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## Review Essays

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## REVIEW ESSAYS

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### THE NETHERWORLD OF GEOPOLITICS

*George Michael*

*The Demon of Geopolitics: How Karl Haushofer “Educated” Hitler and Hess*, by Holger H. Herwig. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016. 292 pages. \$85.

Over the past several years, the field of geopolitics has regained popularity. More and more, scholars show an interest in the impact of geography on international relations and political development. In his book *The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us about Coming Conflicts and the Battle against Fate* (Random House, 2013), Robert Kaplan explains how factors such as terrain, rivers, and weather have influenced the destiny of nations. In Russia, the political theorist Aleksandr Dugin counsels his nation’s leaders to adopt a geopolitical strategy to counter the U.S.-led world order. He draws on not only the rich Anglo-Saxon school of geopolitics but the more obscure German tradition as well. While the former is widely available to the English-speaking world, the latter is more difficult to access. But Holger H. Herwig, professor emeritus at the

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University of Calgary, has written an important book that examines arguably the most important figure in the German school of geopolitics: the enigmatic Karl Haushofer (1869–1946). Now, for the first time, an extensive English-language treatment of Haushofer is available. In *The Demon of Geopolitics: How Karl Haushofer “Educated” Hitler and Hess*, Herwig examines how Haushofer’s theories influenced German strategy in the years leading up to World War II.

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The book is structured as a biography that cogently explains how Haushofer's strategic weltanschauung (worldview) evolved over time. Herwig has carried out extensive archival research. Haushofer's roots trace to Bavaria, where he was raised in a Catholic family. As a young man, he entered the Kriegsschule (Military College), passed his officer's examination in 1889, and received a commission as a second lieutenant. Showing leadership potential, he was admitted to the prestigious Kriegsakademie (War Academy) just two years later, and excelled. In 1904, he took up a three-year post as instructor of modern military history at the Bavarian War Academy.

Through his father, Haushofer met Professor Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904), an ardent pan-Germanist and theoretician of geopolitics. Ratzel's opus *Political Geography* had an abiding influence on Haushofer's strategic outlook. According to Ratzel, geography and ethnography were the engines of world history. For that reason, educating Germany in the discipline of geopolitics was essential to long-term survival, in that nations declined to the degree they were unable to understand the necessity of expanding into new territories.

But it was in the Anglo-Saxon world that the field of geopolitics first gained broad currency. The English academic Sir Halford Mackinder (1861–1947) is regarded as the founder of the discipline. His noted 1904 article "The Geographical Pivot of History" exerted a great influence on Haushofer. For Mackinder, control of the area that corresponds roughly to Russia, Iran, and the central Asian republics (i.e., the "pivot" or "heartland"), is necessary for attaining global hegemony. Ominously, Mackinder feared that someday Germany, with its dynamic industry, technology, and scientific knowledge, would be grafted onto the vast land and natural resources of Russia. A Russo-German alliance would dominate the heartland and, by extension, the world.

Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840–1914), who went on to serve as President of the Naval War College, came to be regarded as geopolitics' principal American proponent. For Mahan, securing vital sea-lanes was the foremost factor in achieving and maintaining national greatness. After World War I, Haushofer integrated Mahan's theories on sea power with his continental-oriented strategy of geopolitics.

Finally, Haushofer was influenced deeply by Rudolf Kjellén (1864–1922), a Swedish political scientist whose book *The State as a Living Organism* stressed the importance of "human geography." To Kjellén, the state was not unlike a biological being. He invented the word *autarky*, or national self-sufficiency, which he believed was a requisite for attaining global power. Kjellén also coined the term *Geopolitik*, which Haushofer adopted for his own strategic approach.

Events in Haushofer's personal life created new opportunities for him to refine his geopolitical perspective. For example, the woman he would marry, Martha

Mechtild Mary Mayer-Doss, had command of multiple languages, including a working knowledge of Japanese—a major asset to both. In 1908, the War Ministry ordered Haushofer to the German embassy in Tokyo. Haushofer's stay in Japan proved to be an important formative period of his life.

Although they were located on opposite sides of the globe, Haushofer believed that Germany and Japan exhibited similar cultures. For example, the samurai tradition was not unlike that of the Junker military class, stressing discipline, monarchism, and a strong state. Consequently, he contemplated a strategic partnership between the two nations as a way to counter American and British influence, both economic and political, in the Far East.

Published in 1913, Haushofer's book *Dai Nihon (Great Japan)* received favorable reviews. In it, Haushofer outlined his basic weltanschauung. He advanced a doctrine of social Darwinism, counseling that nations rose and fell according to unalterable biological laws. An unabashed imperialist, he exhorted Germany to expand into its border areas, as Japan had done in 1894–95 and 1904–1905.

When World War I broke out, Haushofer was given command of a battalion of the 1st Ammunition Column, 7th Army Corps. During quiet periods at the front, he gave much thought to the political side of the war, and concluded that Germany had entered the conflict alongside the wrong ally, the moribund Austria-Hungary. As he saw it, Germany was fighting its two “natural allies” in Russia and Japan, with whom it should be united as part of the heartland of which he dreamed. When the United States entered the conflict in April of 1917, his anti-Americanism became more acute; he wrote that “Americans are truly the only people on this world that I regard with a deep, instinctive hatred.” With the U.S. military now in the war, the forces arrayed against Germany could not be surmounted. But many Germans found it difficult to accept that they had been defeated by superior military force; consequently, a “stab in the back” narrative crystallized that blamed imperial Germany's downfall on internal enemies.

By the end of the war, Haushofer had attained the rank of colonel and was commanding the 30th Bavarian Reserve Division. In the chaos that followed the armistice, he restored order in Bavaria. Returning to Munich, he affiliated with the Thule Society, a study group formed in 1911 that was devoted to ancient German history. In the realm of politics, the organization had a leading role in squelching the leftist revolution led by Kurt Eisner in the spring of 1919. In an effort to win the support of the masses, the Thule Society launched the German Workers' Party (DAP) in 1919. That same year, an obscure army corporal investigating nationalist groups attended a meeting of the fledgling political party. Adolf Hitler eventually would assume its leadership and change its name to the National Socialist German Workers' Party—which came to be known as the Nazi Party.

Not long after the war ended, Haushofer returned to academia, teaching at the Institute of Geography at the University of Munich. Eventually, he made a sober analysis of the reasons Germany was defeated in World War I. In his estimation, Germany's leadership had failed to grasp geopolitics. The experience of World War I refined Haushofer's views on sea power. He adopted Mahan's preconditions for sea power in his own theory of geopolitics. In his 1937 book *World Seas and World Powers*, Haushofer overcame his narrow continental viewpoint and sought to educate Germans on the subjects of commerce, colonies, sea-lanes, and oceanic trade. As Herwig points out, Haushofer's foreign policy views were a blend of romanticism and realpolitik. Increasingly, he adopted the verbiage of the primacy of race and its influence on history. By 1930, he had established himself as Germany's preeminent apostle of geopolitics.

At the university, Haushofer's most cherished student was Rudolf Hess (1894–1987). They first met at a DAP meeting in May 1920 held in Munich. After the failed Beer Hall Putsch of November 1923, Hess was sent to the Landsberg Prison along with his coconspirator Adolf Hitler. Through his pupil Hess, Haushofer influenced Hitler early in his political career. While in prison, Hitler fleshed out the material that eventually became his autobiography and political opus, *Mein Kampf*. In particular, Hitler was influenced by Haushofer's notion of *Lebensraum* (living room), which left a substantial imprint on his weltanschauung. The density of the German population cried out for territorial expansion, most especially into the broad expanses of Ukraine and Russia.

After the Nazi *Machtergreifung* (seizure of power) in January 1933, Haushofer hoped that Hitler would implement his geopolitical vision. On the foreign policy front—at least in the east—Haushofer was at first quite pleased with Hitler. The German-Soviet pact of 1939 appeared to be the quintessence of statecraft, in that it ignored ideology in favor of pursuing national interests. According to the secret protocol signed by Joachim von Ribbentrop and Vyacheslav Molotov, Germany and the Soviet Union would divide Poland along the Vistula, San, and Bug Rivers, while Berlin recognized Moscow's claims to the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. With a single stroke of the pen, the pact seemed to bring Mackinder's geographical pivot of history one step closer to fruition. Haushofer was ecstatic over the treaty. With Russia as an ally, Germany would gain spatial mass, access to vast natural resources, and hinterland security. Furthermore, Hitler's alliance with Japan seemed to be in lockstep with Haushofer's grand strategy as well. Joined with Japan—whose navy was formidable in the Pacific—Germany would be virtually unassailable, never again subjected to “Anglo-Saxon tutelage.”

At least initially, the treaty seemed to fend off the strategic nightmare of another two-front war on the continent. Much to Hitler's dismay, however, Moscow evinced little interest in turning south to focus on the British colonies of India

and Persia. Instead, by late 1940, Molotov pressed Hitler on his intentions in Finland, Romania, the Balkans, and the Baltic. Feeling rebuffed, Hitler signed War Directive No. 21 (Case BARBAROSSA), whose objective was to crush the Soviet Union in a rapid campaign. Initiated on June 22, 1941, the invasion effectively destroyed Haushofer's dream of creating a "Eurasian continental block."

The Western Allies' successful operation at Normandy doomed the Third Reich. Haushofer was arrested not long after the July 20, 1944, plot to assassinate Hitler—Operation VALKYRIE—after it transpired that his son Albrecht was associated with the conspirators. Karl Haushofer was released a month later, most likely owing to the intervention of General Franz Ritter von Epp, but the Gestapo later killed Albrecht Haushofer.

Not long after Germany's surrender, the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg included Haushofer on its list of major war criminals; Chief Justice Robert H. Jackson went so far as to refer to him as "Hitler's intellectual godfather." But ultimately Justice Jackson spared Haushofer by failing to arraign him, and after interrogation Haushofer was allowed to return home. But by this time he was a broken man. Bereaved by the death of his favorite son, he lost all desire to carry on. On March 10, 1946, he and his wife committed double suicide by poisoning.

According to Herwig, Haushofer was blinded by a false sense of pride. As Herwig points out, the ultimate tragedy of Haushofer's life, as his son Albrecht noted, was that he "broke away the seal" to the Aladdin's lamp of geopolitics for Hess and Hitler and then "let the demon soar into the world." Haushofer found an eager pupil in Hitler, but did not appreciate adequately how his geopolitical concepts could be misused in a country that harbored an acute sense of grievance and revanchist aspirations after the humiliating Treaty of Versailles. Herwig's study illuminates the tragic story of Haushofer, and as such will be of great interest to students of geopolitics.

## THE UNITED STATES, CHINA, AND THUCYDIDES'S MANY, MANY TRAPS

Karl F. Walling

*Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?*, by Graham Allison. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017. 384 pages. \$28.

Thucydides was a political pathologist, a student of political disease, especially as it occurs during war. This is most evident from his account of the plague in Athens. He describes the physical symptoms of the disease first, but then turns to its political effects, including the breakdown of the Athenian political order (Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 2.47–55). Thucydides's self-understanding as a political pathologist is also evident in his account of the civil war in Corcyra. He begins with just the facts: the Corinthians inserted a fifth column into Corcyra to incite a revolution, in which the oligarchic faction would overthrow the democracy. The quarrel polarized the community and escalated to a struggle of extermination—while the Athenians watched, callously, from their ships at the port in Corcyra. War is a harsh teacher that reduces most of us to the necessities that war imposes on us, Thucydides said, so no means, fair or foul, were off-limits during this civil war (3.70–85).

Human beings cannot help being moral creatures, however, so the different factions had to justify their atrocities to themselves and their followers. In the process, words began to lose their customary meaning. Anticipating George Orwell's famous account of "doublespeak," Thucydides showed the worst of the disease to be a breakdown of moral, political, and strategic judgment, with murder

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described as justice and crime as virtue. The desire for revenge was so powerful that it overcame the drive for self-preservation (3.82). The civil war was suicidal; alas, it spread to almost every city in ancient Greece, including Athens, and contributed to Athens's ultimate defeat at the hands of Sparta.

Little distinguishes Thucydidean from modern political science more than Thucydides's disdain for rational-actor models of politics and war. His greatest contribution may have been to explain the power of the

irrational passions when violence is a constant threat. If the civil war in Corcyra is treated as a microcosm of the struggle between democratic and oligarchic cities in ancient Greece, it is an apt description of how belligerents under the pressures of war often lose their minds.

The civil war in Corcyra is just one of the many traps against which Dr. Thucydides warns us. As a pathologist he diagnoses symptoms of diseases; sometimes he explains their causes; occasionally he makes predictions, or prognoses, about the likely progress of the disease at hand. He almost never offers prescriptions to cure the diseases he identifies, however. He expected the same sort of pathologies to arise again and again, so long as human nature remained the same (1.22). He had a cyclical view of history. His answer to the question in the 1960s folk-rock anthemic lyrics—“When will they ever learn?”—almost certainly would have been “They never will.” Individual cities and countries might fare better or worse from time to time; some might resist the temptations, even compulsions, that lead to mutually suicidal wars; but wisdom is not cumulative. As one generation learns from the suffering of war, another forgets. So we are condemned to go through this cycle without end.

In contrast, much of modern political science is Whiggish; that is, it embraces a progressive view of history. If one treats Thucydides’s greatest translator, Thomas Hobbes, as the founder of this kind of political science, the genre certainly shares Thucydides’s concern with political pathology. It too diagnoses diseases (such as Hobbes’s famous state of nature as a state of war—a beginning point modeled clearly on Thucydides’s account of the civil war in Corcyra). It too tries to explain causes and make predictions. But it does one thing Thucydides does not: it offers prescriptions. The first to explore in a systematic fashion the possibility of escaping Thucydides’s many traps was Hobbes himself. Henceforward, the purpose of political science would be to escape the Thucydides-inspired Hobbesian state of nature as a state of war, although Hobbes admitted that this was possible only within a political community, not among them. So, the nature of international politics, as was true in Thucydides’s age too, was characterized by a state of war.

Others were more optimistic. Take, for example, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay in the classic American work on federalism, republicanism, and constitutional government, the *Federalist Papers*. Although Thucydides is never mentioned in the text, his shadow hangs over the entire project, beginning with Jay’s and Hamilton’s accounts of the causes of war and the problems of federations in ensuring peace among their members and with other powers (essays 3–9, 11, and 15). The pathology they feared was that the American union would become like the Athenian-led Delian League, a tyranny of one state over the others, or would descend into anarchy among its members as foreign powers exploited their internal divisions, as happened to the Delian League when

Persia intervened at the end of the Peloponnesian War. And just as Thucydides attributed the downfall of Athens to the rise of demagogues, such as Cleon and Alcibiades, and the hyperpartisanship they exploited to serve their ambition (2.65), James Madison is famous for diagnosing partisan faction as the “disease” that commonly destroys free governments from within (essays 10 and 51). Again, human nature is the crucial constant. Eschewing almost all hope of curing the causes of faction in a free government, Dr. Madison advised treating its effects, or symptoms, in an extended republic whose pluralistic character would make it difficult for any one faction to tyrannize in its own name.

And others were even more optimistic about escaping Thucydides’s multiple traps—the constant dangers of war and tyranny arising from, and aggravated by, the wildest passions of human nature. Immanuel Kant famously argued that republican (law-based) government is possible even for a nation of devils, if they have but reason. And if that was possible inside a state, it also might be possible among them, if they established something like a League of Nations or a United Nations to provide collective security. Friedrich Hegel even predicted an end of history, in which the world spirit would transform human nature and put an end to violent conflict. And at the end of the Cold War, Francis Fukuyama even claimed that, inside the West at least, the Hegelian end of history had arrived. Humanity soon might escape Thucydides’s many, many traps.

Not so fast, some argued. History might return, perhaps with a vengeance. And so it did in the Balkans, Iraq, and Syria today, where every political disease Thucydides predicted would happen in civil war has recurred, but with the savage advantages of modern weaponry.

Now entering the fray comes Graham Allison in his latest book, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’s Trap?*, which is based on an earlier, provocative article in *The Atlantic* (September 24, 2015). Those familiar with Allison’s distinguished body of scholarship know his question is rhetorical. Whether writing on the Cuban missile crisis or the dangers of nuclear terrorism, he always has combined a Thucydidean anticipation of recurring problems, such as military escalation, with a progressive aspiration to solve them, so far as they can be solved, at least in our own time. Precisely because the problems are rooted in human nature, they will never go away; they will increase or decrease in intensity depending on the political conditions of the age. They might be mitigated, however, by anticipating them and avoiding some of the errors in judgment that led to calamities in the past.

The calamity Allison fears most is what he calls the “Thucydides Trap”: a situation in which a rising power’s growth inspires such fear in an established power that it seems, inevitably, to lead to war (p. xv). To be clear, this is just one of many traps, or pathologies, Thucydides first diagnosed, but he did claim that

the “truest cause” of the Peloponnesian War was the growth of Athenian power and the fear it inspired in Sparta, which compelled Sparta to go to war (1.23, 1.88, 1.118). Scholars differ on how precisely to translate and interpret Thucydides’s understanding of the truest cause of the war. Did Thucydides mean the war was inevitable, and if so, what kind of inevitability was he talking about?

One might argue that even Thucydides did not believe in the Thucydides Trap as Allison defines it. What appears to be a clear and simple explanation of the causes of the Peloponnesian War is anything but. Wrote Carl Clausewitz, war arises from a clash of policies. If Athens insisted on challenging Sparta’s power and if Sparta insisted on containing Athens, then yes, some form of conflict was inevitable. But these policies were not inevitable. Athens might have chosen not to try to expand its power further; Sparta might have chosen to accommodate Athenian aspirations; some sort of compromise might have been possible if they had made different political choices.

And here Greek tragedy, which was born shortly before and flourished most during the Peloponnesian War, can be helpful. Was Oedipus (whose hubris during a plague reminds some of Pericles) destined to kill his father and sleep with his mother? Sophocles’s play *Antigone* is set after a terrible civil war—not unlike the one in Corcyra. Were Antigone and Creon destined to fight, and suffer, over their different views of the demands of political authority and religious conscience? Yes and no. Tragic inevitability is a result of both circumstance and character. There would have been no tragedy if Oedipus were not Oedipus or Antigone not Antigone. Oedipus was the kind of arrogant character who would make the sort of judgments that brought about his reversal of fortune, and Antigone and Creon were the sorts of self-righteous characters who would allow their conflict to polarize unto death.

Likewise, in international politics, as Thucydides well knew and Allison’s book confirms, geopolitical circumstance is not destiny; the characters of potential belligerents matter, especially their willingness and ability to compromise. As Allison demonstrates, England was so fearful of the rise of Germany that it found ways to accommodate two other rising challengers, the United States and Japan, prior to the First World War, and avoided a war with them as a result (p. 85). So not all rising and established powers are destined to go to war with each other, but, as Allison also shows, it is difficult to see how hubristic ones like Athens and paranoid ones like Sparta can avoid it. Their national characters fed on each other, aggravated their enmities, and made a difficult situation worse, perhaps even impossible to resolve without war.

In many ways, Allison is following in Thucydides’s footsteps. The structural situation of a rising China challenging the established power of the United States has to worry anyone who has seen this problem before. Whereas Thucydides

describes a microcosm of all war that is meant to diagnose the recurring pathologies of war as such, Allison's focus is far narrower, although his dataset is far bigger. Allison gathers evidence from sixteen different case studies in which the structural features of a clash between a rising and an established power are apparent. These range from the Peloponnesian War to the First World War to the Cold War. In twelve out of sixteen cases, war has been the result. No one who has studied the history of war in the twentieth century and beyond can rest easy about this. The First World War destroyed four great empires in Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman caliphate. It set England and France on a path of irrecoverable decline as great powers. And it established conditions for totalitarian government to arise in Europe and the Second World War to begin. The subsequent clash between the Soviet Union and the United States threatened humanity with nuclear extinction. Exactly why the Cold War did not escalate to a mutually suicidal war like the Peloponnesian War is not yet clear and is bound to be much disputed, but China is rising so quickly, and it has so many people and so much wealth, that it seems likely to make the Soviet Union's challenge to the United States pale in comparison.

That does not mean war between the United States and China is inevitable; rather, it reveals the imperative to do all that is possible to ensure that it does not become so. This is the spirit in which Allison's book was written and the spirit in which it should be received (pp. 235–40). Thucydides scholars may cavil over particular passages Allison cites. China scholars may dispute some of his data. And, of course, specialists are bound to question his reading of the sixteen cases in his database, as well as why he chose those cases instead of others. Still others will warn of the dangers of historical analogies that abstract from the unique features of antagonists. Fair enough; but we ought not to lose sight of the forest for the trees.

The great question is how to uphold American rights and interests, yet not go to war with China (pp. 3–24). Allison supplies some helpful ways to begin to develop an answer. He gives us not a recipe book full of answers but a set of questions, or what he calls "clues for peace"—a research agenda, so to speak, for the twenty-first century (pp. 187–213). It belongs to us, students and faculty at war colleges especially, to follow the clues—some of which might be false—and to develop the answers that fit our time.

Allison does point to some Thucydidean pathologies we would be foolish to leave out of our answers, however. One is the tendency toward hubris in many rising powers and toward paranoia in many established ones. That is a very bad mix. He documents the hubris in the character of Kaiser Wilhelm II (and many other Germans) and the rise of anti-German sentiment in England on the eve of the First World War. He also shows that, ironically, Germany before the First World

War feared the rise of Russia just as much as England feared the rise of Germany, but with the difference that the Germans developed a strategy of preventive war to address the challenge from Russia. They planned to start a war before it was too late, just as Sparta opted to go to war with Athens before it was too late to resist its growing power (pp. 63–83). As the cataclysm of the First World War demonstrates, the escalation natural to war makes preventive wars opportunities well squandered. Starting a war to avoid a war is just too dangerous, especially when a rival has nuclear weapons (pp. 207–209).

This, after all, is one of the key insights of the Athenians in the Melian Dialogue. Precisely because Thucydides was a pathologist, modern realists often take what Thucydides understood as diseased to be something natural, even healthy, like the Athenians' famous observation that "the strong do what they can while the weak suffer what they must" (5.89). Properly understood, Thucydides was diagnosing hubris in the Athenians, not endorsing their example. Of greater significance is what the Athenians said immediately *before* this passage: that justice, understood as some form of restraint in international politics, is "only in question between equals in power," or, more literally, between equals in their power to compel (through their capability to destroy each other) (5.89). Perhaps some powers are capable of self-restraint absent external compulsion, but the Athenians anticipated what became the cardinal doctrine of the late Cold War: mutual assured destruction. Had Athens and Sparta known before their war began that it would result in the destruction of the Athenian empire and the irrecoverable decline of Sparta, perhaps neither would have gone to war. We know for certain and well ahead of time that a war between the United States and China could destroy them both. On the basis of that pessimistic premise from the Melian Dialogue, perhaps one might begin to build a system of mutual restraint for the United States and China.

Those who follow Allison's path in seeking to avoid Thucydides's diverse set of traps might do well to remember that the American founding was in many ways an effort to escape those traps, a practical application of republican security theory meant to build a security community in North America in which the member states were neither warring nor preparing to war against each other. Alas, despite the best hopes of the authors of the *Federalist Papers*, neither demagoguery nor hyperpartisanship has disappeared from politics in Europe or America. The Madisonian system of treating the effects rather than the causes of faction clearly has its limitations. When combined with nationalist sentiments, hyperpartisan demagoguery might get out of control, just as it did in Athens, and divide members of the West among themselves, thus producing the sort of international anarchy an outside power might seek to exploit. Under the influence of its demagogues, Athens self-destructed, in part by exploiting its allies, thereby

driving them into rebellion. Pericles stated on the eve of the Peloponnesian War that Athens had a strong chance of weathering the gathering storm if it retained control of the sea and managed its alliances well (2.65). This is probably true for the United States too. So long as it can avoid strategic overextension and lead its allies without dominating them, the United States ought to be able to generate sufficient loyalty among its allies to deter war while doing everything possible to make cooperation in China's best interest. But woe unto the Americans if they undermine, or allow others to jeopardize, the system of alliances on which they based their security in the aftermath of the Second World War.

Allison has written an important book, one destined to be debated as much as Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992) and Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996). Those who take it as a point of departure might consider therefore a different reading of the causes of the Peloponnesian War. What if *both* Sparta and Athens were revisionist powers, with Sparta seeking to revise the structure of power in ancient Greece to where it was before the Persian Wars, when Sparta was the undisputed hegemon in ancient Greece? Might that analogy fit China today, with its young leaders yearning for past hegemony before the European empires exploited its internal weaknesses in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? And what about the United States? On the back of the American dollar bill, underneath the pyramid, is a Latin phrase, *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, "new order of the ages." From its inception, the United States has aimed to be a revolutionary power in world affairs, although with much debate on whether the global revolution would come about from following the American example (what we call soft power today) or by force of arms (in crusades for freedom). After the end of the Cold War, when *enlargement* and *engagement* became catchwords for American foreign policy, one might argue that the United States was anything but a status quo power. In time, it chose preventive war in Iraq. And it sought regime change elsewhere, too, which must have frightened regimes that Americans had not yet sought to change. Small wonder that they push back.

The worst nightmare for the twenty-first century is not one but two revisionist powers, China and the United States, each struggling for hegemony. On the eve of the Peloponnesian War, Pericles told the Athenians that he was "more afraid of our own blunders" than of the Spartans (1.144). As George Kennan indicated long ago, Americans too might become their own worst enemies. While containing the Soviets, they needed to learn to contain themselves, lest they cause the war they meant to prevent. With respect to China, that insight is more relevant than ever.