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Chapter Sixteen

Competitive Antiliberalism

How Geoeconomics, Security, and Values Define Chinese and American Worldviews in the 2020s and Beyond

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Only two powers will be able to exercise full-spectrum geopolitical power in the 2020s and beyond: the US and China. Power, in this context, is the capacity to exploit military and economic resources to achieve overall geopolitical ends. Up to the mid-2020s, there was a fairly clear distinction between the overall US global project that emerged from World War II, the "liberal leviathan" as characterized by John Ikenberry, and the Chinese project, which stressed a combination of national interest and a strategy to increase "authoritarian welfarism" as a global norm.[1]

As of 2025, it is no longer immediately obvious that one should characterize the US competition with China in terms of an economically or politically liberal "Western" project versus a Chinese "authoritarian" one. Instead, there are two geopolitical/geoeconomic projects that are nominally opposed, and start from different political premises and systems, but that also share some aspects of their worldviews. This is a new formation that can be defined as *competitive antiliberalism*: a contest between nonliberal global projects that veer between isolation and self-defined communitarianism. The framing has implications for the nature of political economy, international security, and divergence of worldviews between the US and China into the later 2020s and beyond.

There is a similarity and difference—and a powerful contradiction—at the heart of the American and Chinese projects. The Chinese project speaks in terms of creating a sense of global community but, in practice, also stresses economic self-sufficiency (*zili gengsheng*). The American project, in contrast, has shifted, rather than trying to square the circle between global and national interests. Having previously broadly embraced a policy of seeking to create global community, in significant part based on ideas of economic interdependence, the US has, as of 2025, embarked on an explicit policy of as much self-sufficiency as possible. In 2023, Xi Jinping declared at the National People's Congress that "China should work to achieve greater self-reliance."[2] Meanwhile, in his inaugural speech on January 20, 2025, Donald Trump declared: "We will protect our farmers, our cowboys, and everyone who works to feed our great nation. No more reliance on foreign goods and resources—America will once again be self-sufficient."[3]

These projects of self-sufficiency are, as of 2025, distinctive to the United States and China. The EU, and European actors more broadly, along with NATO members apart from the US, generally find themselves still preferring to use language more ideologically oriented toward global interaction, with a strongly values-driven element. Other significant geoeconomic groupings with limited security responsibilities, such as ASEAN, also still tend toward a language of interaction, albeit with less emphasis on values. India, a relatively isolationist state in terms of its actual security and geoeconomic choices, has nonetheless moved away from the language it used in the 1970s and 1980s, which emphasized import substitution and homemade products.

The current Chinese geopolitical project styles itself a "community of common destiny" at a global level.[4] Its characteristics include an attempt to create an economic model ("dual circulation"), which separates the domestic and international aspects of the Chinese economy; a broad sense that Chinese foreign direct investment will create a wider penetration for Chinese economic power in Asia and beyond; and a rhetorically strong embrace of the language of global free trade.[5] Its latest manifestation (as of 2025) is to combine three global initiatives, on development, security, and (the least well-defined) civilization. It aims for "democratization" of international society, by way of claiming that an emergent multipolarity is the best outcome for the new global order. An official Chinese source cites

Xi stating that the Global Civilization Initiative "advocates respect for the diversity of civilizations, the common values of humanity, the importance of inheritance and innovation of civilizations, as well as robust international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation."[6] Yet the bottom line is clear: none of these terms are used to define a political or economic system that is liberal. "Democratization" of the international system means multipolarity. It does not refer to liberalization of domestic Chinese politics.

The American project of the second Trump administration is characterized by its fluidity. But it has already showcased a range of ideas that contrast strongly with the previous liberal hegemony (which was perhaps a "community of common destiny" by another name). It explicitly rejects ideas of free trade, instead advocating the use of tariffs as an incentive to concentrate as much investment as possible within the United States. The project is dependent on electoral democracy for its legitimacy but rejects traditionally liberal or pluralist outcomes in both political and economic terms. It stresses the importance of outcomes for the American people first, with international consequences (positive or negative) placed at a lower order of salience.

How do the two projects regard each other? China seems both bemused at and wary of the new US settlement.[7] The first few months of the Trump administration were marked by heavy tariffs on Chinese imports into the US, but the new administration had given little indication of its attitude toward issues such as Taiwan or ways in which China would be treated differently in principle (if at all) from any other trading partner if a trade deal were to be reached. Certainly, human rights issues have been no part of any confrontation with China, an undoubted source of relief for Beijing. There are also opportunities for China in the new uncertainty. But overall, Beijing has reacted with issue-specific fury over the issue of tariffs specifically, combined with a cautiousness on any broader geopolitical issues.[8] There are Chinese thinkers who draw comparisons with their own history. Xiao Gongqin, one of China's most influential "neo-authoritarian" thinkers, has approvingly compared the initial actions of the second Trump administration with Deng Xiaoping's actions in 1989.[9]

Likewise, there are distinctly mixed signals toward China in the Trump era. The all-out rhetorical hostility of the second half of the first Trump term is absent, for now. Instead, there is a range of views within the administration and in the penumbra around it: traditional policy hawks who regard China as a major challenge, tech libertarians who have significant connections with China, and isolationists who have no love for Beijing but are not sure that containing its ambitions is a primary American interest. Meanwhile, the attitude of Donald Trump himself is still unclear when it comes to issues such as Taiwan's future status or what the final trading relationship between China and the US should be. Meanwhile, long-standing US-driven geopolitical narratives about the importance of liberal democracy and free trade have also disappeared, at least for now, into the realms of history.

The Long Trajectory

Although competitive antiliberalism only became evident as the framing of the US-China relationship in 2025, its origins have been much longer in the making. The competition between ideologies defined the 20th century in a way that was explicit and confrontational. The 21st century is marked by an ideological conflict just as fierce as that of the 20th but much less stated or indeed formed. It is also a contest that has been shifting during the course of the 2020s, with China and the US both central to the global shift, while other actors, Europe most notably, follow uneasily in the slipstream.

In the interwar period, European politics was divided between liberal and communist states and movements, as well as their fascist opponents. During the Cold War, fascism was discredited, but communism and liberal capitalism continued to vie for supremacy. The ending of the Cold War, for some, became the end of ideology.

Yet, it is now clear that the 21st century's ideological reformulation was alive and well. The US story has become well-known. In retrospect, the increasing unhappiness of former industrial workers in the 2010s (in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis) and the longer-running displacement of jobs to China, Mexico, and other countries with cheaper labor costs since the 1990s has fueled discontent. This has led to the rise of nationalistic politics that combine communitarianism with economic protectionism. (Make America Great Again, or MAGA, is the most recent and successful manifestation, but the campaigns of Pat Buchanan and Ross Perot in the 1990s were part of the longer trajectory). The era of global free trade restarted in 1945 after the tariffs of the 1930s, but it may be coming to an end if high tariffs now become normal in the 2020s.

The Chinese story reflects a wider historical underpinning in which trade and sovereignty are closely intertwined. The "unequal treaties" that arrived in the aftermath of the Opium Wars gave rise to a near-century of compromised trade sovereignty. From 1854 until 1930, when China regained tariff autonomy, successive Chinese governments (the Qing dynasty and then successive Republican governments) had to deal with a tariff regime controlled by the Maritime Customs Service, an agency technically under Chinese government control but in practice run by Britons at the senior level. China participated in a global socialist trade system in the 1950s but became increasingly isolated from world trade after the Sino-Soviet split. From the 1970s onward, however, it cast its lot with the American-dominated global trade environment instead and achieved spectacular economic results, leading to its entry into the World Trade Organization in 2001 and its rise to the status of the world's second-biggest economy.[10]

Just as the Cold War involved severe conflicts over ownership of the same turf of Enlightenment politics—that is, ideas of rationality, scientific progress, and peaceful cooperation—so does the current moment involve a fierce conflict, in which the US and China are dominant players, over a new welfarist communitarianism. In the case of China, this ideology combines autocratic politics with limited consultative elements (in some sense drawing on classic Maoist ideas of the "mass line"), and in the US, it is legitimized by democratic electoral politics, but with a vastly significant shift toward executive power and personal fiat.

Worldviews That Underpin Competitive Antiliberalism

There has been considerable academic work in recent years to identify intellectual antecedents both for the Trump project and that of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). One interpreter who has useful insights on both is the German politico-legal theorist Carl Schmitt (1888–1985).

Schmitt's thought is complex, but there are some elements that broadly apply across his thinking. One is the division of political actors into the categories of friends and enemies. Schmitt's thinking is profoundly antiliberal and regards the idea of argued and acknowledged difference in politics as being a pious fiction that masks the real nature of power relations. "The political enemy is the other, the stranger," Schmitt noted, "and it is sufficient for his nature that he is, in a specially intense way, existentially something different and alien, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible."[11]

There have been analyses that draw on Schmitt to explain Trump, and to explain the CCP. However, few have sought to compare the two. Yet both are notable in that they seek to define international relationships (both in security and economic terms) via definitions of friends and enemies, which are exactly the terms that Schmitt used. Still, the usage of the terms differs in the American and Chinese ideological framing.

The Trump project seeks to redefine how the two terms are used. Speaking of tariffs in late March 2025, Trump declared: "They've taken so much out of our country, friend and foe. And frankly, friend has been often times much worse than foe."[12] This could, at first glance, be seen as a way to declare that there is no meaningful distinction between the two terms "friend" and "foe." In geoeconomic terms, this seems broadly correct. The value of the economic relationship is being judged in this statement purely on its importance to the US (usually in terms of a positive trade balance for America). However, there are other areas, related much more to the support of national conservatism across boundaries, where an affinity or definition of friends and enemies is much more values-driven and clearly differentiates between the two. Senior administration figures have praised the actions and worldviews of national conservative figures in India, Hungary, and Germany, among other places. There are relatively few liberal/centrist figures who have received praise, although Britain's Keir Starmer has in general been treated with respect, if not extensive warmth.[13]

The CCP, in contrast, has long had a formally constituted framing for understanding friends and enemies, which is the idea of the United Front (*tongyi zhanxian*). The origins of the United Front lie in the alliance between the Nationalists (Guomindang) and Communists in 1923–1927, but in its contemporary form, it has proved one of the most powerful ideological tools for international political influence, seeking either to create committed supporters of CCP positions in other countries or at least to neutralize those who might otherwise be hostile.[14]

Few, if any, Trump advocates explicitly use Schmitt to illustrate their arguments (whereas there are certainly liberal critics who use Schmitt to critique Trump).[15] In contrast, Schmitt's work is openly discussed and admired in parts of the Chinese policymaking community. The "Schmitt Fever" that emerged in the 1990s in Beijing circles certainly included active discussions of the question of who were friends and who were enemies.[16] One prominent analyst of Schmitt, Jiang Shigong of Peking University Law School's faculty, was also key to the formulation of the 2020 Hong Kong National Security Law.[17]

Still, how is any sense of China having friends or enemies meaningful in terms of policymaking? China makes frequent claims that it does not seek to spread ideology or influence across borders. The corollary of this statement (regardless of whether it is accurate) is that China has also not formulated a universalist proposition in terms of its external relations, other than a largely economic one. Under Mao Zedong, China claimed specific ideological affinities with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, at least until the 1960 split. In more recent years, it has spoken of its relationship with Russia as a "friendship without limits." But this seems more a formulation of the moment than the kind of deep and emotionally grounded affinity that marked much of the relationship between Britain and the US or France and Germany, during the 20th century and into the 21st.

There are other aspects of the worldviews of both projects that are (perhaps surprisingly) similar. Both worldviews are ambivalent about their relationship with the wider world. The Trump project is strongly against ideas of free trade. Former US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, who served in the first Trump administration, discussed this formulation in his book *No Trade Is Free*.[18] To that extent, trade is not part of a wider vision of global community-building in the Trump formulation as it is, at least rhetorically, in the Chinese formulation. The US is also not keen to stress traditional security coalitions in Europe, although the links with Asian allies have not been subject to active questioning in the same way. In a visit to Manila in March 2025, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth made sure to state that the US commitment to the security of longtime ally the Philippines was "ironclad."[19]

Yet in practice, China's openness to trade and cooperation has immense and obvious limits. Perhaps the most obvious is the cybersphere. The US retains free access to the internet, whereas China is now decades into its use of a "Great Firewall" that limits access to outside information. China also maintains multiple non-tariff barriers to trade, including limiting access to data, conflating academic and business due diligence with national security violations, and creating doubts around rule of law. Problems with these issues also exist in the US, but this should not obscure the reality that throughout the history of the People's Republic of China, these barriers have been everyday practice at a much more intrusive level, even during its most open periods.

A term that both the US and China avoid, but which shapes their views of global order, is hierarchy. The Trump view of the world is one where America, famously, comes first, and which also characterizes that primacy as part of a hierarchy.[20] The term "America First" is double-edged: it can refer both to placing the interests of the US and American citizens first and also to making sure that the US stands ahead of any other countries. China does not use the term "China First." However, aspects of that worldview are visible in some of its actions. Perhaps one of the most famous occurred at an ASEAN meeting in Hanoi in 2010, where then–foreign minister Yang Jiechi declared to the representatives of other Asian states: "China is a big country and you are small countries, and that is a fact."[21]

Yang's mindset can be interpreted in a more consensual way. Some years ago, the political theorists Daniel A. Bell and Pei Wang wrote of a "just hierarchy" in which China would be acknowledged as the primary leader in Asia, as opposed to an equal sovereign state, but where that role would mean, in Confucian style, a duty to offer protection of patronage to states lower down in the hierarchy.[22] Both the US and China now show signs of following such a norm in reshaping global society, without explicitly talking about it as being hierarchical. China speaks of offering *ren*, or benevolence, to other states but is clear that it expects those states to conform to Chinese geopolitical needs, although not to its political system. The US has also started to be explicit about other states needing to conform to US needs, with some exceptions, notably Russia. However, the US no longer makes the case for liberal governance or democratic norms as goods in their own right in other societies.

This does not, mean, however, that the US is neutral in all aspects of other states' domestic politics. But in an innovative development, the US has chosen to comment on the domestic politics of traditional allies rather than adversaries or competitors. For instance, significant figures such as Vice President J. D. Vance have expressed approval of a range of national-conservative figures globally (Javier Milei, Narendra Modi, Viktor Orban). To that extent, there is a communitarian values-driven aspect of the wider political project, if not an economic one.[23]

Less noticed, however, have been the emotional and values-driven elements with echoes of each other in both countries. For instance, the value system associated with both the American national conservative and the Chinese Communist settlements stresses masculinity as an important part of the construction of a reconstituted national and international values-driven order. This is not an entirely new phenomenon. In the early 20th century, Social Darwinist rhetoric was common in the West and Asia. Politicians such as Theodore Roosevelt stressed masculine activity as a means of boosting their image, and in China, Mao Zedong argued for the importance of physical exercise as a means of combating the supposed indolence of traditional Confucian values.

In the 2020s, manhood and its discontents has become a powerful part of the American political discourse, with terms such as “bro” (which operate on left as well as right) and concerns about attacks on masculinity becoming commonplace in domestic politics. In Xi’s China, there has also been a growing pushback against perceived political femininity. In 2021, there was a pushback by the CCP against the supposed social dominance of “niangpao,” or “sissy boys,” in popular culture (such as boy-band members perceived as effeminate). Early on in his rise to power, Xi noted that there was no “real man” who had risen up to offer resistance to the collapse of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.[24] Meanwhile, feminist movements are subject to heavy censorship.[25]

There is very little, if any, direct connection between the culture of political masculinity in the US and that in China. Yet the politics of both places are shaped by personalistic leaders who stress the importance of such values in a way that suggests similar worldviews. Perhaps oddly, this aspect of political culture is one where there is more direct connection between the US and Russia than with China. Although very close to Russia politically in the 2020s, China shows very little cultural connection with the country these days, as opposed to during the Cold War prior to 1960. Instead, it is the US, where there are significant media and cultural figures who see a link between the culture of contemporary Russia and one that would benefit the US. Prominent figures such as the media personality Tucker Carlson have spoken of Russia as a society that is "thriving" under Putin's leadership.[26]

It may sometimes appear that the emergent world order is, to use a word of the moment, transactional, with few values. But it may instead be the case that there are still values, both in the US and China, that are very different from those of the dominant liberal era. In particular, one aspect of politics that has become evident in both states is a shift by the dominant political actors to make political discourse more homogenous. This, too, is an aspect of the era of competitive antiliberalism.

Competitive Antiliberalism—to What End?

If the US and China find themselves pursuing competitive antiliberalism, what is the likelihood of a stable end state? Both projects are underpinned by political worldviews that draw on unconventional economic thinking, which make it challenging to plan what comes next.

First, there is a contradiction at the heart of the Chinese economic proposition. It demands that China should move toward self-sufficiency, while also positing a global role for Chinese trade.

The main theoretical framing for this idea is the "dual circulation" economic policy, which seeks to separate the global and domestic "circuits" of the economy. The policy's priorities, however, demand three elements that will be hard to coordinate simultaneously: a maintenance of China's trade surplus, an increase in domestic consumption, and keeping the capital account closed. In practice, this has meant that domestic consumption has not grown at the level it needs to, as the other factors constrain it. China has been speaking—for more than two decades—about the need for greater consumption but does not put the policy measures in place to achieve it.

However, the sociology of the current era is forcing China to think again about how it deals with economic policy. The demographic shift in China is now well-known, and it is also clear that the change is real, but not instant. However, the state needs to make plans now for the upcoming economic pressures that this demography brings. China's pension systems, which are a mosaic rather than a fully coordinated entity, will likely go bankrupt if pension ages are not increased into the 2030s. The property boom crashed in part because of the slowing demand for housing, as China started to run out of younger families buying properties.

Meanwhile, younger people are suffering from the alternative problem: the information technology revolution does not currently provide the kind of jobs that they need, and there is chronic youth under- and unemployment.[27]

The US is, at the time of writing, at a much earlier stage of reorienting its economic policies. However, it appears that tariffs are likely to play a very significant role in the new economic strategy, a tactic that has not yet found favor with the majority of economic analysts but that has a political mandate, not least as tariff policy was explicitly placed before voters in 2024 as part of the Republican platform. Unlike the Chinese proposition, the US does not make a particular virtue of being embedded in the global trading system. But its model shares the idea that domestic economic production can make any dependence on wider global trade less important, or even irrelevant.

The debate over "weaponized interdependence" in the late 2010s was a harbinger of the shift away from globalization, not just as economic reality but as rhetorical good.[28] During the presidency of Joe Biden, numerous actions were taken to make sure that the US was not dependent on technology or parts from China. Yet these actions have in turn raised complex questions about how far decoupling or self-sufficiency is really possible, despite the rhetoric.

During the earlier period of US shift from globalization to decoupling, there was increased discussion of "friendshoring": the idea that liberal states might cooperate on technology to the exclusion of China. As of early 2025, there is less discussion of this term, with Western allies of the US (Canada and the EU among them) preoccupied with protecting themselves from tariffs and other trade barriers from the US. It is unclear whether the friendshoring strategy can be sustained in the form identified during the Biden years, as the term "friends" becomes ambiguous in a way that "Schmittians" might not have anticipated.

Another geoeconomic area where key terms are in flux is in international development. The ending of most programs of the United States Agency for International Development, with the status of the US as a major aid donor, actually creates a more level playing field between the US and China as geoeconomic actors on global development. Other major players (EU, Japan, UK) continue to advocate the award of donations and grants for international development. Even they are constrained financially (the UK recently reduced its spending on aid from 1.7% to 1.3% of GDP). However, the explicit US statement that it will no longer be a major player on grants for international assistance forces comparison with a less-mentioned reality: that China has never been a major donor of international aid as grants, but rather of loans, often at high interest rates.[29]

The ecology of international lending and infrastructure projects by the US and China may well become more similar; competitive antiliberalism certainly suggests that “loans not grants” is a preferred strategy for governments, whether in Washington or Beijing. China’s private sector has been encouraged to contribute strongly to the Global Development Initiative, the successor of sorts to the Belt and Road Initiative, but very much in areas where China seeks to create long-term path dependency. Examples include 5G, life sciences, and green energy infrastructure. Meanwhile, the US business sector, particularly in areas such as technology, has become more explicitly tied to government priorities, with prominent businesspeople coordinating their priorities with the administration and in some cases serving in it.

In areas where both the US and China cannot be self-sufficient, both have sought to create areas of exclusive control of key resources. Thus, China has long invested in ways that dominate the supply of rare earths. However, the US has become more explicit in its interest in creating mineral deposit rights of its own, for instance in negotiations over the ending of Russia’s war of invasion of Ukraine. As things stand, both China and the US promote these largely as national projects; in other words, there is little ostensible attempt to create a collective sense of alliance behind these projects of resource capture.

The current US dialogue on minerals explicitly suggests a division of control with Russia, another key player in the newly emergent world of competitive antiliberalism. While current discussions are on the contested territory of Ukraine, another contemporary issue shows the growing concern about control of resources. The insistence by the second Trump administration on greater control over Greenland, which began in earnest in late 2024, reflects a longer-standing sense that there is a struggle for control of the Arctic and its minerals. In this area, the US may be in competition with Russia and China, while the EU is ignored.

However, there are other areas emerging in the 2020s where China can show itself as contributing to the global commons. One area of significance divergence is energy transition technology. Here, China has become a key actor in terms of global dominance, particularly in solar and wind technology. The dynamics of climate change have the potential to provide ballast for Chinese claims that collective action on climate means that individual liberties need to be restrained, an antiliberal discourse that may find little purchase in Europe but a potential audience in the Global South, where the problems of providing enough energy to power growth may encourage the support of authoritarian politics. China is more likely to promote such language if there is no longer a hegemonic state actively promoting an alternative liberal discourse but rather a different (fossil fuel based) antiliberal alternative.

The Chinese project's potential success is highly dependent on continued economic stability in its own region. One of the greatest threats to that stability would be efforts by Beijing to use coercion to take Taiwan, or possibly areas of the South China Sea.

Would such Chinese actions over Taiwan and the South China Sea be ignored by the US? It seems hard to imagine that could be the case, not least as the follow-on effects of withdrawing the US from its security role in the Pacific would be so serious. Nuclear proliferation in the region would expand. South Korea and Japan might be the first, but not last, to develop weapons. Domestic economies would be oriented toward defense spending, and consumption in the region could be heavily constrained; one of the most economically vibrant regions in the world would necessarily rethink the predictability around economic and political decisions. As noted above, early language from the new administration is much more unequivocal about US partnerships in Asia than with Europe. But Asian partners are wary about how unstable the region might become.

How Will the Power Competition Be Defined in the Age of Competitive Antiliberalism?

The central dilemma faced by all US and Western governments since the 1990s remains the same, even under the significantly changed international system emerging under the second Trump administration. What is the version of China that the wider world can coexist with? And is the answer to that question different if the US is no longer the liberal hegemon of the past but rather a competitive antiliberal one instead? Singapore's Minister for Defense Ng Eng Hen stated at the 2025 Munich Security Conference that the US role in Asia had shifted from being an actor that drew on ideas of "moral legitimacy" to something akin to "a landlord seeking rent."[30]

If the United States no longer draws on a competition of values as the reason for rivalry with China or a reason to be wary of Chinese dominance, then what becomes the basis of the contest? Simply put, it may be the continued primacy of the US in its own right and the wider sense that Chinese dominance in Asia and beyond is still a worse bargain for the other Asian powers than is acceding to a more transactional US. The global exercise of geopolitical power across the economic and military spheres remains the province of the US and China. Even if their worldviews show relatively more convergence than could have been imagined a decade ago, they are still inexorably rival projects.

Other powers in the region will make their judgments according to the level of flexibility and maneuver that their partnerships provide with one of the great powers. To use Ng's analogy: Landlords are rarely loved, but still, those who want to stay housed usually pay the rent. They move only if another option proves more attractive. Beijing's house has an attractive market attached to it. But it has not yet persuaded potential residents that they want to hire China to cover the residence's security needs. As long as that remains the case, the US's new antiliberalism will not be enough to stop it being competitive in Asia—if it chooses to be.

Is the world of competitive antiliberalisms permanent? That may not be the case. A future US might swing back in the direction of internationalism. More speculatively, even though any future China is likely to be authoritarian, it might be more willing to allow limited pluralism at home, as happened in the 1990s, which in turn might influence its global stance toward a more liberal authoritarianism (a paradoxical but increasingly common political variant). But you can't go home again. The US's turn toward antiliberalism in the short term means that potential partners will start to think in more instrumental ways in the long term about how a pro-US foreign policy will play at home. The natural post-1945 willingness to join in with a US project or campaign because of shared values will be much harder to recover.

Ironically, this might make it harder for the US to create a coalition against China, even with countries that share the antiliberal worldview. Hungary may decide that it likes Chinese investment more than it values ideological affinity with an antiliberal US. The US may have to work harder to demonstrate to partners what the benefits they gain from such a coalition really are; it may need to provide assurance that any such benefits have a long-term worth that justifies the investment of partners' commitment. An antiliberal US declines to be taken for granted. The corollary is that it will need to work harder to be taken on trust.

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NOTES

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