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UNITED STATES AND THE PURSUIT OF AMERICAN PRIMACY

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Executive Summary

This publication argues that China constitutes the central strategic objective of the United States in an era of intensifying great-power competition. American policy across Europe, the Middle East, the Western Hemisphere, and the Indo-Pacific focuses on the requirement of preventing the consolidation of Chinese hegemonic dominance across the Eastern Hemisphere. The strategic problem is defined by finite resources, simultaneous theater pressures, and the accelerating integration of China with Russia and Iran. Internal balancing—economic resilience, technological competitiveness, political cohesion, and sustained warfighting capacity—forms the domestic foundation of this effort. Two structural variables are decisive: the durability of the Sino-Russian entente and the incorporation of Iran into Chinese geo-economic and security architectures. Iran occupies a critical position as a westward corridor for Chinese connectivity and as a potential multiplier of Chinese regional influence, particularly if coupled with nuclear capability. Coercive diplomacy, hybrid pressure, wedge strategy toward Russia, alliance-based deterrence in the Indo-Pacific, and burden redistribution in Europe are evaluated as instruments aimed at fragmenting the emerging Eurasian alignment. Absent credible internal regime-change channels in Iran or a strategic understanding with Moscow, a ground invasion would represent a strategically self-defeating gamble. The most probable and strategically coherent option—if enabling conditions exist—is limited, targeted strikes designed to induce political destabilization without occupation. Yet strategic restraint carries cumulative costs, as continued Sino-Iranian integration erodes deterrence and strengthens the material foundations of a potential Chinese-led Eurasian order.

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary iv
Acknowledgments v
Table of Contents 6
Introduction 7
1. Foundations of U.S. Primacy 7
2. Shaping the Periphery 8
3. Managing Strategic Threat Nodes 12
4. Strategic Synthesis 14
Conclusion 18
Final Assessment 20

Introduction

The international system has entered a period of sustained great-power competition in which the United States must confront the implications of China's rise as a systemic challenger. The central strategic question is no longer whether competition exists, but how Washington can preserve primacy while operating under finite resources and simultaneous pressures across multiple theaters. The challenge is not confined to the Indo-Pacific. It extends across Eurasia, where the gradual alignment of China with Russia and Iran risks altering the broader balance of power.

China's ascent is unfolding through industrial expansion, technological development, energy integration, and overland connectivity that links East Asia to the Middle East and Europe. If consolidated, this architecture would provide the structural foundation for Chinese dominance across the Eastern Hemisphere. For the United States, preventing that consolidation—rather than responding to isolated regional crises—has become the organizing logic of grand strategy.

This monograph examines how American policy across Europe, the Middle East, the Western Hemisphere, and the Indo-Pacific fits within that broader objective. It focuses in particular on two decisive variables: the durability of the Sino-Russian entente and the strategic orientation of Iran, whose geographic position and political trajectory make it central to the wider Eurasian configuration. The preservation of American primacy depends on disrupting adversarial alignment before it matures into durable structural integration, while avoiding the risks of overextension that have historically undermined great powers in periods of transition.

1. Foundations of U.S. Primacy

Starting from the United States, it is crucial to pinpoint the fundamental factors that will define American grand strategy and its effectiveness over the long term.

The Primary Objective

The central strategic objective of the United States is China. The U.S. must be capable of prevailing in a potential regional conflict with China, as well as in a scenario of

simultaneous two-front confrontation involving both China and Russia. The enduring power competition between the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian blocs is already well underway. The subsidiary strategies for achieving this objective are as follows.

United States: Internal Balancing

Sustained warfighting capacity requires internal cohesion, political stability, economic resilience, and societal willingness to bear the costs of armed conflict. The reversal of structural trade deficits and sovereign debt, the restoration of economic growth, and a reorientation toward domestic production and national identity constitute the principal policy imperatives of the Trump administration. The globalization model is fundamentally incompatible with such a strategic posture, while the preoccupation of certain American foreign policy circles with Russia as the primary threat continues to divert attention and resources from the principal long-term adversary: China.

Within the domestic arena, identity-based political cleavages deepen societal divisions and, consequently, degrade the United States' mobilization capacity and warfighting cohesion. Elite competition is expressed at the political level — Republicans versus Democrats — and at the societal level, where traditionalists and nationalists are arrayed against progressive coalitions. The United States' capacity to sustain global primacy — even within a multipolar or contested international order — will ultimately be determined by the outcome of this internal struggle. Internal consolidation constitutes the foundational precondition for prevailing in the technology competition of the AI era, sustaining military modernization, and maintaining the societal cohesion and resolve necessary for effective warfighting.

2. Shaping the Periphery

The following section examines the various geographies across which U.S. policies will unfold.

Western Hemisphere: Sphere-of-Influence Consolidation and Hybrid Coercion

Latin America, Canada, and Greenland must be brought firmly within the United States' sphere of direct influence and subjected to comprehensive strategic control.

Depending on the geopolitical orientation and identity of each country or territory, calibrated hybrid instruments will be deployed to execute a successful coercive strategy — whether through hybrid operations (e.g., Venezuela) or negotiated arrangements (e.g., potentially Greenland).

The overriding objective is to deny any Eurasian Axis power a foothold in the Western Hemisphere through which it might pursue internal destabilization, pursue balancing strategies against the United States, or establish geo-economic dominance—including control over financial systems, critical infrastructure, information environments, natural resources, and strategic maritime chokepoints. Countries such as Mexico, Venezuela, Panama, and Cuba will inevitably face the most intense pressure and the most coercive instruments Washington can bring to bear.

Europe: Burden-sharing, External Balancing, and Selective Coercion

The reallocation of American strategic resources toward the Indo-Pacific requires European states to assume substantially greater defense and security burdens in order to compensate for the U.S. strategic retrenchment. The NATO collective defense umbrella will persist, but will depend increasingly on European capabilities to deter and contain the Russian threat directed primarily at Eastern Europe and the Baltic states. Washington assesses this threat as manageable by European powers acting autonomously and is pushing them firmly in that direction. Germany, as Europe's leading economic power, plays a pivotal role in this strategic reorientation.

Middle East/Persian Gulf/North Africa: Burden-sharing and Regional Balancing

The preferred American approach is to consolidate a durable regional security architecture—centered on the Abraham Accords framework—with Israel as the preeminent regional actor, complemented by key states capable of providing a counterbalancing function: Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and potentially Iran under transformed conditions. Countries aligned with the West and integrated into this umbrella coalition would provide Washington with what it requires—under appropriate security guarantees—to contain the risk of Chinese regional influence creeping into the Persian Gulf and Eastern Mediterranean, which would, over time,

pave the way for the displacement of the United States from its position of global primacy.

For this architecture to hold, the United States must function as a credible guarantor and a reliable security patron, in order to prevent previously committed partners—such as Saudi Arabia—from pursuing hedging strategies through rapprochement with China and Russia. The ongoing effort to undermine the dollar-based international financial system through alternative transaction mechanisms and digital currencies represents an existential challenge to U.S. economic power and its capacity for global force projection.

Indo-Pacific: Denial, Deterrence, and Alliance-Based External Balancing

Alliance relationships with Indo-Pacific states form a defensive containment perimeter that constrains Beijing's freedom of strategic maneuver. States such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand, Australia, India, and the United Kingdom — through formal alliances, defense agreements, and multilateral cooperation frameworks including the Quad and AUKUS — provide the counterbalancing capacity necessary to raise the costs of Chinese coercion above any threshold at which aggressive military action or expansionist revisionism would be assessed as strategically rational by Beijing.

Regional states face a structural dilemma regarding whether to bandwagon with or balance against China, given the geographic proximity of Beijing's power, the cultural and historical ties that generate complex attraction-repulsion dynamics, and the material costs of alignment with a distant hegemon. For Washington, concentrating sufficient deterrent power in this theater—sufficient to preclude Beijing from challenging American command of the seas and freedom of navigation, or from unilaterally reshaping the regional strategic order—constitutes the operational objective of Indo-Pacific strategy.

The current architecture of American alliance commitments has, to a considerable degree, constructed a credible defensive perimeter around China. Nevertheless, two strategic gaps remain outside effective American control: to the north, Russia constitutes an uncontrolled variable; to the west, through Central Asia and Iran, a

strategic corridor provides China with an outlet toward the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf (Figure 1).

It is through this western corridor that multiple commercial, economic, and transit routes are being developed—including the Belt and Road Initiative and the International North-South Transport Corridor—whose full operationalization would deepen the integration of regional states into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). This integration, in turn, would consolidate Chinese dominance at the political, economic, and security levels across Eurasia.

Furthermore, Iran's continued advancement of uranium enrichment raises the credible prospect of nuclear weapons acquisition—representing a long-term existential threat to American regional allies and to American interests more broadly, as well as an acute existential threat to Israel. The prospect of a potential Iranian regional hegemony projecting power westward, combined with Iran's integration into the Eurasian Axis through the SCO—in a country already subject to deep Chinese economic penetration—would cross the critical threshold enabling the emergence of Chinese hegemonic dominance over the Eastern Hemisphere. This is precisely the outcome American strategy is designed to prevent.

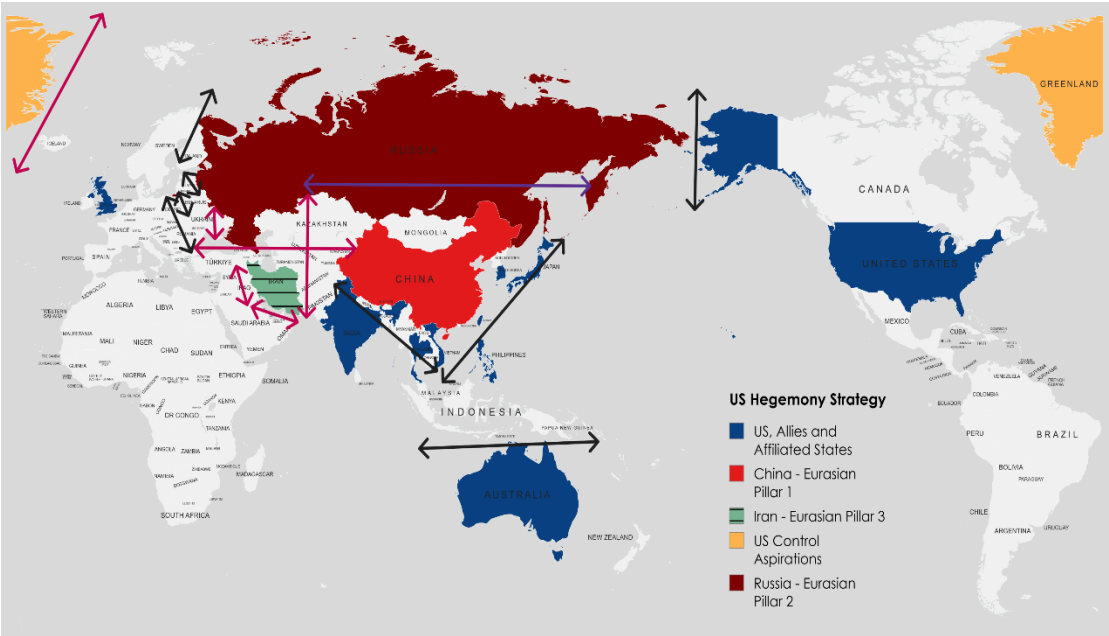


Figure 1. U.S. Alliance Containment Architecture and Strategic Gaps

Source: Author’s compilation using MapChart

In 2025, Washington sought to engineer imposed regime change in Iran as the preferred pathway toward a fundamental reorientation of Tehran's foreign policy. This objective was not achieved and remains structurally elusive. The civil unrest and uprisings suppressed by lethal force in December 2025 and January 2026 represented a strategic opportunity for the United States to exploit internally generated pressure on the regime without deploying American forces directly. This window was ultimately foreclosed by Israel's lack of operational preparedness, objections from regional allies, and domestic political constraints on President Trump. The underlying strategic problem, however, persists.

3. Managing Strategic Threat Nodes

Now, how does American policy address the strategic gaps identified above?

Iran: Hybrid Coercion and the Threshold of War

Following a preceding cycle of hybrid influence and operations that failed to achieve the primary objective of regime change, the United States has reverted to a strategy of coercion—employing brinkmanship to pressure the Iranian regime into renouncing its nuclear ambitions and, potentially, accepting an economic normalization package that would include the penetration of American corporations into Iran's energy sector and broader economic system. The prospects for Tehran accepting such terms are, for structural and identity-based reasons, highly doubtful. Integration into the Western security order—given the historical legacy, the ideological identity, and the institutional interests of the Islamic Republic's ruling elite—is an extraordinarily difficult proposition.

Within this framework, Iran's continued intransigence could serve—under an appropriate pretext—as the legitimating basis for military action, at which point the threshold of war would have been crossed. Washington's ideal outcome remains the removal of the current regime without resort to force. The Iranians, however, operating from a position of strategic desperation, would fully mobilize in the event

of an attack and impose substantial costs on the United States and its allies. The cost-benefit calculus is accordingly complex and appears structurally unfavorable to Washington.

The United States and President Trump face a genuine strategic trap in which no available option is clearly favorable. If military action is undertaken and succeeds, the most probable path runs through a protracted conflict entailing significant casualties—damaging American credibility and image internationally, generating domestic political costs, imperiling Trump's peacetime brand, and risking a severe reversal in the midterm elections. Numerous voices from academic, policy, and military communities have questioned whether decisive military victory is achievable at all. That would be a pyrrhic victory for the U.S. If military action is launched and fails, the consequences would be far more severe: the United States would sustain one of the most consequential strategic defeats in its modern history, with severely damaged deterrent credibility, a strategic setback of sufficient magnitude to embolden adversaries across all theaters, and a domestic political collapse from which Trump could not recover — with significant reverberations within elite circles.

If the United States refrains from military action, its deterrent credibility and hegemonic profile will nonetheless be degraded, as the coercive strategy will have visibly failed and every outcome the threatened use of force sought to prevent will accelerate. Every available scenario thus carries deeply negative consequences for Washington.

Russia: Wedge Strategy

Under the Trump administration, American strategy is oriented toward a negotiated settlement of the Ukraine conflict. If Russia can be persuaded that the European security posture is purely defensive and that no credible threat emanates from NATO, Moscow will face structural incentives to redirect strategic attention toward the challenge posed by China on its eastern flank. China's continued ascent will increasingly marginalize Russia, which finds itself sharing a vast, sparsely populated, and resource-rich border with an emerging hegemon. The post-war international order rested on a bipolar balance amid an ongoing ideological rivalry; that structural foundation, whatever its costs, enforced a form of systemic stability. For the United

States, a successful Russia policy could yield substantial strategic benefits at comparatively modest cost.

Despite the persistence of historical antagonism with the West, China is geographically contiguous with Russia and has already achieved significant economic penetration of Russia's Far East and key resource sectors. This dynamic constitutes a latent but potentially decisive long-term threat to Russian sovereignty and strategic autonomy—one that American strategy seeks to exploit. Should Russia come to assess the Chinese threat as sufficiently grave, it would have powerful incentives to reorient its foreign policy and balance against China, enabling Washington to fracture the Sino-Russian entente that currently provides the structural foundation of the Eurasian Axis and prevent its further consolidation.

4. Strategic Synthesis

These assessments converge on a coherent strategic design. Chinese hegemonic capacity may be disrupted through two mutually reinforcing strategic imperatives. The first is the severance and strategic reorientation of Iran, closing off the western corridor through which China extends its BRI-anchored geo-economic connectivity architecture and integrates regional states into a Chinese-led Eurasian security and economic order. The second is the prevention of a durable Sino-Russian entente, depriving Beijing of the resources, capabilities, infrastructure, and geographic reach that would constitute the material foundation of a hegemonic order spanning the Eastern Hemisphere.

The first objective may be achieved either through Iran's integration into a Western-aligned security architecture—via imposed regime change—or through coercive diplomacy, combining sustained pressure with economic incentives to achieve a negotiated strategic decoupling from China—both of which face severe structural obstacles rooted in Iranian regime identity, institutional interests, and the depth of Sino-Iranian economic integration. In the latter scenario, Iran would not cease to represent a potential threat to U.S. interests, but its strategic alignment would be fundamentally altered. In the Russian case, the indispensable precondition for realizing this design is a credible and verifiable reduction of NATO's perceived

threatening posture—a condition that strikes at the foundation of Moscow's core security requirements and that it will not easily concede. Yet even absent full rapprochement, Russian recognition of the structurally more consequential long-term threat posed by China would generate powerful incentives for strategic reorientation—potentially driving Moscow toward a de facto balancing posture against Beijing regardless of any formal accommodation with the West.

Constraining Chinese relative power and limiting Beijing's hegemonic reach across the Eastern Hemisphere constitutes the immediate priority of American grand strategy. A coercive resolution of the Iranian problem—or, preferably, a reorientation of Iran away from China without resort to force—would serve this objective directly, depriving Beijing of a critical hydrocarbon supplier and a key node in its overland connectivity infrastructure, given that China is the principal importer of Iranian energy. A negotiated, if painful, end to the Ukraine conflict would serve the same strategic purpose, alongside the parallel development of European defensive balancing capacity against Russia—maintained strictly as a deterrent posture. The objective in both cases is the fragmentation of the Eurasian Axis and the dissolution of the Chinese-led revisionist coalition.

Russia has every structural incentive to balance against China on its eastern flank, provided it concludes that no threat emanates from Europe. In this sense, the entire constellation of events currently unfolding is a derivative of the broader American effort to contain China and confine it within a manageable defensive perimeter. Should Iran and Russia remain outside this perimeter—through whatever means—this would constitute a long-term existential threat to American primacy, as the processes currently underway would continue and likely accelerate, energized by perceptions of Washington's strategic overextension and growing credibility deficit.

The United States is accordingly seeking to manage the trajectory of the emerging Eurasian Axis through strategic attrition—disrupting its internal cohesion before it consolidates further. By managing the Russian issue, Washington disengages strategically from Europe. By resolving the Iranian issue, it disengages from the Middle East. This would allow for the concentration of all necessary resources in the Indo-Pacific—while maintaining a credible forward presence in other theaters such as the

Persian Gulf—with the objective of achieving theater dominance in any potential regional conflict with China. Absent this consolidation, the dispersion of American forces across multiple theaters cannot guarantee decisive conventional superiority or escalation dominance in any single theater of operations.

Russia, Iran, and China, for their part, are actively pursuing the fragmentation and internal division of the Euro-Atlantic camp—and of the United States domestically. China's preferred posture is to sustain all three threat vectors simultaneously, keeping Washington engaged across multiple theaters while preserving maximum strategic latitude and freedom of maneuver for Beijing. In any case, all major powers operate under finite resource constraints and are subject to attrition through protracted conflicts and unresolved strategic commitments—a reality that is factored directly into the calculations of all parties.

Any American military operation against Iran risks activating Tehran's proxy network across Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Yemen—generating horizontal escalation and spreading instability across the region in ways that would compound the strategic problems of American allies and severely damage U.S. deterrent credibility. Strikes against neighboring states hosting American bases and personnel would produce similar effects. A sustained land campaign in Iran's complex terrain risks entrapment—generating significant casualties, attritional costs, and severe reputational damage. A purely punitive campaign — operationally rational but strategically myopic — would be counterproductive, as it risks consolidating domestic Iranian support behind the regime while generating precisely the regional escalation dynamics, reputational costs, and perception of American aggression that Washington seeks to avoid — with the prevention of proxy spillover remaining highly uncertain. Even a pyrrhic military victory would entail enormous occupation and state-reconstruction costs; outright defeat would be catastrophic for American deterrence globally.

Under what conditions, then, would a coercive strategy against Iran achieve its strategic objectives—compelling Tehran to accept Washington's core demand: the diminution of Chinese relative power and the reestablishment of a regional balance favorable to the American-led coalition? Such conditions would require pre-existing organized channels to internal Iranian actors prepared to facilitate regime change—

actors that Washington would be positioned to support logistically and militarily. The diplomatic negotiations currently underway function partly as a delaying tactic, buying escalation space for American military preparations to be completed, while logic dictates that an exit pathway should be offered to the regime to enable a negotiated departure. If this proves unachievable, a renewed cycle of civil unrest and popular mobilization—under the military umbrella of concentrated American power in the region—would create the conditions under which the desired political transformation could be precipitated. An alternative scenario would involve coercing the regime into accepting strategic decoupling from China—potentially including external management of Iran's energy resources—a demand tantamount to the effective strategic surrender of Tehran's ruling elite, which appears structurally improbable.

The second scenario that could justify the current military concentration would involve a coordinated strategic understanding with Russia aimed at simultaneous de-escalation and strategic settlement on both fronts. In this framework, Russia would receive credible reassurances regarding the NATO threat threshold and would be permitted to consolidate its territorial gains in Ukraine—gains that Ukraine cannot reverse unilaterally absent the direct involvement of NATO combat forces. An exit pathway for the Iranian regime would be constructed, analogous to the precedent established in the case of Bashar al-Assad. Russia's tacit acquiescence in such an arrangement could yield long-term strategic dividends—both with respect to Iranian participation in commercial transit corridors and regarding the sanctions' architecture, which could be partially restructured or circumvented through agreed channels. In any case, an American-Russian entente aimed at constraining Chinese power is structurally feasible and broadly consistent with the core interests of both parties. Is such a scenario plausible? In the absence of full information, definitive conclusions are difficult to sustain. Whether any form of backchannel understanding has been established between Trump and Putin will become evident in due course. The requisite level of mutual trust is certainly not yet present; the arrangement would be difficult to construct. Yet it is not beyond the realm of the historically possible.

If some form of coordination exists between Washington and internal Iranian actors, and/or with Russia, the expected operational outcome would be limited and targeted

strikes designed to inflict sufficient pain on the regime to facilitate its removal—while the large-scale military concentration, beyond its coercive signaling function, would serve to prevent the spread of regional chaos and contain potential escalation within manageable parameters. In this context, there may also be some form of coordinated effort with Turkey regarding the stabilizing role it could play in a post-regime transition period. Beyond these scenarios, however, and setting aside the prospect of a rapid military victory, an invasion of Iran would constitute a reckless strategic gamble for the United States. Nevertheless, Iran's progressive absorption into Beijing's multilateral frameworks and geo-economic instruments—at both the economic and military levels—underscores the strategic imperative of resolving the Iranian question by one means or another. If President Trump has no ace up his sleeve —no arrangement with Russia, no credible internal Iranian partners—he may ultimately be driven toward a course of action that is politically and strategically catastrophic, plunging the United States into a protracted conflict with asymmetric and potentially uncontrollable costs for all parties.

Conclusion

What is the most probable outcome? If no agreement with Russia is achieved and no viable internal regime-change scenario materializes, the logical course is for the United States to avoid a ground invasion—the approach Washington effectively followed throughout the preceding period, up through the suppressed uprisings of January 2026. Nevertheless, the uranium enrichment trajectory and the accelerating depth of Chinese penetration into Iran—which has already prompted the current concentration of naval and air assets near Iranian borders—demonstrate that the architects of American strategy assess the consolidation of Iranian-Chinese integration as approaching a threshold that could enable Chinese regional hegemony and power projection toward the Mediterranean, via Iran's territory and the Shiite political network, whose capabilities would be multiplied exponentially by nuclear acquisition. China would be able to apply strategic pressure to U.S. and its allies using Iran’s assets.

This prospect—the incapacity of regional powers (Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel, the UAE) to effectively balance a nuclear-capable, Chinese-backed Iran, and the potential emergence of Chinese hegemonic dominance across the Greater Middle East—must be prevented. The strategic situation in Iran must therefore be transformed, by one means or another. The modality for achieving this objective will be determined by the respective risk assessments and cost-benefit calculations associated with each available option. A ground invasion of Iranian territory would signal the exhaustion of every other available pathway.

American grand strategy thus seeks to consolidate and extend U.S. primacy through a coherent if demanding strategic design: the management of the Russian and Iranian problems to enable strategic retrenchment from Europe and the Middle East, the concentration of decisive capabilities in the Indo-Pacific, and the denial of Chinese hegemonic consolidation across the Eastern Hemisphere. The foundational logic is one of burden reduction—through burden-sharing in Europe, external balancing and coercive statecraft in the Middle East, and alliance-based deterrence and denial in the Indo-Pacific—in service of a single overriding objective: preserving American primacy in an era of intensifying great power competition. Contemporary events—including efforts to obstruct BRI connectivity, to control strategic chokepoints, critical technologies, and natural resources, and the management of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict all point to a comprehensive, theater-spanning effort to constrain Chinese relative power and prevent the emergence of a Chinese-led Eurasian order.

The mobilization against Iran reflects Washington's assessment that Iranian behavior is contributing directly to the maximization of Chinese relative power and to the erosion of American balancing capacity. A fundamental transformation of Iran's political alignment is assessed as strategically imperative, and the United States appears prepared to threaten force to achieve it—having already failed through covert operations, economic pressure, and the exploitation of internal unrest. The lowest-cost pathway to imposed regime change—or, minimally, to a decisive reorientation of Iranian foreign policy, since the fall of the regime alone would be insufficient—remains the preferred course of action. Crossing the threshold of war remains the option of last resort. Yet the strategic costs of inaction will compound over time:

deferring decisive action now will produce substantially higher costs in the future, at a moment when intervention will be judged still more urgent.

The prevention of a durable Sino-Russian alignment is consistent with the structural realities and the national interests of both Russia and the United States, given the genuine long-term threat posed by Chinese hegemonic emergence—a threat that is existentially real for Moscow. Should coercive pressure on Iran prove insufficient, a strategic understanding with Russia could foreclose the need for military invasion and create conditions for managed de-escalation. Would Russia prefer a Western-aligned Iran? Ideally not. But if Chinese power is assessed as sufficiently threatening— and the strategic benefits of the current cooperation with Iran as correspondingly diminished— Moscow would face compelling incentives to act accordingly. A potential American-Russian strategic understanding would therefore constitute the decisive variable—one whose resolution would simultaneously unlock a pathway toward strategic settlement of the Ukrainian conflict and fundamentally alter the structural foundations of the Eurasian Axis.

Final Assessment

If Washington has credible internal Iranian partners and some form of strategic understanding with Moscow, the most probable scenario—and the only strategically sound one—is that of limited, targeted strikes against symbolic nodes of regime power: Revolutionary Guard command-and-control structures, nuclear program infrastructure, and the institutional architecture of the regime's ideological legitimacy. The purpose of such strikes would not be military neutralization but political destabilization—producing a shock of sufficient depth to reactivate the existing fault lines within the regime, reignite the latent movements of internal resistance that were suppressed by lethal force in December 2025 and January 2026, and generate the conditions under which political transition becomes achievable from below—under the umbrella of American military concentration in the region, functioning simultaneously as a coercive signal and as a firewall against regional escalation. This, constitutes the most probable operational scenario—the only one that combines

acceptable cost with strategic outcomes sufficient to the purposes of American grand strategy. For the alternative—a full-scale invasion with ground forces on Iranian territory—is not merely high-risk: it is a self-defeating choice. The geography, the demographic depth, the proxy network extending across Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, and Syria, and the lessons of every preceding Western military campaign in the wider region converge inexorably on the same conclusion: such an operation would end in the strategic nightmare of entrapment, consuming the resources, credibility, and political will that Washington requires elsewhere, and delivering to Beijing precisely what American strategy has made its central objective to prevent.



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