

Four Visions of US Strategy on China

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What is current US strategy towards China? This is a basic question and yet there is no consensus as to the answer. Even the architects of the Obama administration's approach, the so-called "pivot" or "rebalance" to Asia, have been inconsistent in their description of US objectives.¹ Observers are often perplexed by seemingly frequent US changes in direction, from embracing China's proposed "new model of great power relations" to rejecting its Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank or Air Defense Identification Zone. Some have suggested that "it is difficult to discern a clear consensus [in Washington] on strategy for managing order in East Asia."² Indeed, different US leaders have different visions of regional security and therefore favour strategies as varied as containment, accommodation, balancing, and integration. This paper discusses these four different schools of thought on US policy regarding China.

Conceptualising Security

Most scholars and policymakers view the world through multiple lenses that shape their views of both the United States and China. Avery Goldstein observes that "the long-term prospect of a new great power rivalry between the United States and China ... ultimately rests on debatable claims about the intentions of the two countries and uncertain forecasts about big shifts in their national capabilities."³ Improving our understanding of US views of these two factors – Chinese intentions and the trajectory of Chinese power – provides a window into US strategy vis-à-vis China.

We broadly categorise US perspectives on Chinese intentions and the trajectory of China's growth as either optimistic or pessimistic. As Thomas Christensen explains, "Pessimists exaggerate China's national power and the actual or potential threat of Chinese hegemony in Asia and beyond Optimists, for their part, note that Chinese power will not catch up to

¹ See David J. Berteau, Michael J. Green, and Zack Cooper, *Assessing the Asia-Pacific Rebalance* (Washington, D.C., 2014).

² Michael J. Green, 'Asia in the Debate on American Grand Strategy', *Naval War College Review* vol.62, No.1, 2009, p.27.

³ Avery Goldstein, 'First Things First: The Pressing Danger of Crisis Instability in US-China Relations', *International Security* vol.37, No.4, 2013, p.50.

that of the United States anytime soon.”⁴ Similarly, Dale Copeland suggests, “Hawks will tend to reject engagement because they are more pessimistic about the depth of the US fall.”⁵ Aaron Friedberg provides another perspective on optimists and pessimists as related to China strategy.⁶

Figure 1: Four US Perspectives on China Strategy

		Assessment of Chinese Intentions	
		Optimistic	Pessimistic
Assessment of Power Trajectory	Optimistic	Integration	Containment
	Pessimistic	Accommodation	Balancing

In focusing on Chinese intentions and the trajectory of Chinese power, we describe four alternative US strategies. There is some overlap between these categories, but as Barry Posen and Andrew Ross have argued, different strategies tend to

contain fundamental disagreements about strategic objectives and priorities, the extent to which the United States should be engaged in international affairs, the form that engagement should assume, the means that should be employed, the degree of autonomy that must be maintained, and when and under what conditions military force should be employed. Some combinations just do not go together.⁷

Thus, we describe objectives, strategies, and policies for each distinct US strategy.

⁴ Thomas J. Christensen, *The China Challenge: Shaping the Choices of a Rising Power* (New York, 2015), p.2.

⁵ Dale C. Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Ithaca, 2001), p.243.

⁶ Aaron L. Friedberg, ‘The Debate over US China Strategy’, *Survival* vol.57, No.3, 2015, p.89–110.

⁷ Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, ‘Competing Visions for US Grand Strategy,’ *International Security* vol.21, No.3, 1996/97, p.52.

Containment

A world without US primacy will be a world with more violence and disorder and less democracy and economic growth than a world where the United States continues to have more influence than any other country in shaping global affairs.

- Samuel Huntington⁸

Those experts who are pessimistic about Chinese intentions but optimistic about the trajectory of Chinese power tend to believe that containment and continued US primacy are the best ways to accomplish US security. Stephen Wohlforth argues that “the current unipolarity is prone to peace.”⁹ Embracing this view, Mac Thornberry and Andrew Krepinevich advocate the United States seek to “preserve primacy.”¹⁰ These experts see growing Chinese military capabilities as a threat to US military supremacy in East Asia, but believe that the United States has the ability to meet this challenge. Because primacists worry that China will seek to push the United States out of the region, they typically suggest the United States invest more in maintaining its hard power edge throughout East Asia in order to contain China.

Supporters of containment tend to see the world through a zero-sum lens. They believe that a rising China presents an unavoidable threat to US interests and is likely to trigger a major conflict. Primacy is often likened to hegemony, which Robert Gilpin defines as “the leadership of one state (the hegemon) over other states in the system.”¹¹ Thus, only one state can lead. Primacists in the United States are often neoconservatives like Robert Kagan, who argues that “were we to retreat from East Asia ... the result could only be global instability.”¹² Yet, Richard Betts maintains that support for primacy spans both sides of the aisle; Democrats just “push primacy with a human face, dressed up in the rhetoric of multilateralism, and they use military power with much hesitancy and hand-wringing.”¹³ In this way, Stephen Brooks, John Ikenberry, and William Wohlforth argue that “the grand strategy debate presumes primacy – it is the United States’ unrivaled power and favourable geographical position that give it such a wide range of strategic choice.”¹⁴

Advocates of containment are pessimistic about Chinese intentions. In particular, they tend to believe that China ultimately aims to supplant the United States’ liberal hegemony in East Asia with an illiberal, Sino-centric order of its own. Michael Pillsbury writes, “Chinese

⁸ Samuel P. Huntington, ‘Why International Primacy Matters’, *International Security* vol.17, No.4, 1993, p.82–83.

⁹ William C. Wohlforth, ‘The Stability of a Unipolar World’, *International Security* vol.24, No.1, 1999, p.7–8.

¹⁰ Mac Thornberry and Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr., ‘Preserving Primacy’, *Foreign Affairs* vol.95, No. 5, 2016.

¹¹ Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge, 1981), p.116.

¹² Robert Kagan, ‘How the Fiscal Crisis Puts National Security at Risk’, *Washington Post*, 12 November 2012.

¹³ Richard K. Betts, ‘The Political Support System for American Primacy’, *International Affairs* vol.81, No.1 (2005), p.2.

¹⁴ Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, ‘Don’t Come Home, America: The Case against Retrenchment’, *International Security* vol.37, No.3, 2012/13, p.13.

leaders have persuaded many in the West to believe that China's rise will be peaceful and will not come at others' expense, even while they adhere to a strategy that fundamentally rejects this."¹⁵ Similarly, John Mearsheimer notes, "I expect China to act the way the United States has acted over its long history A much more powerful China can also be expected to try to push the United States out of the Asia-Pacific region, much the way the United States pushed the European great powers out of the Western Hemisphere in the 19th century."¹⁶ Therefore, Aaron Friedberg argues that if China "grows richer and stronger without also becoming a liberal democracy, the present muted rivalry with the United States is likely to blossom into something more open and dangerous."¹⁷ For the same reasons, Ashley Tellis argues that "rising Chinese power is oriented towards eroding ... US primacy."¹⁸

Primacists, however, are not entirely pessimistic. Most believe that the United States' relative decline vis-à-vis China is not serious enough to endanger its leading position in the international system, or even in East Asia.¹⁹ For example, Hal Brands writes, "Reports of American primacy's demise are much exaggerated, just as they have been in previous instance of premature 'declinism' over the past seventy years."²⁰ Brooks and Wohlforth describe "three key differences from previous eras that invalidate analogies to the power transitions... China is at a much lower technological level than the leading state... the distance China must travel is extraordinarily large... the transition from a great power to a superpower much harder now than it was in the past."²¹ For this reason, Michael Beckley argues, "The status quo for the United States is pretty good: it does not face a hegemonic rival, and the trends favour continued US dominance."²² Thus, primacists are relatively sanguine about future power trajectories. Even with or without continued Chinese growth, they believe the United States nevertheless still has "more room for maneuver than it had during the Cold War."²³

¹⁵ Michael Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower* (New York, 2015), p.4.

¹⁶ John J. Mearsheimer, 'The Gathering Storm: China's Challenge to US Power in Asia', *Chinese Journal of International Politics* vol.3, no.4, 2010/11, p.389.

¹⁷ Aaron L. Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia* (New York, 2012), p.2.

¹⁸ Ashley J. Tellis, *Balancing Without Containment: An American Strategy for Managing China* (Washington, D.C., 2014), p.2.

¹⁹ Pillsbury, *Hundred-Year Marathon*, p.214.

²⁰ Hal Brands, 'The Era of American Primacy Is Far from Over', *The National Interest*, 24 August 2016.

²¹ Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, 'The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers in the Twenty-First Century: China's Rise and the Fate of America's Global Position', *International Security* vol.40, No.3, 2015/16, p.9.

²² Michael Beckley, 'China's Century? Why America's Edge Will Endure', *International Security* vol.36, No.3, 2011/12, p.78.

²³ Richard K. Betts, 'Pick Your Battles: Ending America's Era of Permanent War', *Foreign Affairs* vol.93, no. 6, 2014, p.24.

Primacists often support a strategy of containment to limit the growth of potentially hostile powers, including China. Along these lines, the 2002 US National Security Strategy stated, “Our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States.”²⁴ Therefore, Brands asserts, “Washington will undoubtedly have to work harder – and invest more – to maintain an acceptable degree of primacy.”²⁵ John Bolton goes so far as to suggest “modifying or even jettisoning the ambiguous ‘one China’ mantra, along with even more far-reaching initiatives to counter Beijing’s rapidly accelerating political and military aggressiveness in the South and East China Seas.”²⁶ Mearsheimer sees these views as a continuation of longstanding US policy, noting, “It is crystal clear from the historical record that the United States does not tolerate peer competitors.”²⁷ He thus argues that the United States should do whatever it can “to slow down China’s economic growth. Because if it doesn’t grow economically, it can’t turn that wealth into military might and become a potential hegemon in Asia.”²⁸

Balancing

Postwar American strategy in Asia focused solidly on alliance relations and balance of power.

- Michael Green²⁹

Suspicion about Beijing’s objectives need not automatically lead policymakers to double down on US primacy. In fact, US leaders who are pessimistic about both Chinese intentions and the power trajectory usually favour a balance of power approach rooted in US alliances and partnerships. This strategy shares features with containment, yet it hinges less on the United States’ ability to maintain a decisive military edge alone and more on Asian countries’ willingness to join a strong balancing coalition. Logically, one might expect Americans who are especially pessimistic about China’s rise to favour more extreme steps to preserve Washington’s primacy. However, advocates of preventive war cannot be found in the US public debate.³⁰ Instead, balancers seek to strengthen and expand the United States’ existing hub-and-spokes alliance system in Asia, even if this means having to share some power with like-minded states.

²⁴ White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C., 2002), p.30.

²⁵ Brands, ‘The Era of American Primacy Is Far from Over.’

²⁶ John Bolton, ‘The US Can Play a “Taiwan Card”’, *Wall Street Journal*, 17 January 2016.

²⁷ Mearsheimer, ‘The Gathering Storm’, p.390.

²⁸ Peter Navarro, ‘Mearsheimer on Strangling China & the Inevitability of War’, *Huffington Post*, 10 March 2016.

²⁹ Green, ‘Asia in the Debate on American Grand Strategy,’ p.27.

³⁰ An exception that proves the rule is Bradley Thayer, who obliquely calls for the United States to “consider harsher measures in its confrontation with China ... as unpleasant steps may be [necessary]” if containment fails to stop its rise. Bradley A. Thayer, ‘Confronting China: An Evaluation of Options for the United States’, *Comparative Strategy* vol.24, No.1, 2005, p.93.

As with advocates of containment, balancers hold a pessimistic view about Chinese intentions. Randall Schweller and Pu Xiaoyu argue, “When China was relatively weak in the 1980s and 1990s, its strategy stressed integration within the Western-led order. As China’s power and capabilities have increased, its strategists have gradually shifted the debate towards visions of a negotiated order, and an embryonic vision of a new Chinese order has emerged.”³¹ This challenge to the existing order is seen as a direct threat to US interests, just as it is for primacists. David Shambaugh and others see President Xi Jinping’s increasingly authoritarian leadership as an indication that Chinese intentions are becoming more, rather than less, conflictual with the US vision of a liberal world order.³² In this way, balancers agree with Mearsheimer, who notes, “China’s neighbors, to include India, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Russia, Vietnam – and Australia – will join with the United States to contain China’s power. To put it bluntly: China cannot rise peacefully.”³³

This difference between advocates of balancing and containment is their assessment of the United States’ ability to meet the China challenge alone. Balancers tend to agree with the National Intelligence Council, which in 2012 announced the end of the United States’ “unipolar moment.”³⁴ Indeed, Chinese leaders consistently hail the “growing trend towards a multipolar world.”³⁵ Given such limits to future US power, balancers believe the United States can only uphold its interests if it leads a coalition of allies and partners. At times Mearsheimer appears to hold this view. For example, he notes that “the power gap between China and the United States is shrinking and in all likelihood ... the United States will no longer be the preponderant power in the Asia-Pacific region.”³⁶ Yet even he considers preventive war or a rollback strategy to be “remarkably foolish.”³⁷ For these thinkers, the costs of trying to preserve US primacy in East Asia in the face of continued Chinese growth outweigh any potential benefits. However, rather than cede the region to Beijing, balancers have faith that Chinese power can still be adequately offset if traditional allies like Japan and emerging powers like India rise to the occasion.

Supporters of balancing typically suggest that unilateral primacy is not sustainable outside of a broader geopolitical strategy incorporating allies and partners. Daniel Drezner argues, “There is little evidence that military primacy yields appreciable geo-economic gains.”³⁸ Other critics of primacy note, “The very act of seeking more control injects negative energy

³¹ Randall L. Schweller and Pu Xiaoyu, ‘After Unipolarity: China’s Visions of International Order in an Era of U.S. Decline’, *International Security* vol.36, No.1, 2011, p.59.

³² David Shambaugh, ‘The Coming Chinese Crackup’, *Wall Street Journal*, 6 March 2015.

³³ Mearsheimer, ‘The Gathering Storm’, p.382.

³⁴ US National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2030: Alternate Worlds* (Washington, D.C., 2012), p.X.

³⁵ Jane Perlez, ‘Leader Asserts China’s Growing Importance on Global Stage’, *New York Times*, 30 November 2014.

³⁶ Mearsheimer, ‘The Gathering Storm’, p.381.

³⁷ Navarro, ‘Mearsheimer on Strangling China & the Inevitability of War.’

³⁸ Daniel W. Drezner, ‘Military Primacy Doesn’t Pay (Nearly as Much as You Think)’, *International Security* vol.38, No.1, 2013, p.54.

into global politics as quickly as it finds enemies to vanquish.”³⁹ Evan Feigenbaum warns, “Washington risks ceding leadership and missing opportunities by tilting at ideas whose trajectory it cannot easily halt and whose historical and ideological roots run deep.”⁴⁰ For this reason, Friedberg argues, “Through balancing, the United States aims to uphold its alliances and to preserve peace and stability by deterring aggression or attempts at coercion.”⁴¹

Accommodation

There is no viable alternative to meeting China halfway This judgment is premised not only on the realities of the evolving global and regional balances of power but also on a reasonably positive outlook with respect to Chinese intentions.

- Lyle Goldstein⁴²

A third group of thinkers are optimistic about Chinese intentions but pessimistic about power trends. Niall Ferguson implored the incoming Obama administration to “call a meeting of the Chimerican G-2 for the day after your inaugural.”⁴³ Zbigniew Brzezinski agreed, arguing that “we need an informal G2 It is a task that President-elect Barack Obama – who is a conciliator at heart – should find congenial.”⁴⁴ Along these lines, President Obama announced in 2009, “The relationship between the US and China will shape the 21st century If we advance [our mutual] interests through cooperation, our people will benefit and the world will be better off.”⁴⁵ In a joint statement with President Xi in 2011, Obama agreed to build “a positive, cooperative, and comprehensive US–China relationship for the 21st century, which serves the interests of the American and Chinese peoples and of the global community.”⁴⁶

Supporters of a concert of power (taking its name from the mutual restraint shown between European great powers after the Napoleonic Wars) or accommodation are relatively optimistic about Chinese intentions. Michael O’Hanlon and James Steinberg write, “In our view, the pessimistic outcome is not inevitable,” and instead suggest efforts to “bound the competition and reinforce the cooperative dimensions of our bilateral

³⁹ Itamar Rabinovich, ‘The Case for Restraint,’ *American Conservative*, vol.3, No.2, 2007.

⁴⁰ Evan A. Feigenbaum, ‘The New Asian Order,’ *Foreign Affairs*, February 2, 2015.

⁴¹ Friedberg, ‘The Debate over US China Strategy’, p.89–90.

⁴² Lyle Goldstein, *Meeting China Halfway: How to Defuse the Emerging US-China Rivalry* (Washington, D.C., 2015), p.18, 364.

⁴³ Niall Ferguson, ‘Niall Ferguson Says US-China Cooperation Is Critical to Global Economic Health’, *Washington Post*, 17 November 2008.

⁴⁴ Zbigniew Brzezinski, ‘The Group of Two that Could Change the World’, *Financial Times*, 13 January 2009.

⁴⁵ Barack Obama, ‘Remarks by the President at the US/China Strategic and Economic Dialogue’ (speech, Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center, Washington, D.C., 27 July 2009).

⁴⁶ White House, ‘US-China Joint Statement’ (press release, 19 January 2011).

relationship.”⁴⁷ O’Hanlon and Steinberg’s optimism is rooted in the view that “the lack of intense ideological competition, as well as the absence of bilateral territorial disputes or imperial ambitions by either side, suggest grounds for hope.”⁴⁸ This is not to say that there is no competition for influence or prestige. As Lee Kuan Yew explained, “China wants to be China and accepted as such – not as an honorary member of the West. The Chinese will want to share this century as co-equals with the United States.”⁴⁹ In order to avoid the so-called “Thucydides Trap” – the historical prevalence of major war between rising and established powers – a concert of power would involve an agreement between the United States and China to share power through limited accommodation and strategic reassurance.⁵⁰ In Beijing’s view, such a “new model of great power relations” would have three elements: (1) no conflict or confrontation, (2) mutual respect, and (3) mutually beneficial cooperation.⁵¹ US leaders who are interested in these ideas believe that China’s territorial ambitions are basically limited, and that it does not realistically hope to become a regional or global hegemon.

Those supporting accommodation are not optimistic about everything, however. Indeed, they see accommodation as not only desirable but necessary because, in their view, US primacy in Asia cannot be maintained. Brzezinski explains that China “perceives tectonic shifts in the distribution of global power as ultimately favourable to its prospects,” while in the United States, “public discussion is increasingly dominated by the perspective that historical trends are against America.”⁵² Analysts like Michael Swaine thus argue that “China’s growing military presence on its maritime periphery is challenging US military predominance in the Western Pacific, thereby casting doubt on the future viability of a basic condition underlying America’s strategy in this key region.”⁵³ Like balancers, however, they tend to believe that China does not possess sufficient power to replace US primacy with its own hegemony. Hugh White asserts, “The hope that America can maintain uncontested leadership in Asia is therefore as illusory as the fear that China will be able to dominate Asia in its place.”⁵⁴

Accommodation of China can take several forms. Swaine calls for “far more serious consideration of alternatives to US predominance,” arguing that “America’s strategy

⁴⁷ James Steinberg and Michael E. O’Hanlon, *Strategic Reassurance and Resolve: US-China Relations in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton, 2014), p.4.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.13.

⁴⁹ Graham Allison and Robert Blackwill, ‘Interview: Lee Kuan Yew on the Future of U.S.-China Relations’, *The Atlantic*, March 5, 2013.

⁵⁰ Graham Allison, ‘The Thucydides Trap: Are the US and China Headed for War?’ *The Atlantic*, 24 September 2015.

⁵¹ Bonnie Glaser and Jake Douglas, ‘The Ascent and Demise of a “New Type of Greater Power Relations” between the US and China’, in *Regional Security Outlook 2016*, ed. Ron Huisken (Canberra, 2016), p.28–31.

⁵² Zbigniew Brzezinski, ‘America and China’s First Big Test’, *Financial Times*, 23 November 2010.

⁵³ Michael D. Swaine, *America’s Challenge: Engaging a Rising China in the Twenty-First Century* (Washington, D.C., 2011), p.6.

⁵⁴ Hugh White, *The China Choice: Why We Should Share Power* (Oxford, 2013), p.5–6.

towards China will need to place a much greater emphasis on cooperation instead of rivalry and hedging.”⁵⁵ One option is to strike a deal on the major underlying issues that drive insecurity and competition. Charles Glaser argues that “the United States should negotiate a grand bargain that ends its commitment to defend Taiwan against Chinese aggression.”⁵⁶ Conversely, Fred Bergsten advises Washington that, “Instead of focusing on narrow bilateral problems, it should seek to develop a true partnership with Beijing ... to develop a G-2 between the United States and China to steer the global governance process.”⁵⁷ Advocates of containment rarely call for a US withdrawal from Asia, yet they are far more willing to negotiate new arrangements that are commensurate with the reality of China’s new power.⁵⁸

Integration

In the age of rising Asian power, reports of the death of the West are greatly exaggerated. It is the grand liberal ascendancy of the last hundred years – and the quiet revolution of the postwar liberal international order – that define the logic and choices of global order in the 21st century. This is true regardless of whether Asia and the West are rising or declining or just standing still.

- John Ikenberry⁵⁹

The final group of Asia strategists are those who hold optimistic views about both Chinese intentions and the trajectory of Chinese power. Although these experts view some Chinese actions as a threat to the existing order, they believe that the United States has the ability to integrate China into the existing order. The most famous exposition of this assimilationist approach is Robert Zoellick, who urged in 2005, “it is time to take our policy beyond opening doors to China’s membership into the international system: We need to urge China to become a responsible stakeholder in that system.”⁶⁰ Supporters of integration differ from supporters of accommodation because they desire to assimilate China into an existing system that was largely designed by the United States, rather than working with Beijing to negotiate a new order. They also believe that China’s own best interests are actually well-served by the current system.

⁵⁵ Swaine, *America’s Challenge*, p.18.

⁵⁶ Charles L. Glaser, ‘A US-China Grand Bargain?: The Hard Choice between Military Competition and Accommodation’, *International Security* vol.39, No.4, 2015, p.50.

⁵⁷ C. Fred Bergsten, ‘A Partnership of Equals: How Washington Should Respond to China’s Economic Challenge’, *Foreign Affairs* vol.87, No.4, 2008.

⁵⁸ Michael D. Swaine, ‘Beyond American Predominance in the Western Pacific: The Need for a Stable US-China Balance of Power’, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 20 April 2015.

⁵⁹ G. John Ikenberry, ‘China and the Rest Are Only Joining the American-Built Order’, *New Perspectives Quarterly* vol.25, No.3, 2008, p.21.

⁶⁰ Robert Zoellick, ‘Remarks to the National Committee on US-China Relations’ (speech, New York City, 21 September 2005).

Supporters of integration are generally optimistic about Chinese intentions and view them as fundamentally compatible with the United States' most vital interests. Thomas Christensen notes, "China's rise has created not so much a threat of domination as one of obstructionism and free-riding on the efforts of others."⁶¹ In this way, the real threat to the United States is not that China is too active in foreign affairs, but that it is too passive. As Zoellick has observed, "The Chinese expect to be treated with respect and will want to have their views and interests recognized. But China does not want a conflict with the United States."⁶²

Advocates of integration are also optimistic about the trajectory of the growth in Chinese capabilities. Joseph Nye firmly rejects the notion that the "American century" is over, arguing that it "is likely to continue for a number of decades at the very least."⁶³ Similarly, John Ikenberry notes, "The international distribution of power is shifting with the rise of Asia, but I do not see a great transformation in the organizing logic or principles of international order."⁶⁴ Instead, Ikenberry suggests that the current order "is easy to join and hard to overturn" because it has a high integration capacity, shared leadership, shared "spoils of modernity," and can accommodate differences.⁶⁵ In this way, supporters of integration and of accommodation share a common view. As Evan Montgomery observes, "Despite a spirited debate, deep engagers and offshore balancers actually share an optimistic view of US military power."⁶⁶

In pursuing policies, integration supporters look to assimilate China into the existing regional and international order. Rather than trying to contain or balance China, integration supporters seek to channel its growing power productively within a broader regional architecture. For the past thirty to forty years, integration has included efforts to bring China into the World Trade Organization and other institutions, but to avoid Beijing's creation of alternative arrangements. This is a strategy of working within the existing system. Thus, Ikenberry explains that "China – and Greater Asia – are rising in power but they are also integrating into this international order ... Asian countries want to join and help run the existing global system, not overturn it."⁶⁷

⁶¹ Christensen, *The China Challenge*, 8.

⁶² Zoellick, 'Remarks to the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations.'

⁶³ Joseph S. Nye, *Is the American Century Over?* (Cambridge, MA: Polity, 2015), p.127.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.19.

⁶⁵ G. John Ikenberry, 'The Rise of China and the Future of the Liberal World Order' (speech, Chatham House, London, 7 May 2014).

⁶⁶ Evan B. Montgomery, 'Contested Primacy in the Western Pacific: China's Rise and the Future of US Power Projection', *International Security* vol.38, No.4, 2014, p.147.

⁶⁷ Ikenberry, "China and the Rest Are Only Joining the American-Built Order", p.19.

Implications for US–China Relations

These four perspectives show how and why US leaders hold very different views on US strategy towards China. Whether US leaders seek to contain, balance, accommodate, or integrate China largely depends on their views of Chinese intentions and power trajectories. Maintaining security in East Asia requires that Washington and Beijing be clear with each other about their interests and intentions. If they are to safely navigate increasingly choppy waters, US and Chinese leaders need to understand and address each of these conceptions of security.