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I want to thank Cora, Bina, and others in IPB's Asia committee for inviting me to participate in today's webinar. I'll be learning more than sharing today. U.S.-Chinese relations will be determinative of humanity's fate. This applies to the increasingly dangerous arms race and military confrontations, the intense economic and technological competition, and the current absence of disarmament, pandemic, or climate change collaborations. How we respond to and shape that arc of history and the lives of this and future generations.

Our era is defined by the inevitable tensions between rising and declining powers. Here in the United States, our daily newspaper and social media feeds are filled with stories about the two powers' intense economic and technological competition. We see little about the dangerous military contest for control of the South China/West Philippine Sea that has replaced the struggle for dominance over the Strait of Hormuz and the Fulda Gap in Germany as the geopolitical center of the struggle for world power. Incidents, accidents, and miscalculations amidst provocative exercises in the South China Sea, where there are no agreed rules of engagement, and in relation to Taiwan, could easily escalate into great power war.

Compounding these dangers are the increasing militarization of artificial intelligence, robotics, and other advanced technologies

After nearly a century of U.S. Asia-Pacific hegemony and the imposition of the U.S.-dominated post WWII Bretton Woods order, China's "reform and opening" created an economy that is expected to soon overshadow that of the United States. China's economic transformation, which as Walden Bello notes includes China replacing the United States as the new center of capital accumulation, which also serves as the foundation for its increasingly advanced and powerful military. Today, China's area denial air, naval and missile forces, defensive though they may be, increasingly call into question Washington's long-term ability to dominate the South China/West Philippine Sea and the western Pacific Ocean, in what since 1945 was the "American Lake". And, despite U.S. arms sales to Taiwan and related military training, it is increasingly apparent that should China ultimately opt to "reunify" this historically Chinese province by military means, armed resistance would be futile and could escalate to nuclear war.

As we see in the Biden Administration's rhetoric that the United States must lead, and with its extension of the Trump Administration's confrontational military, economic, and diplomatic policies, the Biden Administration and much of the country remain rooted in the tragic ideologies of U.S. exceptionalism and manifest destiny.

With his trade war, confrontational military threats and deployments, and his racist election-related scapegoating of China, Donald Trump crystalized a new Cold War with China. A self-defeating Washington consensus, driven by the mainstream and extreme right-wing media, has permeated elite and popular opinion. A recent poll by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs concluded that “A 55% majority of the public sees China as a critical threat, and another 40% see China as an important threat.”

Even before pandemic induced economic dislocations, wage stagnation and massive neoliberal economic inequality, Chinese and other low wage production platforms, industrial and financial off shoring, and increased automation provided fertile ground for Trump’s demagogic neo-fascist authoritarianism and scapegoating of China. With its forced technology transfers, intellectual property theft, and violations of WTO and other trade agreements, Chinese policy makers are hardly innocents. But, at root, neoliberal and other systemic factors are the primary cause of U.S. economic stagnation and the root of economic tensions.

#### Paradigms, History, and Security Strategies

Two systemic paradigms illuminate the present danger. First is the Thucydides Trap, named for the ancient Greek historian’s analysis of the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta. He stressed the inevitable tensions between rising and declining powers that have too often resulted in catastrophic wars. The post-WWII international order, including its Asia-Pacific hegemony, were imposed by the United States when China was an extremely poor, war torn, and technologically undeveloped nation. Chinese needs and interests were not considered. In recent decades, as China has risen, it has understandably pressed to revise, but not completely overturn, the rules of the global and strategic disorder.

There are also disturbing similarities between this era and the period leading to WWI. These include tensions between rising and declining powers, complex alliance structures, intense nationalism with the attendant hatred of others, territorial disputes, arms races with new technologies, economic integration and competition, autocracies, and wild-card actors. Just as a nationalist’s gunshots in remote Sarajevo triggered a global war, today an incident, accident, or miscalculation – for example, a collision of warships or war planes in the South China Sea or near Taiwan – could easily escalate to a major, potentially nuclear, war.

Here in the United States, we urgently need to understand the seriousness of the moment and the imperative of pressing the Biden Administration to reject the containment policies that date back to the aftermath of the Cold War with the Soviet Union. Humility dictates that we remember that former U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry traces the driving force behind China’s massive

military modernization to his ordering two nuclear-capable aircraft carrier fleets through the Taiwan Strait in 1996 which terrified China's leaders. The subsequent spiraling conventional, high-tech, and nuclear U.S. Chinese arms race, which U.S. will lead for at least another decade, is in no one's interest.

U.S.-Chinese tensions didn't begin with Trump's trade war and racist anti-Asian rhetoric. The creation of the U.S. overseas empire began with the 1898 conquests of the stepping stones to the potentially massive China market – seen then as now as the holy grail of capitalism - the Philippines, Guam, Samoa and the annexation of Hawaii, as well as the seizure of Cuba and the Philippines. Two years later U.S. sent armed forces to China as part of the colonial coalition that subdued the Boxer rebellion. The determinative reason that the U.S. devastated Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and their people with A-bombs, was to bring the war to an immediate end, so as not to have to share influence with Russia in northern China, Manchuria, and Korea. And the United States prepared and threatened China with nuclear war in 1955, 1958 and 1996 during Taiwan crises.

Bush II-Cheney plans to ratchet up efforts to contain China were sidelined by the 9-11 attacks and the disastrous invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Then, faced with China's increasing economic, military and diplomatic power, instead of exploring the potential of Xi Jinping's vision of a new model for great power relations, the Obama Administration's responded with its "pivot to Asia and the Pacific" to reinforce U.S. hegemony. The commitment then as now was to deploy 60% of U.S. naval and air power to the Pacific Theater, to increase U.S. reliance on what are now termed Indo-Pacific allies and partners, and to plan for an air-sea battle targeted against China's military infrastructure, electronic grid, and its financial and industrial resources, all of which are concentrated along China's vulnerable coastline.

The Trump Administration doubled down on this containment policy with Secretary of Defense Mattis' 2018 *National Defense Strategy*, the Pentagon's defining doctrinal statement. In an era of fracking and a global oil glut, the Strategy which shapes all U.S. military planning, the United States reduced U.S. military commitments to the Middle East. And, in the last months of Trump's reign, NATO fell in line with the U.S. Defense Strategy by taking the first steps toward adopting its NATO 2030 Doctrine, which makes containment of China one of the alliance's two priorities. Europe is not fully on board, as we saw in the signing of the recent E.U.-China trade agreement, despite the opposition of the incoming Biden Administration.

It should be noted that in contrast to the offensive doctrines and structures of the U.S. military, even the Pentagon recognizes that China's defining military doctrine is "strategic defense." Encircled by hundreds of U.S. military bases and installations and the U.S. Navy's Seventh Fleet, it

has expanded its South China Sea defense perimeter with its nine-dash line territorial claims and construction of military bases on disputed rocks and islets in total disregard of other nations with legitimate territorial claims and international law. In this regard, in the imperial tradition of all great powers, China is mimicking the United States' Monroe Doctrine and its domination of the Caribbean Sea.

Even as China has become the world's second largest military spender, we should bear in mind that its military budget is one-third that of the United States. It has a no first use nuclear doctrine – not that retaliatory use would reduce the danger of nuclear winter. It has an estimated 260 nuclear weapons, as compared to the United States' roughly 1,500 deployed nuclear weapons and 4,000 it has stockpiled. In addition to its several South China/West Philippine Sea islet fortifications, it has one foreign military base – in Djibouti, as compared to the hundreds of U.S. military bases that nearly encircle China from Korea and Japan, through the Philippines to Australia.

Faced with China's military and technological challenges to U.S. regional dominance and global influence, the 2018 National Defense Strategy which will not be greatly changed by the Biden Administration, defined China as a "strategic competitor" and "prioritized "major power competition and, in particular, reversing the erosion of U.S. military advantage in relation to China and Russia." To do so, it mandated "modernization of nuclear deterrence forces and nuclear command, control and communications (NC3) capabilities; additional missile defense capabilities; ...continuing increased procurement of certain preferred and advanced munitions; [and] investment in technological innovation to increase lethality, including research into advanced autonomous systems, artificial intelligence, and hypersonics".<sup>i</sup>

As then Secretary of Defense Mattis testified, "Our military remains capable, but our competitive edge has eroded in every domain of warfare – air, land, sea, space, and cyber". This, in response, provided the rationale for massive increases in military spending for post-modern weapons acquisition and the deepening expansion of U.S. military alliances – most notably the U.S.-Japanese-Australian-Indian Quad, but also the reaffirmation of United States "ironclad" commitment to its alliance with South Korea, its military backing to Japan's Senkaku/Diaoyu Island claims, and defense of the Philippines interests in the South China/West Philippine Sea.

While the Biden Administration has impressively cancelled and reversed many disastrous Trump era social, economic, and environmental policies and moved aggressively to contain the Covid-19 pandemic, even with its announced Pentagon review of U.S. military strategy toward China, it will be adhering to the board outlines of the Mattis National Defense Strategy. President Biden has repeatedly insisted that the U.S. must "get tough" with China, and as an early

manifestation of this commitment, Taiwan's de facto ambassador was invited to participate in the Biden-Harris inauguration. Since Biden came to power, the Pentagon sent destroyer through the Taiwan Strait and dispatched two aircraft carrier fleet for a massive and provocative so-called freedom of navigation show of force. Those fleets were joined by a French submarine in an early display of NATO 2030 doctrine unity.

Biden has appointed Kurt Campbell – the primary author of the Obama Administration's Asia-Pacific "pivot"- as the lead National Security Council Asia policy maker. In their Senate the confirmation testimonies Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, April Haines, Director of National Intelligence, and Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo all confirmed their hardline commitments toward China.

Even as China's leaders welcomed the Biden administration with statements about the need for "cooperation instead of confrontation between China and the United States" it has agreed the Biden Administration with its own provocative and threatening military assertions of its ambitions. It dispatched bombers into Taiwanese airspace and adopted a new law that "for the first time explicitly allows its coast guard to fire on foreign vessels." Consistent with the new law, it is reported that it has deployed an armed coast guard ship to contested waters near the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. In addition to what this means for Vietnamese and Philippine vessels in disputed waters, it has raised deep fears among Japanese leaders about its implications for the contest to control the uninhabited Senkaku/Diaoyu islands and thus for the East China Sea.

Time doesn't allow me to explore the background and dynamics of the two most dangerous U.S.-Chinese flashpoints, the South China Sea and Taiwan, in any detail, so let me turn to the questions of what must then be done. Despite the very real differences between, and the competing interests, of the two powers, it is imperative that they and we pursue our common interests via détente and Common Security diplomacy. War with China must be prevented at all costs.

Even as we are not uncritical of China, including its repression of basic human rights, we need to challenge the fear tactics that inflate the perceived dangers posed by China and concentrate on collaborating to overcome the existential threats posed by pandemics, the climate crisis and nuclear weapons. As we learned from the Palme Commission's Common Security report, which provided the paradigm that ended the U.S.-Soviet Cold War even before the collapse of the Berlin Wall, security cannot be achieved via spiraling arms races with a nation's rival, but only on the basis of creating mutual trust and security.

Among the most constructive steps that Congress, and more importantly President Biden can take would be adopting a no first use nuclear war fighting doctrine to match China's. As Chinese

interlocutors have noted, it could provide the foundation for deeper demilitarization diplomacy. In the past, President Biden has opposed the U.S. first strike doctrine. There is reason to hope that with a declaration in the run up to August's Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference or in the context of his promised Nuclear Posture Review, the U.S. could turn the hands of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists Doomsday back from 100 seconds to midnight. Several no first use bills, supported by our peace movement, are pending in Congress. While their adoption is unlikely, they add press to Biden's considerations.

Additionally, the United States should halt freedom of navigation provocations, encouraging ASEAN-Chinese negotiations for an enforceable code of conduct and resource sharing in the South China/West Philippine Sea, cancelling arms sales to Taiwan, and encouraging Taiwanese-Chinese negotiations.

Remarkably, there is even a call from the U.S. Naval War College for the U.S. to meet China halfway. In terms of pressing policy change from the grassroots and grass tops, a host of new peace, anti-war and real security formations have emerged to prevent and reverse the Cold War with China. Among them are our newly created Committee for a Sane U.S. China Policy and a more movement-oriented Asia-Pacific Working Group, which are organizing webinars and creating resource packed webpages to build a base of informed activists and to develop strategies to impact U.S. policy. The recently created Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, Win Without War and Code Pink, all based in Washington, have also become important resources in our common effort to prevent a catastrophic war with China and to build a Common Security order that serves all of the peoples of the Asia-Pacific region.

To prevent new and catastrophic war, and to redirect the United States' limited financial resources to address urgent human needs, we are in serious need of moving the money. By replacing Washington's military first U.S. strategic doctrine with commitments to Common Security diplomacy, as a growing number of members of Congress and the U.S. public understand, we can finance the revitalization of the U.S. economy, pay for construction of a 21<sup>st</sup> century infrastructure, and begin to reverse the impacts of climate change. Given our national crisis, and despite Biden's "get tough" approach to China, we expect an intense guns or butter debate in the coming year. Near the top of the list of possible cuts are funding to replace the United States offensive land-based ICBMs, the new and destabilizing standoff cruise missiles, and Trump's "more usable" battlefield nuclear weapons. Closing as many as U.S. foreign and domestic military bases as possible, and naval reducing spending would also reduce the dangers of war and build real security.

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<sup>i</sup> Mattis, Statement for the Record, SASC, April 26, 2018.