



Out of Order: Sources and Implications of the Current Turbulent International Security Environment

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Competing views on the sources of global instability

- Traditional view: Rising powers are the source of instability, and power transitions are dangerous, e.g. great power wars become a distinct possibility
 - Structural forces produce Thucydides trap
- Modified view: Sources of instability are contingent on a broad array of factors, both domestic and international
 - The current US-China relationship less than openly hostile

Importantly, international stability emerges when states accept constraints on their behaviour

What instability?

- **Structural sources of instability**
 - Revisionist powers – China, Russia, Iran
 - China and Russia's borders are borders of defeat
 - US-China strategic competition
- **Contingent sources of instability**
 - Preferences/grievances/ambition of political leaders
 - International (military, economic, health etc.) crises
 - Regional conflicts (Middle East etc.)
 - Technological competition and disruption
 - Domestic politics (interest group dissatisfaction, electoral cycles)

Current sources of instability

- The challenge posed by China and Russia is well-known already, and the answer to it is containment
 - The complicating factor is mutual dependence which makes weaponization of interdependence possible
- The US challenge is less well-known, but its current elements include:
 - ‘Chaos Kid’ strategy – President Trump’s negotiating unwillingness to accept constraints on the US behaviour
 - Questioning key norms that underpin the current international order (such as sovereignty)
 - Lesser emphasis on shared values with other democracies
 - Domestic political transformation in the US
 - Willingness to squeeze allies economically and the use of dependent security relationships to extract concessions from allies
 - Questioning the benefits of the US alliances and pressure on NATO allies (benevolent extortion – 3.5% + 1.5% defence spending)
 - Emphasis on dealmaking – European allies fear ending up on the menu rather than at the table
 - Have we passed the point where change in US foreign policy has become irreversible?

Europe in an increasingly unstable world

- It's the end of the world as we know it, or is it really?
 - Pessimistic interpretation of current trends – US, Russia, China ganging up on Europe and exploiting its weaknesses
 - Optimistic interpretation of current trends – temporary turbulence & inherent weakness of authoritarian powers
- Defending Europe's interests rather than projecting power abroad and shaping the world
 - Economic realm – Europe's competitiveness problems
 - Military realm – NATO keeping up appearances and Europe rearming
 - Course adjustment on military capabilities, defence industry, and personnel shortages
 - What is the European way of war?



Questions?