

HOW WASHINGTON GOT CHINA WRONG

MARCH/APRIL 2018

FOREIGN AFFAIRS



Letting Go
Trump, America,
and the World



FOREIGN AFFAIRS



Volume 97, Number 2

LETTING GO

- | | |
|---|----|
| Trump's Lucky Year
Why the Chaos Can't Last
<i>Eliot A. Cohen</i> | 2 |
| The World After Trump
How the System Can Endure
<i>Jake Sullivan</i> | 10 |
| The Rise of Illiberal Hegemony
Trump's Surprising Grand Strategy
<i>Barry R. Posen</i> | 20 |
| The Post-American World Economy
Globalization in the Trump Era
<i>Adam S. Posen</i> | 28 |
| Giving Up the High Ground
America's Retreat on Human Rights
<i>Sarah Margon</i> | 39 |

ESSAYS

Just and Unjust Leaks 48
When to Spill Secrets
Michael Walzer

The China Reckoning 60
How Beijing Defied American Expectations
Kurt M. Campbell and Ely Ratner

Life in China's Asia 71
What Regional Hegemony Would Look Like
Jennifer Lind

Green Giant 83
Renewable Energy and Chinese Power
Amy Myers Jaffe

How to Crack Down on Tax Havens 94
Start With the Banks
Nicholas Shaxson

Iran Among the Ruins 108
Tehran's Advantage in a Turbulent Middle East
Vali Nasr

The President and the Bomb 119
Reforming the Nuclear Launch Process
Richard K. Betts and Matthew C. Waxman

ON FOREIGNAFFAIRS.COM

▶ **Julia Gurganus** on
Russia's strategy in
Afghanistan.

▶ **Volha Charnysh** on
Poland's right-wing
extremists.

▶ **Elizabeth Saunders**
on Donald Trump's
on-the-job learning.

Mugabe's Misrule 129
And How It Will Hold Zimbabwe Back
Martin Meredith

The Clash of Exceptionalisms 139
A New Fight Over an Old Idea
Charles A. Kupchan

REVIEWS & RESPONSES

Stranger in Strange Lands 150
Joseph Conrad and the Dawn of Globalization
Adam Hochschild

Still Crazy After All These Years 156
America's Long History of Political Delusion
James A. Morone

Future Fights 162
Planning for the Next War
Stephen Peter Rosen

Recent Books 168

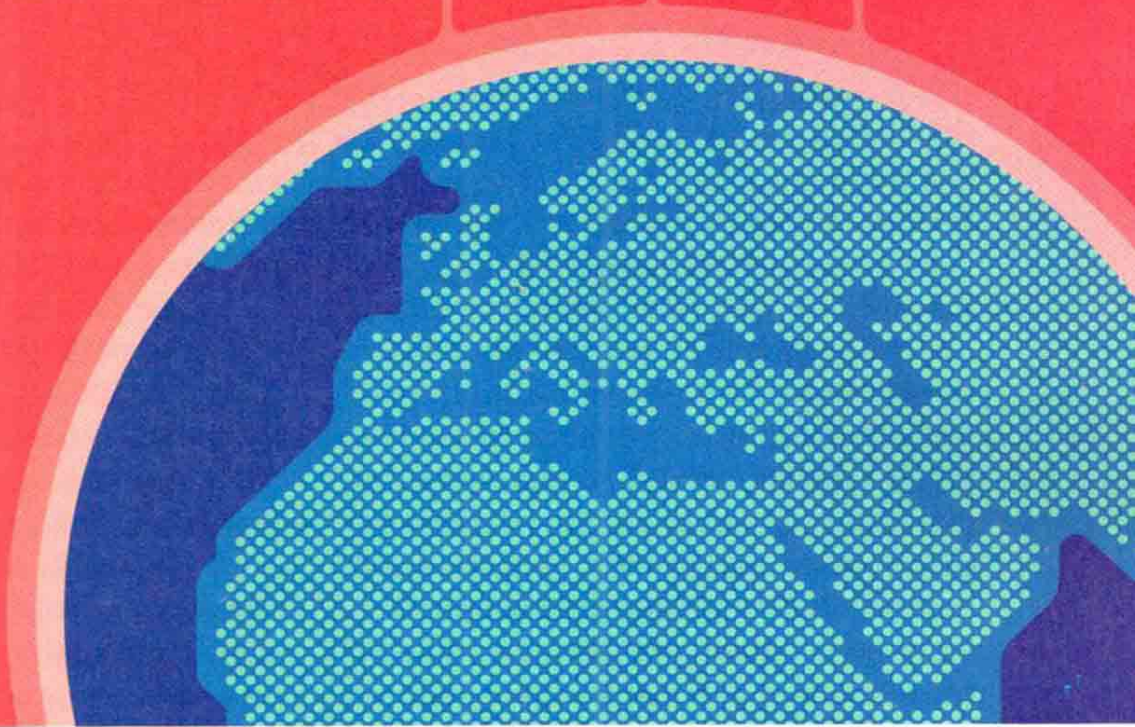
"Foreign Affairs . . . will tolerate wide differences of opinion. Its articles will not represent any consensus of beliefs. What is demanded of them is that they shall be competent and well informed, representing honest opinions seriously held and convincingly expressed. . . . It does not accept responsibility for the views in any articles, signed or unsigned, which appear in its pages. What it does accept is the responsibility for giving them a chance to appear."

Archibald Cary Coolidge, Founding Editor
Volume 1, Number 1 • September 1922



The Trump administration ostentatiously walked away from the maintenance of world order as an animating principle of U.S. foreign policy.

—Eliot Cohen



Trump's Lucky Year

Eliot A. Cohen

2

The Post-American World Economy

Adam S. Posen

28

The World After Trump

Jake Sullivan

10

Giving Up the High Ground

Sarah Margon

39

The Rise of Illiberal Hegemony

Barry R. Posen

20

Trump's Lucky Year

Why the Chaos Can't Last

Eliot A. Cohen

When Donald Trump became president of the United States, many wondered just how abnormal his administration, and particularly his foreign policy, would be. After all, as a candidate, Trump had evinced a partiality for foreign strongmen, derided U.S. allies as a gang of freeloaders, proposed banning Muslims from entering the United States, sneered at Mexicans, and denounced free-trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement and the nascent Trans-Pacific Partnership, while demonstrating little understanding of most other dimensions of international politics. Scores of former senior Republican foreign policy officials, myself included, repudiated his candidacy on the grounds of both his character and his bent toward populist isolationism. His inaugural address confirmed fears that he viewed the world in darkly narrow, zero-sum terms. "We've made other countries rich while the wealth, strength, and confidence of our country has dissipated over the horizon," he said. He went on: "From this day forward, it's going to be only America first. America first."

ELIOT A. COHEN is Robert E. Osgood Professor of Strategic Studies at Johns Hopkins University and the author of *The Big Stick: The Limits of Soft Power and the Necessity of Military Force*.

Being in office has done little to moderate Trump's belligerent rhetoric, improve his commitment to facts, or alter his views on trade and international agreements. Over the course of 2017, he insulted foreign leaders on Twitter, openly undermined his secretary of state, and attacked the FBI and the CIA. He continued to praise dictators, such as Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, and refused to mention Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty—which enshrines the idea that an attack against one NATO member is an attack against all—when visiting NATO headquarters in Brussels. His subordinates gamely echoed the promise of "America first," assuring both the public and themselves that Trump's use of that phrase had nothing to do with Charles Lindbergh's isolationist and anti-Semitic America First Committee, founded in 1940.

Still, the world did not blow up. World War III did not break out. A case can be made that all things considered, Trump has ended up being a highly erratic, obnoxious version of the Republican normal. He has been strong on defense (he increased the Pentagon's budget, although not as significantly as it had hoped), willing to use force (he launched cruise missiles at Syria as punishment for its use of chemical weapons), and committed to allies (enthusiastically in the case of Israel and Japan, grudgingly in the case of the Europeans). Although he has been more of an economic nationalist than some might like, the thinking goes that he remains within the bounds of GOP tradition.

Yet this reassuringly non-apocalyptic foreign policy was a product of good