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## The dangerous new call for regime change in Beijing

he world is a tense place these days, with Europe consumed by its biggest land

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war since 1945 and conflict continuing to convulse the Middle East.

These tensions would pale into insignificance, however, if a third arena were to **ZAKARIA** erupt — in Asia, involving the United States and China. Those tensions have in fact calmed down in recent months as both Washington and Beijing have sought to stabilize their relationship. But there are now cries in Washington to change

In an essay in Foreign Affairs, Matt Pottinger and Mike Gallagher argue that the United States should adopt a Cold War-style containment policy toward China, a strategy whose goal should be a victory that would encourage the Chinese people to "explore new models of development and governance."

Pottinger acknowledged on my CNN show last week that "an effective U.S. strategy might naturally lead to some form of regime collapse." Pottinger was Donald Trump's senior-most aide on China policy, and Gallagher, a former congressman, chaired the House select committee on China. Their views will likely shape the next Republican administration.

Pottinger and Gallagher argue that President Biden's strategy managing competition with China — does not go nearly far enough. The authors accuse the Biden administration of pursuing a 1970s-style détente policy toward China when it should be pursuing a 1980s-style Reaganite policy designed to push Beijing to the brink. According to them, we should welcome more friction and tension with

This is an important essay because it lavs out clearly the alternative strategy being proposed by some on the right. By putting their cards on the table, Pottinger and Gallagher help us understand the reckless, dangerous and utterly impractical nature of their preferred policy.

China today bears little resemblance to the Soviet Union of the 1970s and 1980s. The Soviet Union was an unnatural empire, cobbled together after World War II, with a decrepit economic model that had started to fail by the mid-1970s. China is the world's second largest economy and largest trading nation.

Unlike the Soviet Union's totally state-owned economy, China has a mixture of private and public sector. Ninety-two% of China's exports come from a vibrant private sector, including 42% from firms with foreign investors. Despite its recent troubles, the Chinese economy is still growing at around 5% and, because of its size, is likely to stay the world's second most important economy for decades.

The Soviet Union was an isolated economy, whereas China is deeply integrated into the global system. Trade between the United States and the

U.S.S.R. peaked at several billion dollars a year. China and the United States do that much trade every few days. The U.S.S.R.'s GDP was around \$3.2 trillion at its peak, roughly 7.5% of world GDP.

Today, China's GDP is about 20% of global

Most fundamentally, the Soviet Union was largely a natural resource economy — a Siberian Saudi Arabia — deriving much of its growth from extractive industries like oil, gas, coal, nickel and aluminum. China is a diversified manufacturing powerhouse with an increasingly sophisticated information technology industry that is second only to the United States.

In fact, looking back, it's clear that in the 1970s, the U.S.S.R.'s economy had stalled, before receiving a last lifeline when global oil prices quadrupled. By the 1980s, oil prices had collapsed - and then so did the Soviet Union.

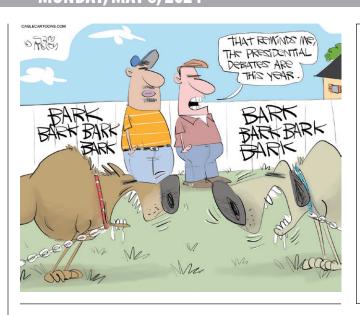
Were the United States

to embark on a policy of containment, it would likely find itself alone. China is the largest trading partner of over 120 countries around the world, far more than the United States. And most of these countries are eager to maintain good ties with Beijing. Eighty-two% of Nigerians, for example, say Chinese investment has been a boon to their economy. Even European nations - America's closest allies — have made clear that they view China as much as a partner as they do a rival. French President Emmanuel Macron noted last year that even in the worst-case situation of a conflict over Taiwan, Europe should be careful not to mimic U.S. hostility toward Beijing. And while he was criticized for those remarks, as one German businessman noted to me, "We all privately believe what Macron said publicly.' German Chancellor Olaf Scholz was in China last month, hoping to deepen economic ties between the two countries.

American strategies of regime change have rarely worked. Think of Cuba, Venezuela, North Korea, Iraq and Afghanistan. And they are unlikely to work this time, especially in a country like China, where the regime is broadly credited with bringing major economic progress for its people. After decades of poverty and misery, average incomes in China grew ninefold from 1978 to 2015.

The current bellicosity on the right reminds me of the growing demands for regime change against Iraq two decades ago. But this would be even worse. Because of China's size and engagement with the world, a strategy of containment and overthrow would take the United States down a hair-raising path. Sustained confrontation would unravel the global economy, risk isolating

the United States, and



## IN MY VIEW GUIDELINES

In My View is a column for readers. Criteria for accepting In My Views are largely subjective and at the discretion of the editorial board of the Messenger-Inquirer. Generally, content must require the space (350 to 850 words), which is substantially longer than letters to the editor. The subject must appeal to a wider audience, usually be about a local issue and the column should clearly argue a point and present an easily understood point of view. Assertions of facts should be accompanied by attributions. After submission, the writer may be asked to reduce the column to letter length (250 words or less) if the longer length is

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## 2024 electorate more interesting than either candidate

ike the Gorgons in Greek mythology whose glances could turn people to stone, today's sour candidates have calcified our presidential politics with their glowering contest. "Rancor," said José Ortega y Gasset, "is an outpouring of a feeling of inferiority." Both men have much about which to feel inferior. The electorate, however, is at least

interesting. Until recently, presidential politics was significantly shaped by regional differences that were Civil War residues. In 1968, the Republicans' "Southern strategy" (following 25 years of steady gains in the South) facilitated victory in four of the next five, and five of the next seven, presidential elections. But in 2008, Barack Obama received a larger percentage of the nation's White vote than Democratic nominees Michael S. Dukakis, Al Gore and John F. Kerry won in 1988, 2000 and 2004, respectively. In 2020, Donald Trump won at least 56% in 18 states but not in Florida (51.2), Texas (52.1) or South Carolina (55.1).

Today, the nation has newer class-based and culture-fueled divisions, but is not happier for having

somewhat transcended regionalism: There are battleground states

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(Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Georgia, Arizona, Nevada) in the North, South, East and West.

When George W. Bush was reelected in 2004, Ohio was the only large state he carried outside the South.

(His next most populous non-Southern victory was in Indiana.) Regional differences have not lost their salience, but Obama won Florida and Virginia twice, North Carolina once, and in 2012 received 44% of both Mississippi's and South Carolina's votes.

In 2016, Hillary Clinton became a harbinger and casualty — of today's ongoing class-based realignment. If her White working-class turnout and percentages of support had matched those of Obama in 2012, she would have won Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Florida and the presidency. She would have won Wisconsin and Michigan if she had matched Obama's 2012 turnout in Milwaukee and Detroit.

Because so many Democratic voters are in California (13.7% of the party's national popular

vote total in 2020) and a few other noncompetitive states (e.g., Illinois, New York), the party probably must win the national popular vote by more than 3 percentage points to win 270 electoral votes. Oddities abound. Gerald Ford came closer to defeating Jimmy Carter in the 1976 popular vote than Mitt Romney came to defeating Obama in 2012. Clinton, losing to Trump in 2016, won the popular vote by a larger margin (2.1 points) than John F. Kennedy did defeating Richard M. Nixon in 1960.

In 56 of the 70 years prior to tumultuous 1968 (marked by assassinations, urban riots and a polarizing ground war of attrition on the Asian mainland with a conscript army), the federal government was united: One party or the other held the presidency and both houses of Congress. In the subsequent 56 years, there has been unified government for only 17 years.

In the 62 years from 1932 to 1994, there were Democratic House majorities for all but four years (and Senate majorities for 10 years). After Democrats controlled the House of Representatives for 40 years (1954-1994), control changed three times in 24 years. Now, for the first time, control has changed under five consecutive presidents

(under Bill Clinton in 1994, Bush in 2006, Obama in 2010, Trump in 2018, Joe Biden in 2022). Before ticket-splitting became unusual, Nixon trounced George McGovern in 1972 by 23.2 points, and Ronald Reagan defeated Walter Mondale in 1984 by 18.2 points, yet in both cases Democrats retained control of the House.

It is asserted that independents will decide the 2024 election. Romney might be skeptical. In 2012, he won independents by 5 points but lost the popular vote by 4 points. Stasis is, however, notable: 36 states and the District of Columbia have voted for the same party in this century's six presidential elections.

If Biden loses, he will be the fifth incumbent defeated in the past 100 years (Herbert Hoover, Ford, Carter, George H.W. Bush). If Biden wins, he might be the first incumbent since Dwight Eisenhower in 1956 to win reelection while losing control of both houses of Congress. (Although Republicans seem to be trying to lose the House.)

Finally, for 50 years, the percentage of Americans calling themselves moderate has remained constant, around 40. Yet, remarkably, the ascent of glowering Gorgons has turned moderates away from politics.

## Call the campus protests what they are

campuses are spurring debate about U.S. foreign policy, free speech and the purpose of

higher education. But there's a more basic question that journalists, especially, have to answer: What should we call these protests?

The Associated Press says the demonstrators are "antiwar protesters." CBS News has used the same label and has also labeled the protesters "supporters of Palestinian rights." Many outlets including The Post, USA Today, Axios, CNN, Politico and the New York Times — have gone with "pro-Palestinian."

These aren't neutral, or accurate,

descriptions. A leading group backing the demonstrations, Students for Justice in Palestine, exulted in the terrorist attack "against the Zionist enemy" on Oct. 7. Protesters at George Washington University and Cornell University have been chanting, "There is only one solution: intifada revolution." ("Globalize the intifada" is another popular slogan.) Terrorist-group regalia has been spotted at protests at Yale, Princeton, Stanford and the University of Minnesota. At UCLA, a Jewish student claimed he was chased by a group of protesters for intruding on their turf.

Perhaps because of its location, Columbia University in New York has had the most publicized demonstrations. It's also a place where Jewish students have been subjected to such chants as "We don't want no Zionists here!" and "the 7th of October is going to be every day for you!"

These are too numerous to count as isolated incidents, and they help

he protests engulfing many college to explain why Jonathan Greenblatt, the head of the Anti-Defamation

League, has labeled the Columbia demonstrators "pro-Hamas activists."

> Obviously, not every protester at Columbia or elsewhere approves of these aggressive acts and sentiments. After speaking with dozens of student protesters around the country, Jeremy W. Peters of the New York Times reported that many of them condemned

Hamas — though many others "declined to engage" when asked about it. And while many supporters of Israel have called the protests antisemitic, many Jewish students are

participating in them. What's fair to say is that peace is not the organizing principle of the protests. The protesters at Columbia have listed several official demands. They don't include that Hamas release all its hostages. It's no answer to note that they have no influence over Hamas. Absurd as it might be, the conceit of the protest is that the university is in some meaningful sense an actor in the Middle East. The protesters have no influence over Israel, either, but it

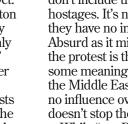
While "pro-Palestinian" is better than "antiwar," it, too, fails to convey the point of the protests. For one thing, it's possible to be concerned for that matter, while also opposing a movement that can't bring itself to oppose the events of Oct. 7. The massacres of that day have, after all, been a proximate cause of immense Palestinian suffering. The Columbia protesters have not hesitated, either, to shun Palestinians and Palestinian

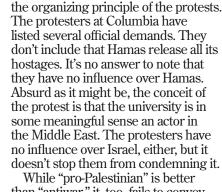
confrontational. The protests are not even bringing attention to the plight of Gazans. They're bringing attention to the protesters (and sometimes to their dietary needs, as in the case of the Columbia students who sought food and drink from the administration they are protesting against). Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) implicitly acknowledged the point by complaining that the media is providing too much coverage to the campus drama and not enough to the conflict in the Middle East.

How college officials and law enforcement should respond to the protesters does not turn on whether we see them as "antiwar" or as something more sinister. Even the antisemites among the protesters have free-speech rights. And all of the protesters, whatever their views, should comply with the restrictions on the time, place and manner of protest that the law and campus rules impose — or be willing to face the academic and legal consequences. Blocking other students' ability to traverse the campus, or threatening them with violence, ought not be tolerated.

The rules governing these protests should be neutral with respect to their viewpoint. But the public is under no obligation to refrain from judging that viewpoint, and the media is under no obligation to provide the protesters with public relations assistance. If the extremism on display in the protests were associated with the right rather than the left, I suspect the media would be covering it with less sympathy. The anodyne descriptions journalists are instead giving, such as "pro-Palestinian," will only deepen distrust of the news media in the center and on the right.

The media should call the protests what they are: anti-Israel.





about Palestinians, and critical of Israel Americans they consider insufficiently

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