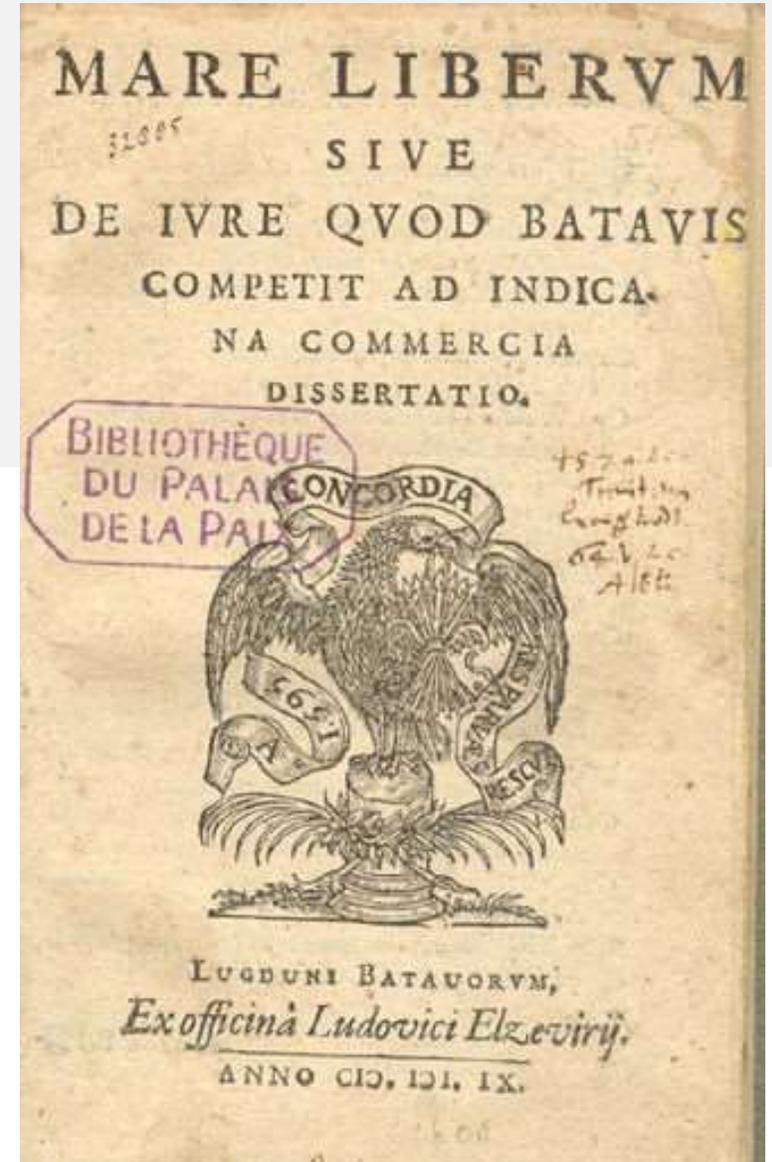
Promoting freedom of the
seas **key**

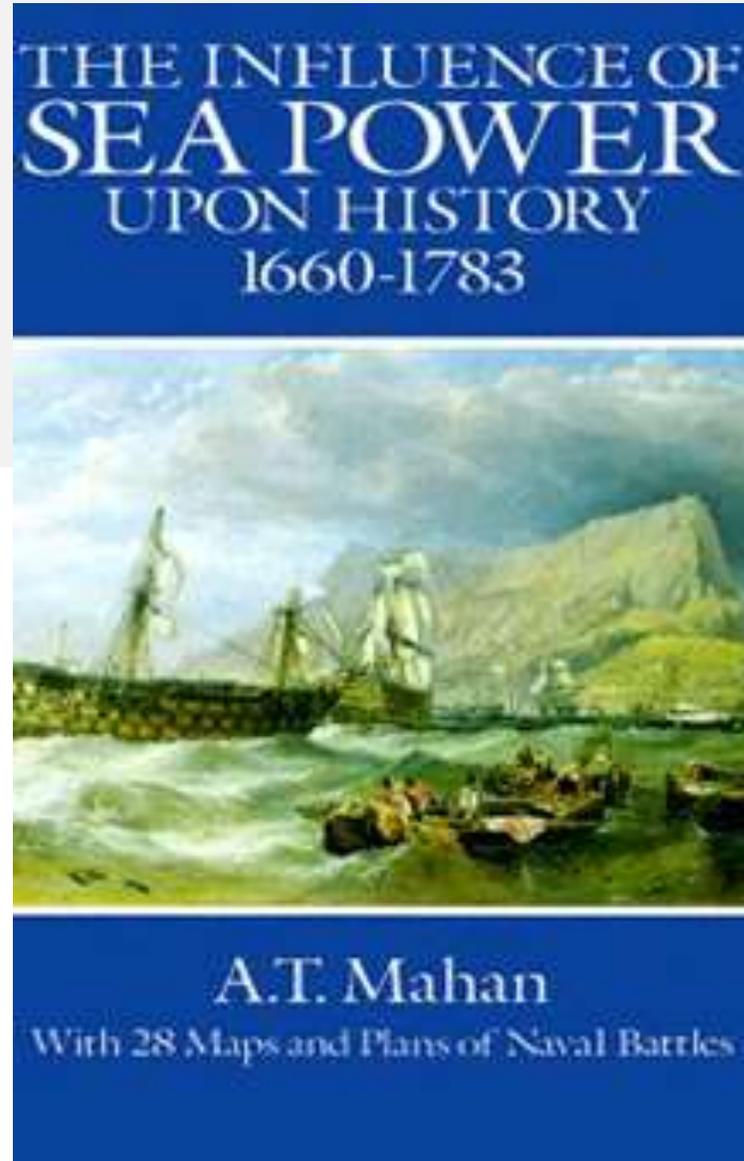
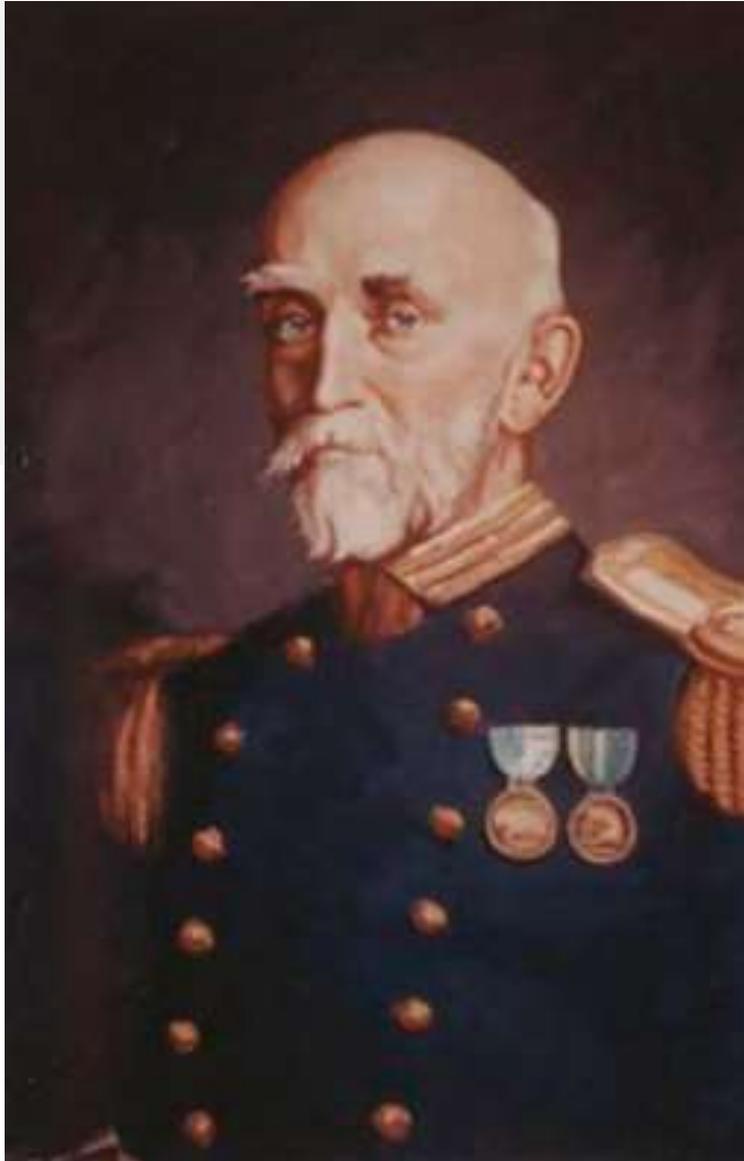




Hugo Grotius (1583-1645)

***Mare Liberum* (1609):** the sea as international territory and all nations free to use it for seafaring trade





Captain Mahan's naval strategy

Freedom of the seas, a founding principle to U.S. global power

UNIFIED COMBATANT COMMAND'S AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY

U.S. EUROPEAN COMMAND

U.S. NORTHERN COMMAND

U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

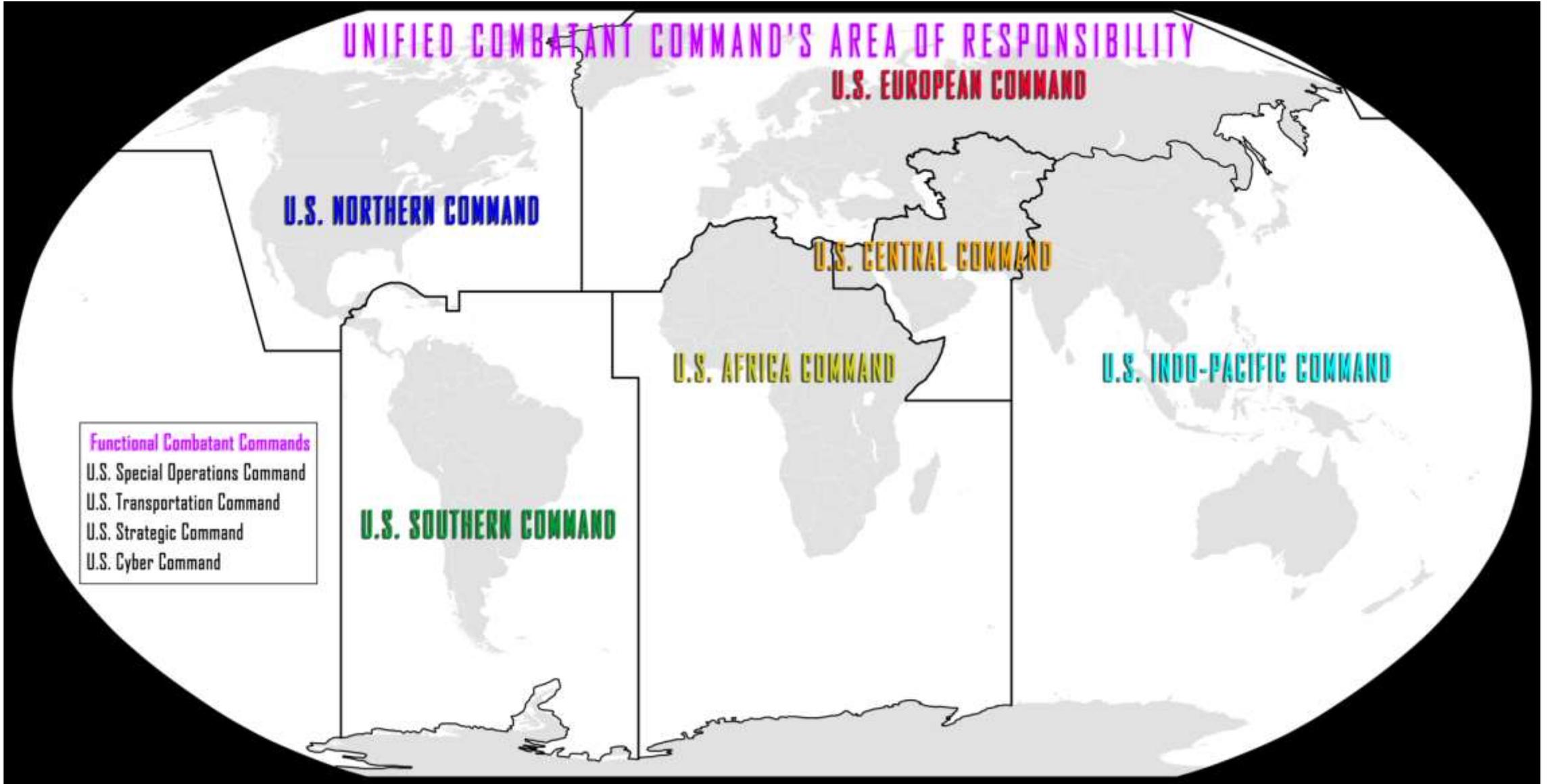
U.S. AFRICA COMMAND

U.S. INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND

U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND

Functional Combatant Commands

- U.S. Special Operations Command
- U.S. Transportation Command
- U.S. Strategic Command
- U.S. Cyber Command

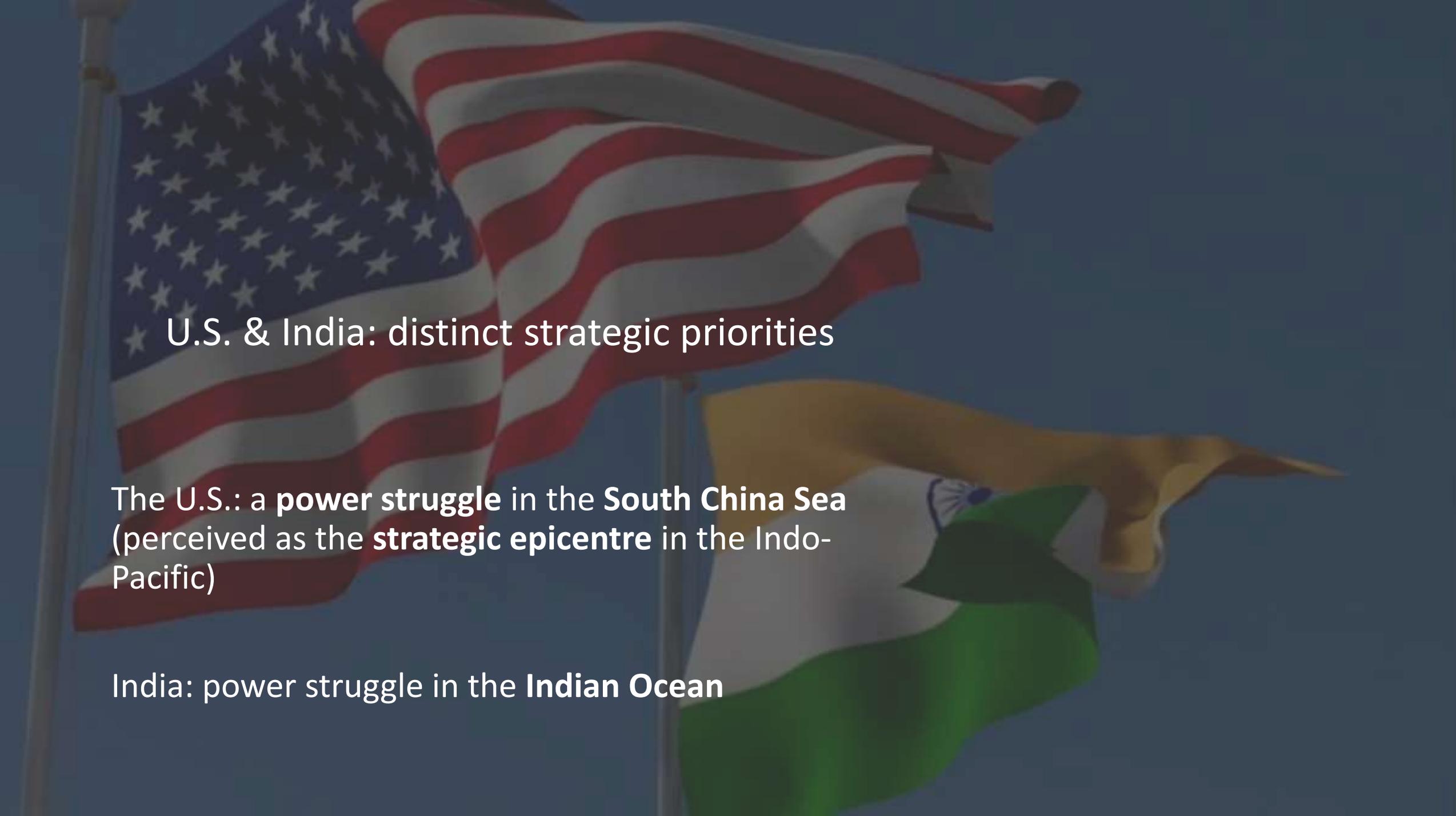


USINDOPACOM

Does not cover the Indian Ocean, East African seashore & Persian Gulf

U.S. approach vs. Indian, French and Japanese definitions of Indo-Pacific



The background of the slide features two flags waving against a dark blue sky. On the left is the United States flag, and on the right is the Indian national flag. The text is overlaid on the image in white.

U.S. & India: distinct strategic priorities

The U.S.: a **power struggle** in the **South China Sea**
(perceived as the **strategic epicentre** in the Indo-Pacific)

India: power struggle in the **Indian Ocean**

U.S. Navy deployed in Southeast Asia

To contest China's growing naval
power in the region

Multiple *Freedom of Navigation*
Operations since 2017

An Indo-Pacific "*free and open*"



Indo-Pacific “*free and open*”

Freedom of navigation

**International rule of law (1982
UN Convention on the Law of
the Sea – UNCLOS)**

Peaceful resolution of conflicts

Similar preoccupations amongst
maritime great powers
(Australia, India, France, UK...)



India: a key element in the
U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy

**India: no coalition of maritime
democracies against China**

India to preserve its diplomatic
options on the global stage

No exclusive relations with any
nations (formal alliances)

Non-Alignment tradition



North Pacific

Numerous U.S. military bases
Territories threatened by the
North Korean ballistic program

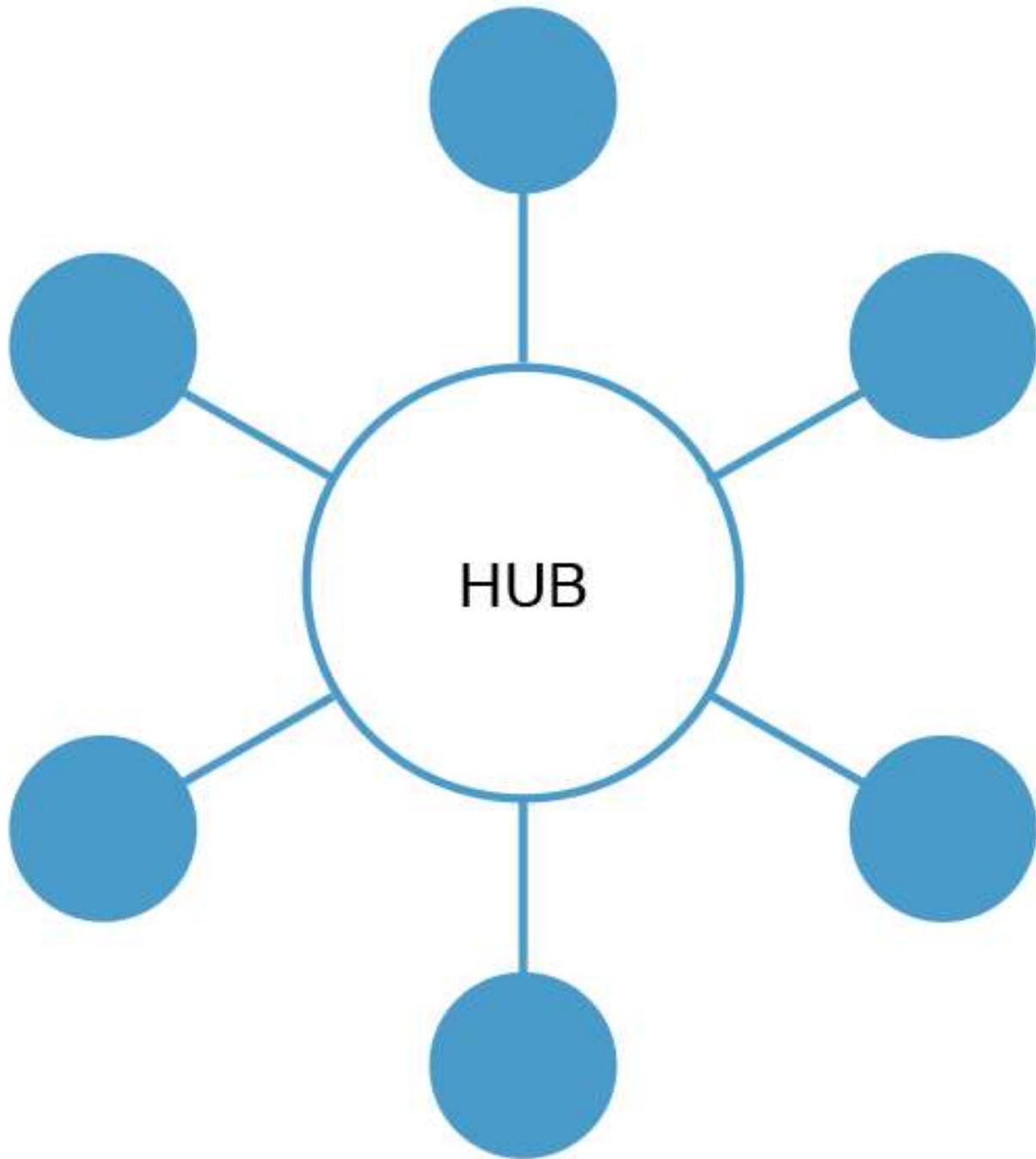




Increased military presence

2020 U.S. military budget:
732 US\$ billion

A **fluid** network of alliances and partnerships
“Hub an spokes” vision abandoned



“Hub and spokes” model

A system of bilateral alliances

The allies (*spokes*) take advantage of a strong bilateral relations with the U.S. (*hub*)

Little interaction amongst allies

New U.S. approach: regional cooperation amongst democracies

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (« QUAD »)



China: *“Asian NATO”*

A vague concept

Bloc of Indo-Pacific democracies that was created to counter China's regional influence (freedom of navigation, Indo-Pacific as a “free and open” space)

The US' Indo-Pacific Strategy



The *AUKUS* Security Pact

A **trilateral security pact**
(Australia, the UK and the U.S.)

Australia to acquire nuclear-
powered submarines

Diplomatic spat with France (the
cancellation of a French-
Australian submarine deal)





China: a *“cold-war mentality”*

AUKUS: another response to
China’s perceived assertiveness
as an emerging superpower

Chinese Foreign Affairs
Minister **Wang Li**