

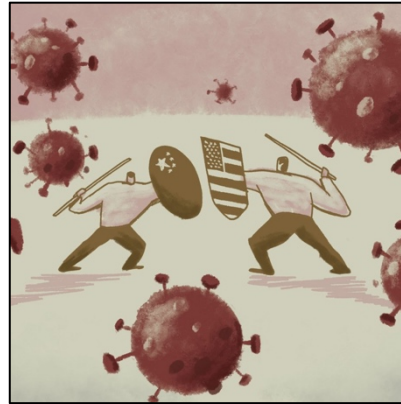


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# The COVID-19 and its Effects on Asian Geopolitics:

## *The Prospects of the US-China Relation*



**Dr.Sungmin Cho, Associate Professor, APCSS**



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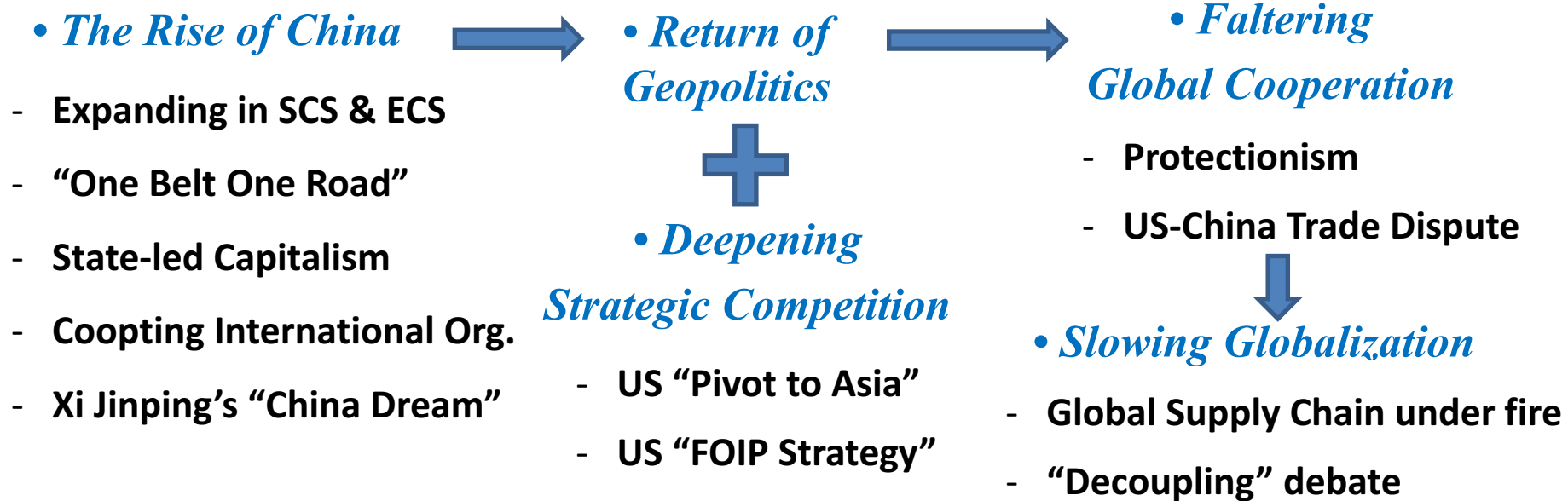


## **Agenda**

- 1. Geopolitics before COVID-19 (2009-2019)**
- 2. COVID-19 and the World Politics**
- 3. COVID-19 and the US-China relationship**
- 4. Prospect: Three Scenarios**
- 5. Conclusion: comparing before/after COVID19**



# 1. Geopolitics before COVID-19 (2009-2019)



**\* A Crisis Occurs: Does it Break or Accelerate the trends?**



## 2. COVID-19 and the World Politics

### • *Less Prosperous*



### • *Less Open*



### • *Less Free*

- 12-18 months to vaccine
- Global economic recession
- Seasonality of the virus
- W-shaped recovery >L,V,U

- Governments turning inward
- Opposing immigration
- Reducing global manufacturing
- Less resources for global problems

- Return of state-government
- Economically vulnerable segment of society, underdeveloped countries
- Political upheavals inside and between states.

**\* We are heading for a Poorer, Smaller, and Meaner world!**

### 3. COVID-19 and the US-China relationship: China's Behavior



#### COVID-19 and its Effects on China's Foreign Policy Behavior



- Silencing the internal warning
- Censoring the academic research on the origin

➔ *Cover-up of CCP's Responsibilities*



- Self-narrative as pandemic response exemplar
- Providing medical aids and supplies

➔ *Recasting China as a Responsible Great Power*



- Military provocations in the Taiwan Strait
- “Gray Zone” activities in the South China Sea

➔ *Opportunism with Probing Behaviors*



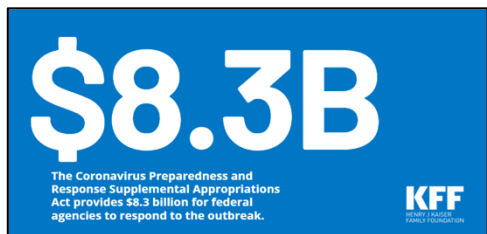


### 3. COVID-19 and the US-China relationship: US Views

- The COVID-19 and its effects on the US views and foreign policy



- International aids to combat COVID-19 abroad
  - Supported by experts community & bureaucrats
- ➔ *US stays engaged with the world.*



- More resources for the recovery of domestic economy
  - Claimed by public & Congress
- ➔ *US also turning inward from the world.*



- Debate on the term 'Chinese Virus'
  - More attention on "De-coupling"
- ➔ *US drifting further away from China*

## 4. Prospect: Three Scenarios – “China dominates the world.”



### ▪ *Scenario 1: A New World led by China*

#### • *If China*

- maintains stability
- provides financial aids
- provides coordination
- militarily intimidates
- economically coerces



#### • *If the United States*

- dysfunctions in politics
- pursues unilateralism
- without global leadership
- retreats from international engagement



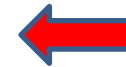
*“Pax Sinica!?”*

*Not very likely...*

*However,*

#### • *China's Troubles*

- Signs of Discontents
- Shoddy foreign aids
- Economic slowdown
- Surging “China Responsibility” theory
- Negative image with bullying



## 4. Prospect: Three Scenarios – “America’s global leadership.”



### ▪ *Scenario 2: America’s Global Leadership through Multilateral Institutions*

- *If the US changes to*

- promote global collaboration ?
- lead through multilateralism ?
- revive liberal internationalism ?



- *Whether US changes or not*

- The World knows CCP’s responsibility ✓
- Trend of companies leaving China ✓



- *If China continues to*

- show signs of domestic discontents ✓
- provide substandard supplies ?
- struggle to recover economic growth ✓
- deny the responsibility of outbreak ?
- not recover large trust deficits ✓

*American supremacy in  
both hard and soft power*

*Not so likely...for now*



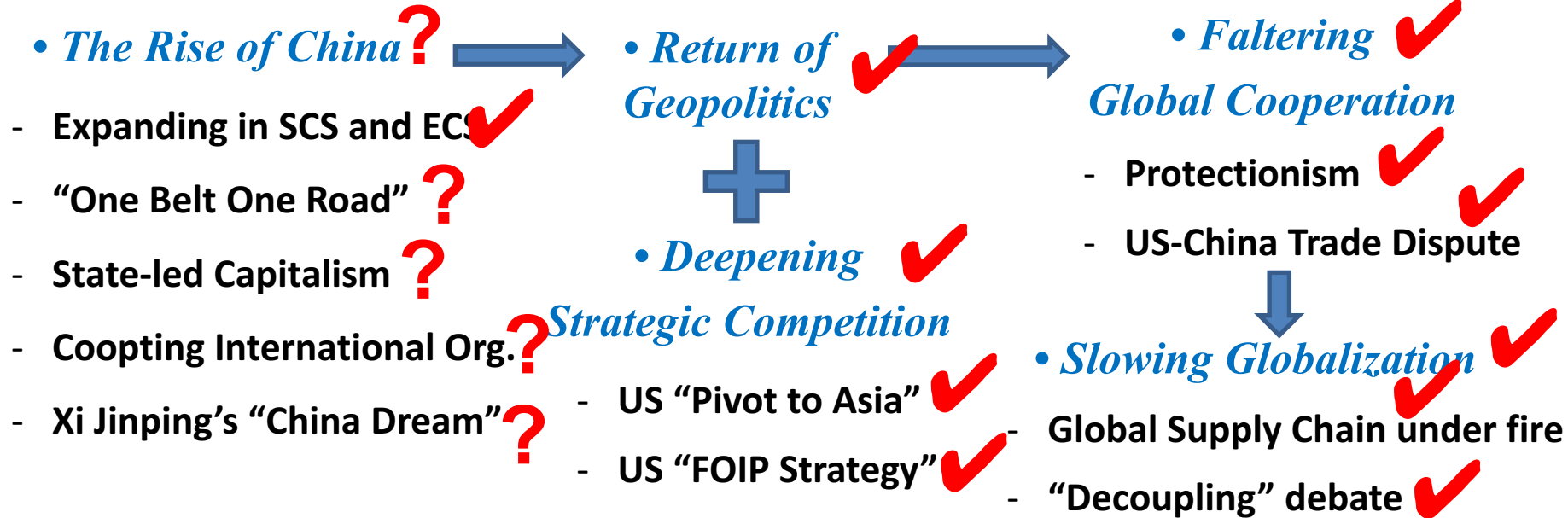
## 4. Prospect: Three Scenarios – “US-China competition”

- *Scenario 3: Intensified US-China Strategic Competition* **Most likely!**
- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>As China continues to</i><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- show signs of domestic discontents</li><li>- struggle to recover economic growth</li><li>- deny the responsibility of the outbreak</li></ul></li><li>➔ More needs of nationalist support</li><li>➔ More frictions with neighboring countries</li><li>➔ Yes, more BRI and economic aids, but with political strings attached</li></ul> |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>As the US continues to</i><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- stay engaged in Indo-Pacific</li><li>- drift away from China both politically and economically</li></ul></li><li>• <i>As the rest of the world</i><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- questions CCP's responsibility</li><li>- considers to diversify supply chain</li></ul></li><li>• <i>As the long crisis extends...</i></li></ul> |
|---|---|--|



## 5. Conclusion

### ▪ *Comparing before and after COVID19*



\* **A Crisis Occurs: Does it Break or Accelerate the trends?** → *Accelerate!*



## 5. Conclusion

- *Comparing before and after COVID19*

- \* A Crisis Occurs: Does it Break or Accelerate the trends? → *Accelerate!*

- *Surprising element and Geopolitics* → *Intensifies the tension of geopolitics.*

- Weak and slow crisis responses in the US and Europe

- Rapid and effective crisis management in Asian countries

- But NOT that authoritarian regime performs better than democracies.

- *Comparing mid-term and long-term prospects*

- **Mid-term: less prosperous, open, free world → More competitive geopolitics!!**

- Long-term: stable and resilient societies+ call for global cooperation

- Revival of democracies with liberal internationalism



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- Michael Green (March 31, 2020). “Geopolitical Scenarios for Asia after COVID-19.” *CSIS* ([Link](#))
- Richard Haass (April 7, 2020). “The Pandemic Will Accelerate History Rather Than Reshape It. Not Every Crisis Is a Turning Point.” *Foreign Affairs* ([Link](#))
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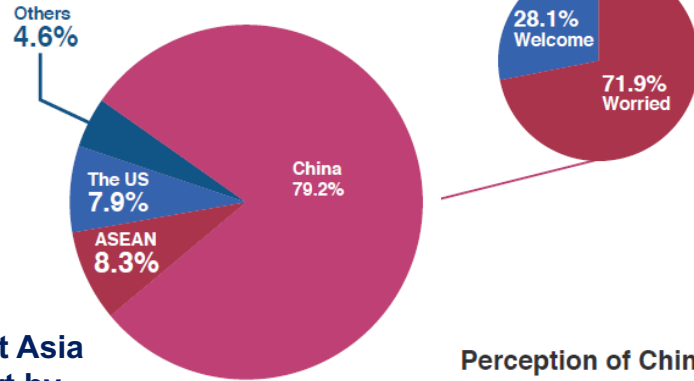
# Back-up Slides from here





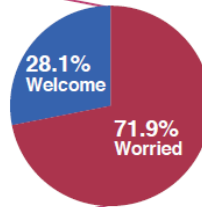
# China's Influence in the Indo-Pacific Region

Most influential economic powers in Southeast Asia

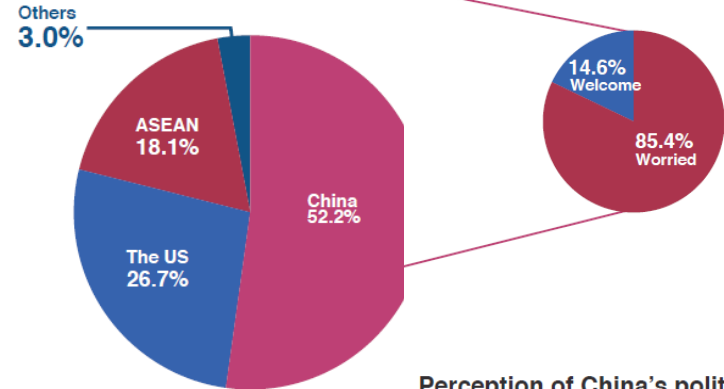


2020 Southeast Asia  
Survey Report by  
ASEAN Studies center

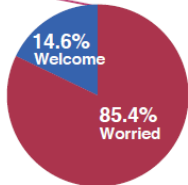
Perception of China's economic influence



Most influential political and strategic powers in Southeast Asia



Perception of China's political and strategic influence

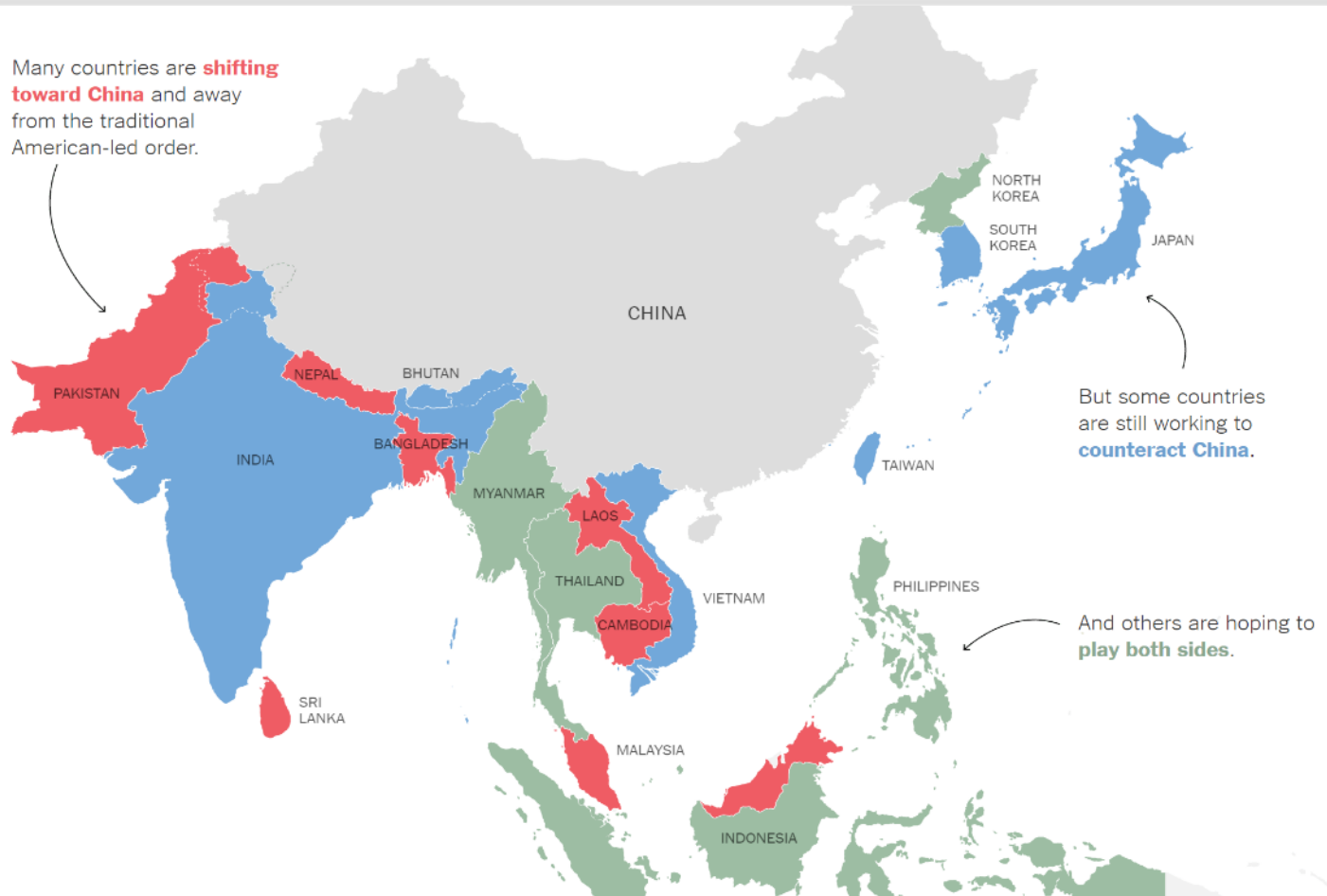


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## 4. Regional View- How do countries in the region view China?

Many countries are **shifting toward China** and away from the traditional American-led order.



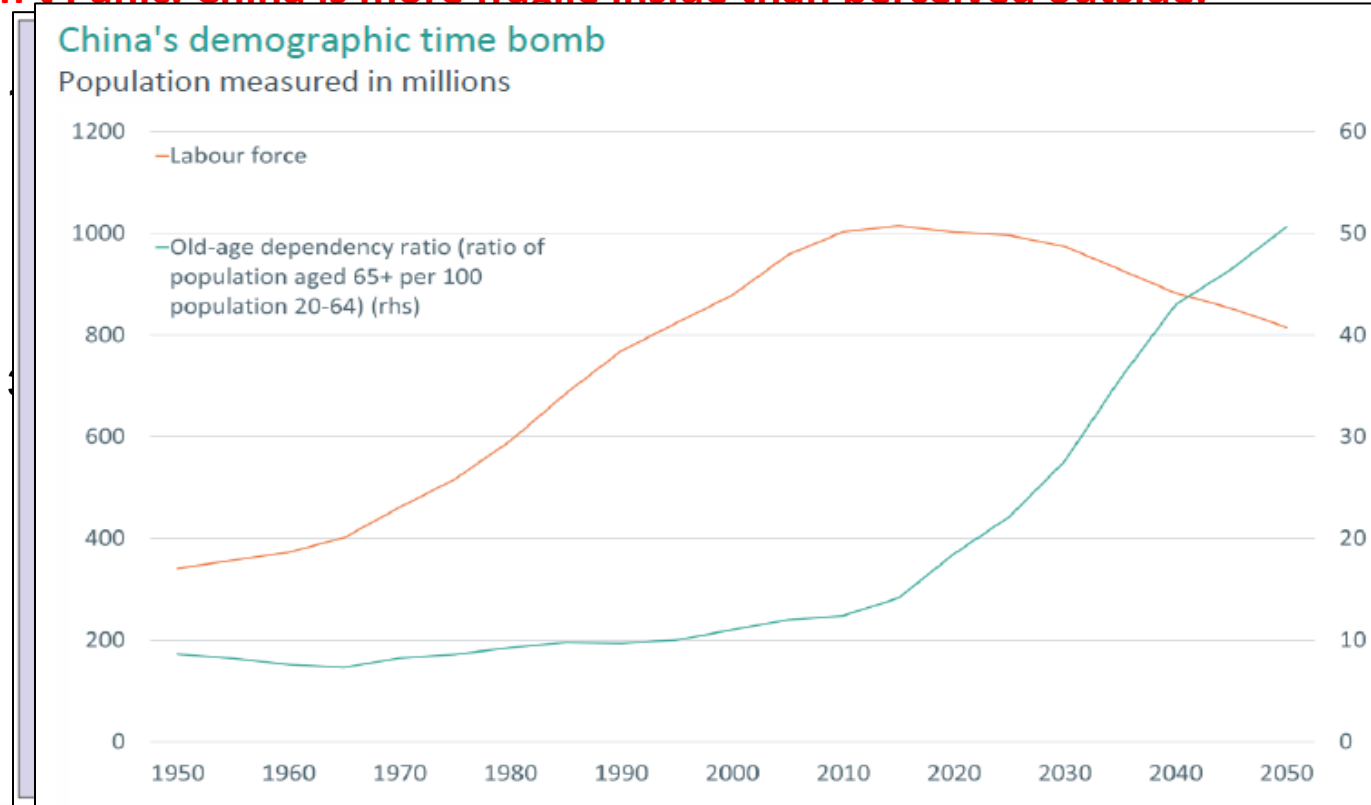
But some countries are still working to **counteract China**.

And others are hoping to **play both sides**.



## 5. Policy Implication- What should the US do?

### 1. Don't Panic. China is more fragile inside than perceived outside.



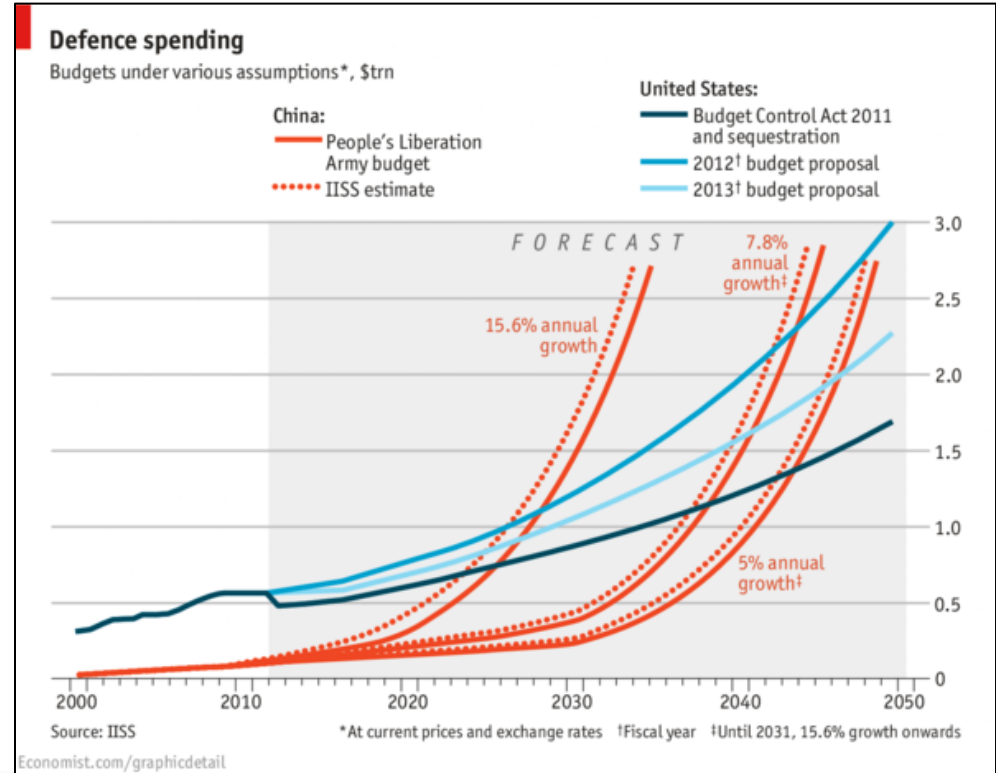
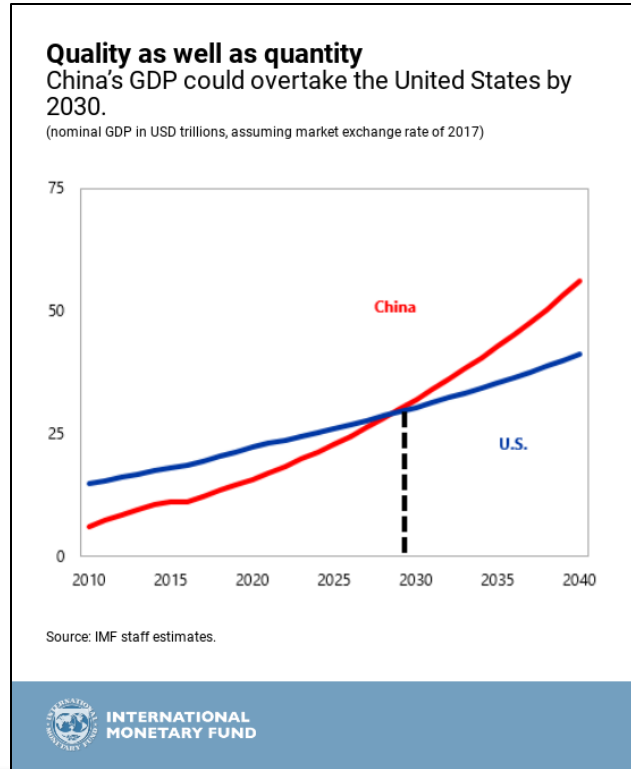
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fore getting rich.”

## 2. Argument for the Prospect of US-China War



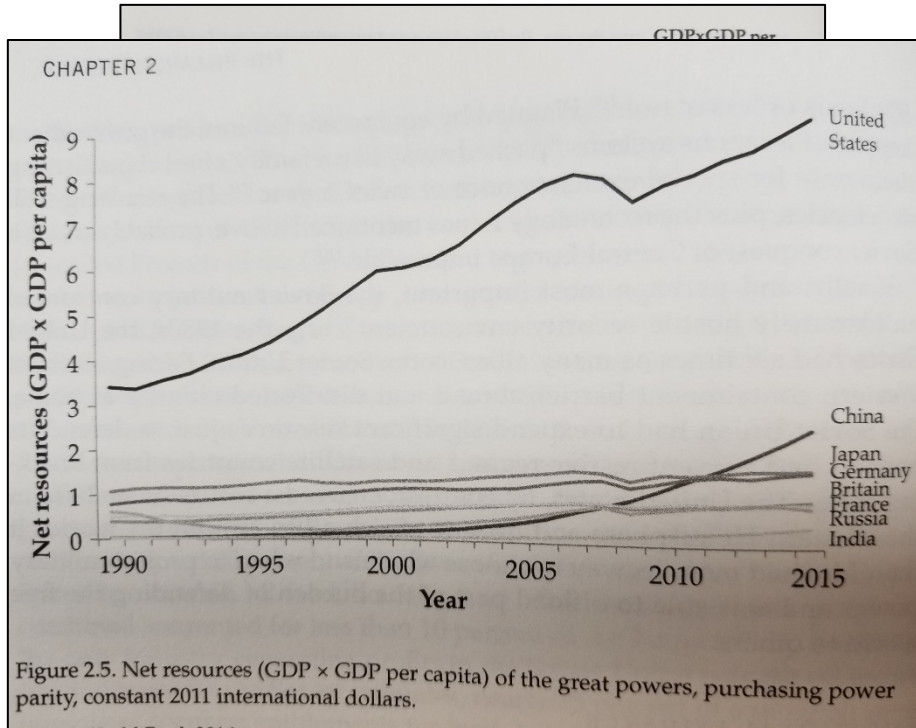
- Evidence: China's rapid economic and military rise- CAPABILITIES.



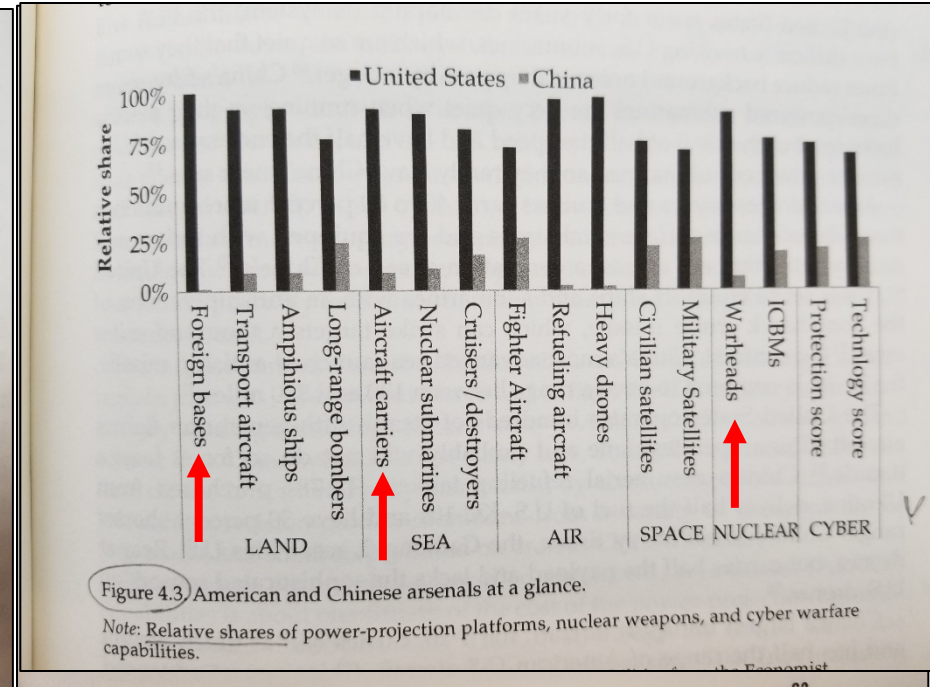
### 3. Argument against the Prospect of US-China War



- Evidence: despite rising, China cannot match the US power at the global level.



Source: Maddison 2003; Singer, Bremer, and Stuckey 1972.



(Source: *Unrivaled*, 2018)



### 3. Argument against the Prospect of US-China War

- Evidence: despite rising, China cannot match the US power at the regional level.

- Geography and Security Costs

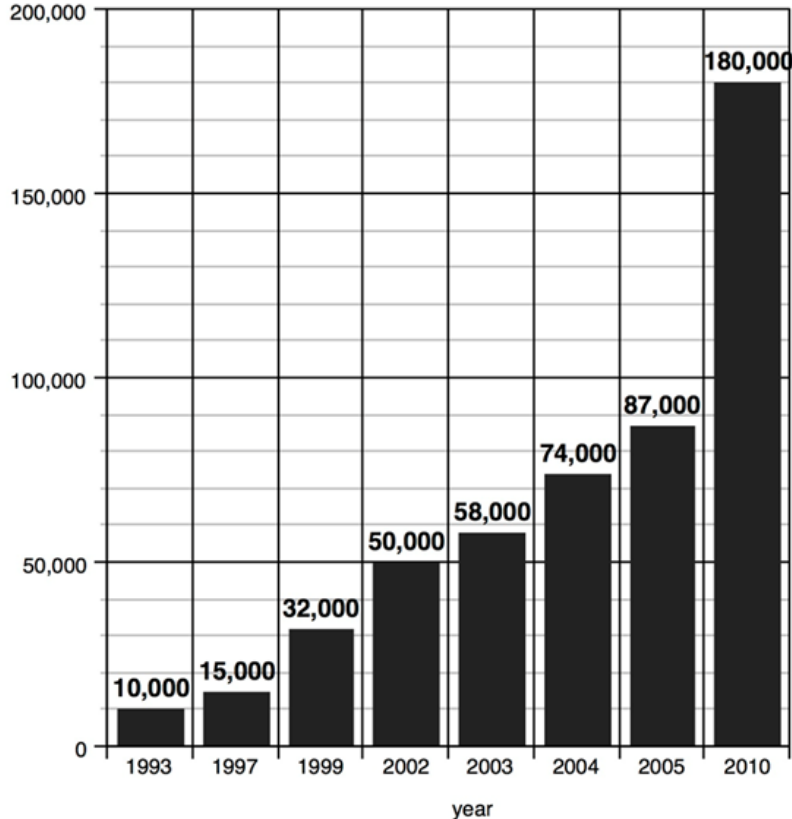


- Obstacles to Chinese Naval Expansion

- The US from the 1890s to today
- The Imperial Japan in the 1930-40s
  - ➔ 80~ 99 percent of **naval tonnage** in America and Asia respectively
- China today
  - ➔ less than 30 percent of Asia
- Asian nations' A2/AD capabilities against China (Japan, Vietnam, Taiwan...)

(Source: *Unrivaled*, 2018)

# Contentious Politics in China



## Increasing Trend of

### “Mass-incidents (群体性事件)” in China

- Protests
- Rebellions
- Unrest
- Riots

#### ▪ Issues

- Taxation
- Land Seizure
- One Child Policy
- Lay-offs
- Labor Conditions
- Environmental
- Food Security
- Ethnic Discrimination
- and so many others...

Sources: Lee CK: *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China's Rustbelt and Sunbelt*, 2007; and Chinese edition of the *Wall Street Journal*, Sept 26, 2011