

The Thucydides Trap

When one great power threatens to displace another, war is almost always the result -- but it doesn't have to be.

BY GRAHAM ALLISON | JUNE 9, 2017, 10:21 AM

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/06/09/the-thucydides-trap/>

The Thucydides Trap: How to stop the looming war between China and the U.S.

The Thucydides Trap leads us to believe a U.S.-China war is inevitable. But is a 2,400-year-old school of thought really what the U.S. should base its foreign policy on?

CHARLES KOCH FOUNDATION | 16 August, 2018

What made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta.

<https://bigthink.com/mike-colagrossi/thucydides-trap-historical-conflicts-of-nation-states>



ARMS SALES TOPIC: AFFIRMATIVE

RE-SIGN AND ACCEDE TO (OR RATIFY) THE ARMS TRADE TREATY

- The U.S. helped negotiate the Arms Trade Treaty and was one of its original signers, but the Senate has refused to ratify it. Now President Trump announced before a cheering NRA audience that he is "un-signing" the Arms Trade Treaty.
- The Arms Trade Treaty offers the best hope for stopping the worst abuses in the world arms trade, where arms sellers promote human rights abuses and feed both sides of regional conflicts.

Ria Ems, *Laurakki, Stefanik*, ARMS SALES, TREATIES, AND VIOLATIONS, 2018, 161. The United States is the world's largest arms dealer. So US support and ratification of the accord is essential to its success. According to Dany Kinosh, executive director of the Washington-based Arms Control Association, formal support from the United States gives the treaty the potential to change the very nature of the global arms trade.

REDUCE SALES OF ARMED DRONES

- The use of drones makes war more likely by making it more thinkable; armed drones turn war into a video game.
- The U.S. is the major world user of drones and the Trump administration is ramping up the sale of armed drones.
- The sale of armed drones should be reduced.

High Guterson, *PhD*, International Affairs, George Washington U., CRIME: REMOTE CONTROL WARFARE, 2016, 147.

Whatever we call them (drones or—laughter, hunting, aerial police work, targeted killing, state terrorism, warfare—) these machines and their operators are remaining the world's most significant evil. They are enabling a kind of permanent, low-level military action that threatens to erase the boundary between war and peace and, in its illegitimacy from classical war, is not easily contained or regulated by either the War Powers Act or the UN Charter.

REDUCE THE SALE OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

- Small arms do most of the killing in armed conflicts throughout the world.
- The U.S. — already the world's leader in the selling of armaments — is now trying to deregulate the selling of assault weapons by moving them from the U.S. Munitions List (where Congressional notification is required) and placing them instead on the Commerce Control List (where no notice is required).

Jennifer Erickson, *PhD*, Political Science, Boston College, DANGEROUS TRADE: ARMS EXPORTS, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION, 2015, 2. Small arms and light weapons (SALW) and major conventional weapons (MCW) are responsible for the vast majority of conflict deaths, frequently associated with special instability, and commonly involved in human rights violations. Calls to control the spread of small arms, now referred to as "the real weapons of mass destruction," and major conventional in the past decade.

https://www.nfhs.org/media/1020321/arms-sales-topic_affirmative-cases.pdf



Negative

ARMS SALES TOPIC: NEGATIVE

FILL-IN DISADVANTAGE (ESSENTIALLY U.S. HEGEMONY GOOD)

- Uniqueness:** U.S. arms sales preserve strong ties of allegiance; U.S. dominates arms sales now.
- Link:** The case reduces arms sales to key allies (in the Mideast, Asia, or Africa); this will lead to Russia or China "filling in" the gap and increasing their influence in these regions.
- Impact:** Loss of support for U.S. leadership to Russia or China will result in war.

Brook Manville, *(Staff)*, FORBES, Oct. 14, 2018. Retrieved June 17, 2019 from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/brookmanville/2018/10/14/why-a-crumbling-world-order-urgently-needs-us-leadership/#1314a92ae1>.

If U.S. global leadership slides, Kagan asserts, the invisible protective bubble we've enjoyed since 1945 won't just deflate. It will explode. Good-type rules-based trade, hello shortages of food and essential products. Dictators not just threatening but using nuclear weapons. More innocents repressed or killed in civilized countries.

https://www.nfhs.org/media/1020325/arms-sales-topic_negative-responses.pdf



ARMS SALES TOPIC: NEGATIVE

ECONOMY DISADVANTAGE

- Uniqueness:** The U.S. economy is OK now, but we are approaching a fragile time where any blow to the economy could tip us over into recession or worse.
- Link:** Defense industries are critically important to the economy & arms sales are critical to defense industries. Economic shocks have multiplier effects, rippling through the economy.
- Impact:** Economic decline leads to war

Qian Liu, *(Economist based in China)*, Nov. 8, 2018. Retrieved Apr. 24, 2019 from <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/economic-crisis-military-conflict-or-structural-reform-by-qian-liu-2018-11>. The next economic crisis is closer than you think. But what you should really worry about is what comes after: in the current social, political, and technological landscape, a prolonged economic crisis, combined with rising income inequality, could well escalate into a major global military conflict. The 2008-09 global financial crisis almost bankrupted governments and caused systemic collapse.

U.S. MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL BASE DISADVANTAGE

- Uniqueness:** U.S. arms sales are strong now, sustaining the U.S. military-industrial base.
- Link:** The case undermines support for U.S. defense industries.
- Impact:** U.S. military weakness resulting from a weakened military-industrial base results in war.

U.S. Department of Defense, 2017 National Security Strategy, quoted in Jeffrey A. Green, *(president of J.A. Green & Company)*, Jan. 24, 2019. Retrieved Apr. 24, 2019 from <http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2019/1/24/viewpoint-industrial-base-gears-up-for-great-power-conflict>.

A healthy defense industrial base is a critical element of U.S. power and the national security innovation base. The ability of the military to surge in response to an emergency depends on our nation's ability to produce needed parts and systems, healthy and secure supply chains, and a skilled U.S. workforce.

https://www.nfhs.org/media/1020325/arms-sales-topic_negative-responses.pdf

Wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will her heart, her benedictions and her prayers be. But [America] goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own.

John Quincy Adams' July 4 Speech

Each July 4th the Declaration of Independence would be read aloud in the capital as part of a July 4th celebration. John Quincy Adams's July 4th, 1821 speech is memorable. I have long seen quotes of his brief mention of foreign policy. But the rest of the speech is excellent as well. It is often described online as a speech to Congress, but Congress was not in session during the July heat in Washington DC. You can see the full pamphlet online here.

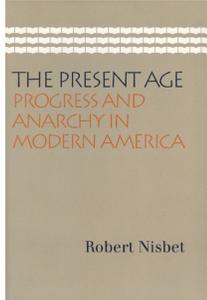


She has, in the lapse of nearly half a century, without a single exception, respected the independence of other nations, while asserting and maintaining her own. She has abstained from interference in the concerns of others, even when the conflict has been for principles to which [32] she clings, as to the last vital drop that visits the heart. ...



<http://oll.libertyfund.org>

Nisbet, The Prevalence of War



Source: Chapter in Nisbet's *The Present Age: Progress and Anarchy in Modern America* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2003).

Related Links:

- Robert Nisbet
- Subject Area: War and Peace

The Prevalence of War

Of all faces of the present age in America, the military face would almost certainly prove the most astounding to any Framers of the Constitution, any Founders of the Republic who came back to inspect their creation on the occasion of the bicentennial. It is indeed an imposing face, the military. Well over three hundred billion dollars a year go into its maintenance; it is deployed in several dozen countries around the world. The returned Framers would not be surprised to learn that so vast a military has inexorable effects upon the economy, the structure of government, and even the culture of Americans; they had witnessed such effects in Europe from afar, and had not liked what they saw. What would doubtless astonish
