

Progressive Grand Strategy: A Synthesis and Critique

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Forthcoming in the Journal of Global Security Studies

Abstract

This paper evaluates emerging progressive ideas about U.S. grand strategy. Progressives' distinctive analytic premise is that structural inequality undermines America's national interests. To combat this problem, progressives recommend retrenching U.S. primacy in a manner that resembles the grand strategy of restraint. But progressives also seek to build a more democratic international order that can facilitate new forms of global collective action. Progressives thus advocate ambitious international goals at the same time as they reject the institutional arrangements that the United States has traditionally used to promote its global agenda. No other grand strategy shares those attributes. After articulating the core elements of a progressive grand strategy, the paper explores that strategy's unique risks and tradeoffs and raises several concerns about the theoretical and practical viability of progressive ideas.

For input on prior drafts, I thank Daniel Bessner, Stephen Brooks, Mike Poznansky, Megan Stewart, and Bill Wohlforth. Margaret Doyle, Emilia Hoppe, James Lawrence, Annie Michalski, and Owen Ritz provided excellent research assistance. Funding from the French Agence Nationale de la Recherche (under the Investissement d'Avenir programme, ANR-17-EURE-0010) is gratefully acknowledged.

Progressive Grand Strategy: A Synthesis and Critique

Progressives have become increasingly assertive in calling for structural change to U.S. foreign policy. These ideas now regularly appear in left-wing journals such as *Dissent*, *Jacobin*, and *n+1* along with mainstream outlets such as *Foreign Affairs*, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*. Progressives are expanding their institutional presence in foreign policy debates through organizations such as Common Defense, Just Foreign Policy, the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, and Win Without War. Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren brought national attention to progressive foreign policy during the 2020 presidential primaries. Progressives have reportedly influenced several of President Joe Biden's personnel appointments and policy decisions (Detsch and Gramer 2020; Ward 2021). These are just some of the ways in which progressives shape contemporary foreign policy discourse.

Yet, international relations scholars have been slow to engage with progressive ideas. As of this writing, none of the top academic journals in the field – such as *International Organization*, *International Security*, *International Studies Quarterly*, the *Journal of Global Security Studies*, the *Journal of Strategic Studies*, or *Security Studies* – has published an article explicitly devoted to analyzing progressive views of international politics. A recent *Foreign Affairs* article by Nexon (2018) argued that progressive foreign policy remains an “ambiguous ideological construct.” Recent editions of the *Oxford Handbook of Grand Strategy* (Balzacq and Krebs 2021) and the *Oxford Handbook of International Security* (Gheciu and Wohlforth 2018) do not explicitly discuss progressive ideas.

Meanwhile, most existing writings on progressive foreign policy are short-form articles that do not draw clear contrasts with the content of other grand strategies.¹ That can make it difficult to say exactly what progressives add to existing arguments about retrenching America’s defense posture, most notably the literature on restraint (Posen 2015).² Similarly, while progressives often employ unusually intense anti-militaristic rhetoric, their critiques of recent U.S. military interventions do not obviously depart from the content of more conventional grand strategies, such as deep engagement, which did not prescribe the invasion of Iraq, armed nation-building in Afghanistan, or humanitarian intervention in Libya (Brooks and Wohlforth 2016, 150-151).

The rising salience of progressive voices in foreign policy debates has thus not yet triggered much systematic discussion of how progressive ideas compare to other visions of U.S. grand strategy. This paper seeks to fill that gap by asking three questions. What unique theoretical and empirical assumptions characterize the progressive worldview? How do those assumptions generate policy prescriptions that other grand strategies do not recommend? How would the benefits and risks of a progressive grand strategy compare to those of rival frameworks? In addressing these questions, the paper explains what makes progressive ideas new and relevant for analyzing America’s global role, while also raising fundamental concerns about the theoretical and strategic viability of progressives’ foreign policy agenda.

¹ As of this writing in June 2022, the most detailed work on progressive foreign policy is the *Texas National Security Review*’s December 2018 roundtable on “The Future of Progressive Foreign Policy.” This excellent group of essays provides valuable foundations for understanding and critiquing progressive ideas. However, it does not bring these views into conversation with the literature on grand strategy. For example, it mentions restraint only once (in a footnote) and it does not mention or cite the literature on deep engagement.

² As of this writing in June 2022, the most extensive published analysis of the difference between progressive foreign policy and restraint is a two-paragraph treatment in Priebe et al. (2021, 10-11). Deudney and Ikenberry (2021, 22-24) devote five paragraphs to describing the progressive worldview, but they do not explain how that worldview grounds policy prescriptions that differ from those of restraint.

The core idea that this paper examines is the claim that structural inequality undermines U.S. interests. For these purposes, structural inequality refers to any system of social relations that inherently privileges some people over others. Progressives criticize structural inequality at three levels of analysis: across a global system dominated by the United States, within countries governed by undemocratic elites, and within a U.S. foreign policy establishment that does not always represent a majority of American voters. Progressives argue that these power structures promote international conflict, impede international cooperation, and prioritize elite interests over ordinary citizens' welfare. This worldview departs from grand strategies based on realist theories of international politics, such as restraint and deep engagement, because realists argue that the sociopolitical composition of states is largely incidental to their international behavior. Progressives also disagree with liberal internationalists who believe that American power and global leadership facilitate international cooperation. Progressives' focus on the causes and consequences of structural inequality thus constitutes a distinctive lens for studying the central problems of grand strategy.

Progressives' foreign policy proposals generally align with the grand strategy of restraint when it comes to cutting the defense budget, retrenching America's security commitments, and forswearing wars of choice. But progressives go beyond the prescriptions of restraint in arguing that the United States should promote global collective action to mitigate climate change, to combat rising authoritarianism, and to raise living standards for the global working class. To pursue those goals, progressives recommend democratizing the international system – defined here as giving other countries and groups that represent the working class greater say in managing global affairs – which includes restructuring, replacing, or removing intergovernmental organizations that reinforce U.S. primacy. Progressives thus advocate pursuing ambitious

international goals at the same time as they reject the institutional arrangements that the United States has traditionally used to promote its global agenda. No other grand strategy shares those attributes.

Of course, progressives are a diverse group of people who do not all believe the same things. Two such distinctions are worth highlighting up front. First, some progressives argue that the United States should adopt “transhumanistic” goals of promoting global welfare and distributive justice as ends in themselves (Bessner 2019) – including arguments about how the idea of national sovereignty is itself a problematic source of structural inequality (Bronner 2017) – while other progressives defend their arguments on narrower criteria of maximizing U.S. national interests. This was one of the principal differences between the foreign policy views of Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren during the 2020 presidential primaries, with Warren generally defending her views with respect to promoting U.S. interests (Patrick 2019).

This paper focuses on interest-based arguments, because those arguments are directly relevant to the existing literature on grand strategy. Debates about global justice are important in their own right, but – for better or for worse – they are not what scholars of grand strategy examine. One of this paper’s main contributions is thus to demonstrate that progressives make distinctive contributions to debates about grand strategy, even if one defines those debates with respect to conventional criteria of promoting America’s security, prosperity, and freedom.

A second cleavage among progressive foreign policy analysts involves the extent to which the United States should prioritize relations with democracies. Some progressives, such as Jackson (2018) and Walzer (2018), argue that the United States should reorganize its international relationships to promote democratic solidarity. Other progressives, such as Bessner and Greenberg (2019) and Wertheim and Adler (2020), believe that marginalizing illiberal states would limit

prospects for stimulating global collective action. This is arguably the most important disagreement among proponents of progressive foreign policy, and the paper presents both sides of the debate.³

The rest of this paper proceeds in three stages. Its first section describes progressive grand strategy in greater depth. The paper's second section explores the most important costs and risks that a progressive grand strategy could generate. In the short run, implementing progressives' recommendations would likely sacrifice leverage over allies and international institutions that the United States could use to promote global collective action. Progressives would accept these costs in order to create a more democratic international system. But there is no historical precedent for the world order that progressives envision, so it is inherently hard to estimate the chances that this wager will pay off. More than any other grand strategy, the viability of progressive claims thus hinges on theoretical coherence. Yet, existing international relations scholarship offers limited foundations for explaining how the United States could retrench its military posture while simultaneously promoting ambitious new forms of global political cooperation that advance U.S. national interests. This departure from conventional theoretical frameworks is part of what makes progressive ideas worth exploring, as it is possible that this line of reasoning could ultimately generate new ways of understanding world politics. At the moment, however, these claims are less well-developed than the theoretical foundations of alternative grand strategies. The paper's third section concludes by identifying a series of open questions that progressives could tackle in order to enhance the credibility of their foreign policy agenda.

³ Existing scholarship does not always observe this distinction. For example, Wright (2019) raises valid critiques of how some progressives prioritize democratic solidarity, but it is incorrect to say that this is a problem for progressive foreign policy writ large, as many progressives reject the ideas that Wright critiques.

What is progressive grand strategy?

A grand strategy is a conceptual framework that explains how nation-states can employ military and non-military instruments of foreign policy to advance their core interests (Brands 2014, 3-4). Debates over what grand strategy the United States should pursue thus help to establish organizing principles for evaluating the merits of specific foreign policy decisions (Silove 2018, 39-42). For example, the concept of containment anchored U.S. foreign policy decision-making throughout most of the Cold War. Though leaders frequently disagreed on the details of where and how to stop Soviet aggression, the idea of orienting U.S. foreign policy around containing communist advances – rather than rolling back Moscow’s influence – provided a conceptual schema for linking specific foreign policy choices to the broader pursuit of America’s long-term interests (Gaddis 2005). Thus, even if it is unrealistic to expect that scholarship on grand strategy could provide a comprehensive blueprint for foreign policy decision-making (Betts 2021), these debates reveal fundamental disagreements about what role the United States should play in world politics.

In order to understand how progressives offer distinctive organizing principles for evaluating foreign policy choices, it is necessary to compare progressive ideas to prominent alternatives. To do this, Figure 1 presents a typology of grand strategies arrayed on two dimensions. The first dimension captures whether or not a strategy recommends military retrenchment. For these purposes, “military retrenchment” involves significantly reducing defense capabilities and attenuating America’s core security commitments in Europe and East Asia. The second dimension in Figure 1 captures whether or not a strategy advocates promoting new forms of global political cooperation, defined as sustained efforts to work with other countries in order to promote

		Does the strategy advocate promoting new forms of global political cooperation?	
		<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
Does the strategy advocate military retrenchment?	<i>No</i>	Liberal internationalism Conservative internationalism	Deep engagement
	<i>Yes</i>	Progressivism	Restraint Offshore balancing

Figure 1. *A typology of grand strategies.*

objectives that are not directly related to U.S. national security.⁴ These are certainly not the only ways to classify grand strategies, but they reveal how progressives occupy a unique space in contemporary discourse on the subject.

The grand strategy of deep engagement argues that America’s military capabilities and security commitments help to suppress security competition among states. Proponents of deep engagement also argue that America’s participation in intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and trade networks helps to “lock” other countries into patterns of cooperation that favor U.S. interests. Deep engagement thus assumes that the United States would suffer substantial losses if it retrenched its

⁴ For example, efforts to enhance military cooperation with NATO would not qualify as “political” cooperation, because they are directly related to questions about force projection and military deterrence. Efforts to combat global climate change would qualify as “political” cooperation, because, even if climate change could ultimately influence drivers of political violence, that relationship involves a complex mixture of intervening variables (Scheffran et al. 2012).

current military and political commitments (Brooks and Wohlforth 2016). Liberal internationalists share these beliefs, but they argue that the United States should also work to promote democracy, human rights, and international law (Ikenberry 2011). The key difference between deep engagement and liberal internationalism is thus largely a question of whether the United States should seek to preserve or to enlarge the liberal international order (Avey, Markowitz, and Reardon 2018, 38-45). The strategy of conservative internationalism also seeks to promote democracy, often through the use of force, whereas liberal internationalists generally seek to advance their aims by embedding other states within networks of rule-based institutions (Nau 2013).

The grand strategy of restraint argues that the United States should downsize its security commitments and military posture (Posen 2015). Restrainers believe that balance-of-power politics generally deter international aggression, and they think that potential peer competitors, such as Russia and China, pose relatively little threat to America's core interests. The grand strategy of offshore balancing also recommends reducing U.S. military capabilities and forward deployments, but it recommends maintaining an active role in shaping regional power dynamics by threatening to project power in order to contain the emergence of regional hegemony, such as a Chinese attempt to dominate East Asia (Layne 1997). Neither restraint nor offshore balancing places a priority on promoting democracy or stimulating new forms of global political cooperation.

Progressives agree with restrainers and offshore balancers in arguing that America's current military posture is excessive and potentially counterproductive. But, unlike other proponents of military retrenchment, progressives support an ambitious international agenda that involves promoting many new forms of international cooperation. The rest of this section explains how

progressives' unique position in foreign policy discourse stems from their assumptions about the sources and consequences of structural inequality.⁵

Structural inequality across the international system

The international system comprises states with massive disparities in their political, economic, and military resources. Many of the advantages that powerful states possess have historical roots in slavery, colonialism, and other exploitative practices. After World War II, the United States crafted a global order designed to promote American influence (Ikenberry 2020). Many of the institutions that support this order, such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, grant special privileges to the United States and other wealthy countries (Mastanduno 2009). The United States also regularly uses military force (Torreon and Plagakis 2021), economic sanctions (Mulder 2018), and covert action (O'Rourke 2018) to coerce other countries.

Progressives have two primary concerns about this state of affairs. The first concern is that the current international system provides poor safeguards against abuses of political power. For instance, progressives argue that wealthy elites use international financial institutions to advance a neoliberal economic framework that suppresses working-class wages, destroys the environment, and raises the risk of global financial crises. Just as democratic theorists expect governments to

⁵ This articulation of progressives' distinct contribution to debates about grand strategy synthesizes the views of scholars and policymakers who explicitly identify themselves as adopting "progressive" stances towards foreign policy issues. It also draws on writings from left-wing journals (e.g., *Jacobin*) and progressive think tanks (e.g., Win Without War), even if those writings do not explicitly use the word "progressive" to label their foreign policy ideas. Perhaps needless to say, the paper's articulation of progressive grand strategy does not capture every foreign policy idea that progressives promote. In particular – and as noted above – the paper focuses on progressives' distinctive contributions to debates about U.S. foreign policy, and thus pays limited attention to areas in which progressive views largely align with prescriptions of other grand strategies, as with rejecting the Iraq War or reducing military expenditures.

work better when they employ checks and balances, progressives believe that circumscribing the influence of wealthy states would improve the functioning of intergovernmental institutions (Buchanan and Keohane 2006; Stiglitz 2008; Fung 2017; Gould 2018; Galbraith 2018).

Progressives also believe that structural inequality in the international system impedes global collective action. To the extent that the United States is viewed as a hegemon – especially as a hegemon whose power is associated with historical exploitation, coercive diplomacy, and the excessive use of military force – this may erode other countries’ willingness to collaborate with the United States in tackling global problems. Many of today’s most pressing global problems, such fighting climate change and preventing the spread of pandemic disease, depend on effective cooperation between the Global North and the Global South. Progressives argue that the United States has undermined prospects for this cooperation by abusing its position of global dominance (Moyn 2017; Adler and Bessner 2020; Bacevich and Vine 2021). Progressives argue that this behavior makes it effectively impossible to convince other countries that the United States is a benign hegemon.⁶

The idea that American primacy impedes global collective action stands in sharp contrast to scholarship on liberal internationalism. Liberal internationalists generally argue that U.S. power and leadership plays a crucial role in stabilizing the international environment and promoting economic cooperation (Keohane 1984). In this view, U.S. power does not impede global collective action – it facilitates global collective action. Similarly, proponents of deep engagement argue that

⁶ This argument resembles existing scholarship on “soft balancing,” which argues that weaker states will naturally seek opportunities to impede a hegemon’s foreign policy agenda (Pape 2005; Walt 2006). But progressives go beyond arguments about soft balancing in two ways. First, they argue that the problem stems not just from the material fact of American primacy, but from perceptions that the United States exploits other countries. Second, progressives focus not just on how weaker states push back against existing U.S. power, but on how structural inequality undermines opportunities for crafting new forms of global collective action.

other countries are more likely to cooperate with the United States because America has unique resources to deter security competition (Brooks and Wohlforth 2016, 92-94, 155-189). Liberal internationalism and deep engagement thus view U.S. primacy as a source of stable cooperation.

In order to mitigate structural inequality across the international system, progressives generally recommend *democratizing the international order* in terms of giving other states and groups that represent the working class greater say in managing global affairs. One tangible way to do this would be for wealthy states to surrender special privileges at IGOs, such as the United States' ability to appoint the President of the World Bank. Progressives generally support expanding the membership and mandate of IGOs to promote the interests of the global working class – for instance, by giving labor unions official status as IGO participants. In other cases, progressives support eliminating IGOs altogether, particularly the Bretton Woods organizations that progressives see as impossible to disentangle from U.S. hegemony (Zurn 2000; Verweij and Josling 2003; Stiglitz and Tsuda 2007; Matthews 2019; Rana 2019). More generally, progressives want foreign policy decision-makers to place less emphasis on using military, economic, and political power to coerce other states, on the grounds that these actions drain U.S. legitimacy and crowd out opportunities to develop new forms of international cooperation.⁷

Progressives also argue that the United States should redress grievances about prior exploitation by *increasing efforts to improve outcomes for the global working class*. These proposals typically involve substantial increases in U.S. foreign aid, devoting large-scale expenditures to “jump-start” global collaboration in fighting climate change, and accepting greater refugee resettlement. Some progressives argue that the United States is morally obligated to take these steps to compensate for

⁷ This is one of the left-wing journal, *Jacobin*'s core themes: <https://www.jacobinmag.com/category/imperialism>.

its past behavior. But these policies could also serve U.S. interests if they encouraged other countries to amplify their own investments toward combating global problems.⁸

Finally, and perhaps most obviously, progressives recommend significant *military retrenchment*. These proposals are generally similar to the security architecture of restraint: they involve substantial cuts to the defense budget, retracting security guarantees to allies in Europe and East Asia, removing overseas bases, and rejecting military interventions for purposes beyond self-defense.⁹ Progressives stake these arguments on many of the same logics that restrainers have developed, such as the idea that the United States has limited security interests at stake in regional conflicts, or the claim that security commitments are more likely to entrap the United States in foreign wars than to deter threats to America's core interests. But progressives also believe that retrenching U.S. power would have other, important effects when it comes to promoting global political cooperation. This is a substantial departure from the grand strategy of restraint, which focuses more narrowly on issues that are directly related to U.S. national security, and is thus not explicitly designed to pursue goals such as combating climate change, promoting global health, or insulating the world economy against financial crises (Posen 2015, 1-2). Progressives thus occupy a unique position in contemporary discourse on grand strategy by placing a high priority on stimulating global collective action while simultaneously arguing that U.S. primacy impedes that goal.

⁸ Murphy (2017), Peace Action (2019), Sanders (2018a), Rose (2018), Kizer (2019), Mount (2018, 27-28), Schmidt (2019), Bessner (2020).

⁹ Beinart (2018), Schwarz (2018), Barnes, Koshgarian, and Siddique (2019), Ujayli (2019), Wertheim (2020b), Bennis and Barber (2020).

Structural inequality in other countries

Structural inequality at the state level can take many forms, including the concentration of political power among elites, disparities of income and wealth, and unequal opportunities based on race, gender, ethnicity, and religion. A substantial volume of scholarship indicates that marginalizing social groups in these ways can generate grievances that lead to higher rates of insurgency and terrorism (for a review, see Hillesund et al. 2018). Higher rates of political violence can destabilize U.S. allies, disrupt economic systems, and spawn militant groups that directly attack the United States.

Structural inequality can also give elites incentives to take actions that undermine U.S. interests. Corruption distorts markets, and limiting workers' political power allows elites to maintain exploitative labor practices that weaken the competitiveness of U.S. exports. In the political realm, elites frequently mobilize nationalist sentiment, provoke resentment against other countries, and spread disinformation to distract their publics from demanding more equitable distributions of political influence and wealth. Many progressives argue that this is one of the main drivers of the recent surge of global authoritarianism, including Russian meddling in the politics of the United States and its allies (Hurlburt 2018; Sanders 2018b; Sitaraman 2019a; Mettler and Lieberman 2020).

This proposed link between structural inequality and interstate competition differs from the way that liberal internationalists and proponents of conservative primacy have traditionally analyzed democratization. For example, even though the United States helped Russia democratize after the Cold War, this transformation allowed corrupt elites to capture much of Russia's wealth. Russian President Vladimir Putin then found that stoking nationalist resentment helped to distract voters from criticizing a political and economic system that primarily benefits Russian elites. As

Sitaraman (2019a) explains it, “democratizing” Russia’s political and economic institutions ended up creating a “nationalist oligarchy” that had political incentives to compete with the West (see also Klion 2018; Warren 2019; Rana 2019.) This is an example of how progressives attribute Russia’s problematic behavior to structural inequality – and how this argument differs from the emphasis that liberal internationalists and proponents of conservative primacy have traditionally placed on the virtues of democratic governance.

Progressives generally agree on two responses to the problems posed by structural inequality within other states. First, progressives generally advocate *limiting trade with countries who have poor labor standards* or who engage in other kinds of economic exploitation (Harris 2018; Mulder 2018; Warren 2019). This would, in principle, give states incentives to raise living standards for the working class, while improving the competitiveness of U.S. exports.

Progressives also generally support *de-militarizing international cooperation*. The United States has traditionally maintained military relationships with several countries – such as Hungary, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey – whose politics feature substantial levels of political exclusion or repression. Progressives believe that U.S. military assistance to these countries entrenches the power of illiberal elites. De-emphasizing the military components of American diplomacy could also allow the United States to devote more time and resources to tackling non-military problems such as combating climate change and fighting corruption (Bessner 2018a; Warren 2019; vanden Heuvel 2019; Wertheim 2020b, 25).

Some progressives also support *privileging international collaboration with liberal regimes*. Relevant proposals include expelling Hungary and Turkey from NATO, distancing the United States from Israel and Saudi Arabia altogether, and creating a new “Alliance of Democracies” designed to promote “democratic solidarity” (Walzer 2018, 34; Jackson 2018a, 6-8; Sanders

2018a; Kizer and Miles 2018; Magsamen et al. 2018). Yet, marginalizing illiberal regimes would likely make it harder to secure those states' cooperation for tackling global problems such as climate change (Goldgeier and Jentleson 2020; Wright 2020). Moreover, if progressives are correct to argue that the recent authoritarian surge is a product of nationalist oligarchies protecting their power, then any actions the United States undertakes to marginalize illiberal regimes should only intensify political conflict with those countries. Several progressives thus argue that the pursuit of democratic solidarity would be counterproductive (Klion 2018; vanden Heuvel 2018; Bessner and Greenberg 2019; Wertheim and Adler 2020).

It is not yet clear how progressives will resolve this debate. The most plausible defense of pursuing “democratic solidarity” is that the short-run cost of antagonizing illiberal states would encourage those states to undertake reforms that advance progressives' long-term vision.¹⁰ But it is hard to see how any plausible Alliance of Democracies would give illiberal elites incentives to relinquish their hold on power, especially if those elites are as predatory as progressives claim. Progressives could articulate ways of pursuing democratic solidarity that run little risk of impeding global collective action. But it is unclear how a new network of democratic alliances could serve valuable functions without alienating non-members. A progressive grand strategy would thus likely be easier to articulate and defend without prioritizing relations with other democracies.

Progressive responses to structural inequality within other states have little overlap with other grand strategies. Restraint, offshore balancing, and deep engagement are all grounded in a realist tradition that views the sociopolitical composition of states as being largely incidental to their

¹⁰ These measures could also protect democracies from threats such as election interference. However, it is not clear why those efforts would require reshaping alliances and IGOs in fundamental ways, and this argument is largely unrelated to progressive concerns about structural inequality.

international behavior (Quinn 2018).¹¹ Liberal internationalists agree with progressives that states' sociopolitical compositions shape their international behavior, but they traditionally see alliances, international institutions, and trade flows as offering crucial tools for spreading democratic values (Owen 2018). That is why the Clinton administration absorbed former Soviet states into NATO and offered China membership in the World Trade Organization.¹² The idea of restricting military and trade relationships with illiberal states thus contradicts liberal internationalists' belief that these relationships generally facilitate productive reforms. Progressives' analysis of the causes and consequences of structural inequality within other states thereby constitutes another realm in which they offer distinctive contributions to debates about grand strategy.

Structural inequality at home

The idea that “good foreign policy begins at home” is a common political refrain. But this notion holds special salience for progressives, who believe that America's history of structural inequality undermines its moral authority abroad. Progressives therefore expect that *domestic reforms that mitigate structural inequality* in the United States would have positive spillover effects in the realm of international affairs.

Progressives also sharply criticize the role that elites play in shaping U.S. foreign policy. Some formulations of this argument invoke long-standing claims about how a “military-industrial complex” steers the United States toward militaristic foreign policies that serve corporate or bureaucratic interests. Progressives also argue that the U.S. foreign policy establishment is

¹¹ Some realists oppose trade arrangements that provide relative gains to potential adversaries, but that logic is unrelated to progressive concerns about structural inequality.

¹² See, for example, the Clinton administration's 1996 *National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*.

dominated by government officials, think tanks, and pundits who adhere to a narrow range of foreign policy views and systematically marginalize voices that do not support militarized conceptions of U.S. global primacy. Progressives thus advocate several steps to *constrain the influence of foreign policy elites*. These recommendations include restricting executive authority over foreign policy-making, curtailing emergency defense appropriations, building new left-wing think tanks, de-emphasizing credentialism when appointing national security personnel, encouraging women and people of color to pursue careers in national security, and closing the “revolving door” between government service jobs and the defense industry (Beauchamp 2017; Murphy 2019; Bessner and Wertheim 2019; Shorrock 2020).

Progressives’ emphasis on domestic reform is not entirely novel: international relations scholars have debated the importance of “soft power” for decades (Dudziak 2000; Nye 2004), proponents of restraint frequently argue that America’s foreign policy elites hold misguided views (Walt 2018; Porter 2018), and it is hard to imagine that anyone opposes recruiting more capable people to work on international affairs. Yet, these reforms are much more closely related to progressives’ focus on combating structural inequality than to the analytic foundations of alternative grand strategies. As noted above, proponents of restraint, offshore balancing, and deep engagement typically base their arguments on the logic of realism, which does not grant much weight to states’ domestic political structures.¹³ And though liberal internationalists believe that social institutions shape states’ foreign policy behavior, their arguments typically rely on materialist conceptions of international political economy rather than the kind of subjective perceptions that underpin scholarship on soft power. Furthermore, proponents of deep engagement and liberal

¹³ As a rough heuristic, the terms “soft power” and “inequality” do not appear in the indices for Posen (2015) or Brooks and Wohlforth (2016). Brooks and Wohlforth briefly discuss inequality within the United States as a potential challenge to maintaining U.S. military and economic power, but not for maintaining U.S. political influence abroad.

internationalism argue that U.S. grand strategy since the end of the Cold War has generally served U.S. interests, and so these scholars have less reason for concern about the degree to which the concentration of power among foreign policy elites might skew U.S. foreign policy. Progressives' focus on analyzing and combating structural inequality thus assigns an unusually high priority to domestic reform while also connecting those efforts to a broader theoretical framework for understanding international politics. This argument represents another area in which progressives' analysis of structural inequality offers distinctive contributions to debates about grand strategy.

Risks and tradeoffs of a progressive grand strategy

All grand strategies require balancing benefit and risk. Two risks loom particularly large when evaluating progressive ideas. First, proponents of deep engagement, liberal internationalism, and conservative internationalism argue that U.S. military retrenchment would encourage other states to compete for regional hegemony. Second, liberal internationalists and other proponents of free trade argue that restricting commerce for political purposes could undermine America's economic welfare. Since these arguments are already the subject of substantial scholarly debate, resummarizing them in this space would add little value to the literature on grand strategy. This section thus explores four drawbacks with progressive grand strategy that are more novel, and thus less well-covered by existing scholarship.

First, a progressive grand strategy would undermine U.S. leverage for promoting global political cooperation in the short run. This cost could be justified in the service of restructuring the international environment in the manner that progressives envision. But the second part of this section explains why the upside of progressive grand strategy is inherently speculative given the lack of historical precedent for the kind of democratic global order that progressives aim to

cultivate. More than any alternative, the success of a progressive grand strategy depends on its theoretical coherence. Yet, the third part of this section describes how existing international relations scholarship offers limited support for claims about how the United States could advance its interests by simultaneously pursuing strategic retrenchment and promoting new forms of global political cooperation. The section concludes by describing how progressive ideas about democratizing the international system contain additional risk because these proposals would be difficult to reverse: if a democratic international system did not stimulate global collective action in the way progressives predict, then it could be hard to restore existing institutions that are already designed to coordinate international cooperation.

Short-term costs of pursuing a progressive grand strategy

Progressive grand strategy is a bet on long-term structural change. As the last section described it, progressives believe that cultivating a more democratic international order would ultimately advance America's core interests. For example, a progressive grand strategy would involve surrendering privileges in IGOs that were designed to help the United States influence other countries' behavior. If the United States wanted to stimulate global collective action in the short run, it would almost certainly be better-off promoting that objective by exploiting its power and agenda-setting authority via existing international institutions. Establishing a more democratic international order could also be a time-consuming process, particularly if the United States does not exert the kind of control that it used to facilitate building the current network of intergovernmental organizations (Keohane 1984; Ikenberry 2011).

Demilitarizing international relationships would also likely reduce America's leverage over other countries. Progressives may be right that security assistance serves to entrench the authority

of nondemocratic elites – but if the United States deliberately made its aid programs less useful to foreign governments, then those governments would have less incentive to take costly actions on America’s behalf (Gavin 2004; Norrlof 2010). This is another sense in which progressive grand strategy involves accepting short-run costs in the interests of building a more democratic global order.

Progressives could respond to these short-run costs in two ways. The first would be a “rip-the-bandaid-off” strategy of immediately retrenching U.S. military and political influence, with the expectation that this would encourage other states to participate in new forms of global collective action. This approach would entail steep losses to America’s international leverage, but potentially minimize the time it takes to get new forms of global cooperation up and running. A second approach would be for the United States to use its current leverage to promote new kinds of global cooperation and then cede primacy once the foundations of the international order have been reset (Bessner 2021). This kind of “managed transition” would limit the short-term downsides of surrendering U.S. leverage, but it is inconsistent with progressive arguments about how U.S. primacy hinders global collective action, and it would forestall progressive commitments to military retrenchment.

Either way, implementing a progressive grand strategy would likely involve a transition period during which the United States works to build a more democratic international order without reaping the benefits that progressives claim this order would provide. The appeal of a progressive grand strategy depends on assumptions about how long this period would last and how the United States could minimize its costs. Existing scholarship on U.S. grand strategy does not provide systematic foundations for understanding how this process might play out: though international relations scholars have vigorously debated the potential consequences of U.S. military

retrenchment, this debate has not previously envisioned retrenchment as part of a broader program for facilitating new forms of global political cooperation. This is one sense in which progressive grand strategy entails unique risks and tradeoffs that are challenging to evaluate.

The lack of historical precedent for a democratic world order

Scholars of grand strategy typically base their analyses on historical precedent. Restrainers, for example, use empirical studies of balance-of-power politics to argue that a wisely managed U.S. grand strategy could help to replicate the more stable periods of international history. Proponents of deep engagement and liberal internationalism generally base their arguments on analyses of U.S. global leadership since World War II. Reasonable people can contest the ways that international relations scholars use history to substantiate their claims, but these conversations generally revolve around finding ways to emulate empirically documented patterns of behavior.

By contrast, the democratic international order that progressives envision would be entirely novel. No great power has attempted to play the pro-social role that progressives advocate for the United States. Wealthy states have never banded together to raise conditions for the global working class, and the international system has never achieved the kinds of collective coordination that progressives seek for managing global security and climate change, among other problems.¹⁴ Progressive grand strategy thus entails substantial uncertainty when it comes to predicting that other countries would reciprocate pro-social behavior on the part of the United States.

¹⁴ The European Union provides an example of how a security community can establish peaceful relations on a regional basis. But this is different from establishing peaceful democratic relations on a global level, and many scholars believe that the European Union's development depended on U.S. security guarantees.

Some progressives invoke the Marshall Plan as an example of how pro-social foreign policy ultimately advanced U.S. interests (Murphy 2017; Kunkel 2019; Friedman 2020). But the Marshall Plan is a poor analogy for progressives' foreign policy proposals. The Marshall Plan provided a temporary infusion of assets designed to stimulate Europe's economic recovery after World War II. The authors of the Marshall Plan assumed that the structure of Europe's economy was fundamentally sound – their goal was simply to inject new capital into that system on a short-term basis. The Marshall Plan was designed to reinforce the political stability of Europe's ruling elites, and thus gave European leaders wide discretion in how to allocate aid. Meanwhile, the United States immediately recovered much of the Marshall Plan's expenditures as Europe used that money to buy American exports (Steil 2018).

None of these factors applies to progressive grand strategy. Progressives want to change economic systems that they view as being fundamentally *unsound*. Progressives believe that foreign aid should be used to empower *non-elites* rather than to entrench existing power structures. And there is no guarantee that any money devoted to progressive foreign policies would return to the United States in the short run. Instead, progressive recommendations for reforming foreign assistance are primarily geared toward long-term objectives of restoring America's moral authority and uplifting conditions for the global working class. Such efforts might ultimately work to advance U.S. interests, but there is no clear precedent to draw on for evaluating that prospect, certainly not the Marshall Plan.

Meanwhile, efforts to democratize intergovernmental organizations could backfire if they simply granted more power to ruling elites in other countries. For instance, the United Nations Human Rights Council is widely perceived to be ineffective precisely because it grants substantial influence to a diverse array of states, many of whom would like to prevent scrutiny of their human

rights records (Ramcharan 2011). Progressives might respond to this problem by arguing that intergovernmental organizations should devolve power to non-elite groups, such as labor unions. But many non-elite groups espouse aims that progressives reject, such as restricting immigration or oppressing racial minorities (Valdez 2021). The process of deciding which non-elite groups to empower in intergovernmental organizations would thus likely reflect the same power dynamics that progressives aim to ameliorate. Navigating this process would require substantial effort that could drain America's political capital and undermine perceptions that the United States is no longer in the business of coercing other countries.¹⁵

Theoretical concerns about how a more democratic world order would advance U.S. interests

The lack of historical precedent for a democratic world order does not mean that a progressive grand strategy is infeasible. Yet, this context imposes special challenges for substantiating progressive ideas. More than any alternative, the success of a progressive grand strategy depends on its theoretical coherence. Here, it is worth noting that many individual components of progressive concerns about the causes and consequences of structural inequality possess credible foundations in existing international relations (IR) scholarship.

For example, relative deprivation theory explains why groups that feel unjustly excluded from political and economic power may also be more likely to mobilize for political violence (Gurr 1970). A related literature explains how states that are dissatisfied with their status in international power hierarchies may resort to war in order to advance their relative prestige (Renshon 2017).

¹⁵ Walzer (2018, 133) makes a similar argument about how progressive conceptions of world order may depend on cultivating long-term changes in global civil society rather than implementing immediate revisions to international institutions.

Feminist scholarship supports progressives' claims about how the United States has an interest in combating structural inequality in other countries (Hudson and Leidl 2015) as well as how male-dominated foreign policy establishments may be prone to excessive militarism (Cohen and Karim 2022). Studies of "democratic advantage" suggest that holding elites accountable to public scrutiny promotes effective foreign policy decision-making (Reiter and Stam 2002). International relations scholarship rooted in Marxism and other variants of historical materialism generally support progressive arguments about how the international political system is structured in a manner designed to entrench elite dominance rather than to promote global collective action (Teschke 2008). Scholars who advocate for the grand strategy of restraint offer a broad range of arguments about how U.S. military primacy is counterproductive (Posen 2015). Even proponents of deep engagement accept that U.S. military power generates a significant "temptation risk" of using military resources unwisely (Brooks and Wohlforth 2016, 193-95).

Yet, existing IR scholarship provides limited grounds for explaining how the United States could tackle those challenges together – particularly with respect to progressives' vision of advancing U.S. interests by retrenching military power while simultaneously stimulating new forms of global political cooperation. For example, IR theories rooted in historical materialism generally argue that the concentration of power held by capitalist elites undermines global welfare, but that does not mean that the United States would benefit from surrendering its dominance over the international system. Indeed, IR scholarship in the historical materialist tradition frequently argues that structural imbalances in the international system serve the agendas of wealthy countries (e.g., Wallerstein 2004), and therefore imply that the United States has an interest in preventing the diffusion of its power (e.g., Cox 1987). Theoretical frameworks that explain how autocracy, sex-based discrimination, and other forms of structural inequality harm U.S. interests often have

little direct bearing on the prospective value of democratizing the international order: indeed, this scholarship plausibly indicates that it would be a mistake for the United States to cede political influence to states with the poorest records on those dimensions. And, while proponents of the grand strategy of restraint offer many theoretical arguments for why the United States might benefit from strategic retrenchment, restrainers explicitly define their conception of U.S. interests in a manner that narrowly focuses on interstate security and thereby excludes progressive concerns about promoting global collective action to tackle problems such as climate change (Posen 2015, 1-2).

The most plausible theoretical foundation for progressives' desire to retrench U.S. military power while simultaneously promoting global political change may rest with debates about collective security in the aftermath of World War I (Wertheim 2020a). Today, these ideas are primarily associated with President Woodrow Wilson, who argued that states who treated each other as equals could develop consensus-oriented procedures for resolving interstate disputes and promoting liberal ideals (Ikenberry 2020, 100-140). When institutions such as the League of Nations and agreements such as the Kellogg-Briand Pact proved unable to prevent a second world war, liberal internationalists pivoted their focus towards designing an international system anchored on U.S. power. But, as Ikenberry (2009, 75-76) points out, Americans did not wholeheartedly pursue Wilsonian notions of collective security: for instance, the United States never joined the League of Nations and Wilson himself was frequently unresponsive to the concerns of the global South (Manela 2009). This perspective suggests that, instead of abandoning interwar ideas about collective security in favor of a "liberalism 2.0" that entrenched global hierarchy, the United States could have tried harder to create a democratic world order in the first place. Yet, existing scholarship offers a limited guide for understanding exactly what that order

would have looked like, and why it could have done a better job of solving global problems than the grand strategy of liberal internationalism.¹⁶

Describing progressives' vision of a democratic world order as being underdeveloped raises questions about whether those ideas can ultimately provide a viable set of organizing principles for U.S. foreign policy. Yet, this is also a reason to believe that progressives would benefit from engaging more directly with existing debates about grand strategy – and doing so in forums, such as peer-reviewed journals, that permit developing conceptual foundations of the progressive worldview in detail. Short-form articles intended for public consumption may help progressives to build a base of enthusiasm from like-minded individuals. But converting informed skeptics will likely require marshaling a clearer theoretical case for how the United States could retrench its power while effectively promoting new forms of global political cooperation. Fleshing out these mechanisms would allow progressives to shore up their strategic arguments while potentially making novel contributions to international relations theory.

The difficulty of reversing a progressive experiment

In an ideal world, one might be inclined to experiment with democratizing the international order, even when faced with inevitable uncertainty about how these policy choices would unfold. If this experiment did not pay off in the manner that progressives predict, then the United States

¹⁶ For instance, Wertheim (2020a) provides a historical treatment of how liberal internationalists marginalized proponents of collective security, without providing extended theoretical discussion of how the latter idea would function or why it would be more desirable for promoting U.S. interests. On how progressives lack thorough theoretical foundations for explaining what a democratic international order would look like and why it would be superior to alternatives, see Bessner (2018a, 2021).

could simply restore the status quo. Yet, the United States would likely struggle to fully recapture the gains provided by any alliances or intergovernmental institutions that it abandons.

Proponents of continued U.S. primacy argue that the value of alliance relationships depends on the degree to which allies trust each other's promises to provide mutual aid. That was one reason why many international relations scholars criticized President Donald Trump for questioning the utility of NATO and other alliances. Even if Trump did not materially change America's alliance commitments, his public statements may have undermined allies' faith that the United States would honor its international obligations (Cooley and Nexon 2020, 163-175; Kirshner 2021). Section 1 explained how progressives would do much more than criticize America's alliances – progressives actually want to eliminate those alliances, or at least repeal the security guarantees that form the core of America's current alliance relationships. If the United States followed these prescriptions, then it would likely struggle to convince other states to trust any commitments that it subsequently tries to reconstitute. Almost by definition, it is easier to destroy a reputation for consistency than to build that reputation back up again (Brooks and Wohlforth 2016, 155-170).

To summarize, a progressive grand strategy thus requires wagering that world without American primacy would help to generate new forms of political cooperation that serve U.S. interests better than the status quo. Implementing the progressive vision would involve absorbing short-term costs in pursuit of benefits that have no historical precedent, and whose theoretical foundations are underdeveloped. And, if a progressive grand strategy failed to generate global collective action, then it would likely be challenging to restore the current system. Progressives' unique worldview – following restrainers' advice on retrenchment while proposing to restructure the international order in a manner that is very different from the models of deep engagement,

liberal internationalism, or conservative primacy – thus raises distinctive risks and tradeoffs for U.S. grand strategy.

Open questions for progressives to address

This paper has explained how progressives offer a distinctive contribution to debates about U.S. grand strategy by explaining how structural inequality can undermine American national interests. The manner in which progressives would combine military retrenchment with new forms of global cooperation also departs from every other grand strategy in today's discourse. Yet, saying that progressives add distinctive views to grand strategy debates does not mean that those ideas are desirable or fully fleshed-out. This section concludes the paper by identifying a series of open questions that progressives could address in order to enhance the credibility of their foreign policy agenda.

First, progressives could be much clearer about the *theoretical assumptions and causal mechanisms* that support their claims about how a more democratic international order would promote new forms of global political cooperation. The basic premise behind this argument is that retrenching U.S. primacy, avoiding coercion, and empowering non-elites would stimulate pro-social behavior in the international system. Yet, it is easy to locate examples where non-elites appear antagonistic toward global collective action or liberal politics. Prominent examples include British support for leaving the European Union and the rise of anti-immigrant nationalism throughout Europe. Russian President Vladimir Putin, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán support illiberal policies precisely because they appeal to their mass publics (Norris 2021). Countries from the Global South frequently use their voice in intergovernmental organizations to block liberal

reforms. It is not clear how democratizing the international system would mitigate those problems. Fleshing out these claims is a crucial step for progressives to take in bolstering the theoretical and empirical plausibility of their worldview.

There are several other questions that progressives could address in order to clarify *how a democratic order would function and how the United States could bring that order about*. The paper's second section already raised a basic question about whether it would be better for the United States to "rip the bandaid" off current power structures or to pursue a "managed transition" toward new forms of global cooperation. Other important questions on this front include: How much power and influence would the United States need to cede in order to convince other countries that it is no longer a malign hegemon? How would a democratic order deter or punish interstate aggression, such as Russia's recent invasion of Ukraine?¹⁷ How many kleptocratic elites would have to leave power in order to facilitate global collective action to improve outcomes for the global working class? If international institutions no longer delegated agenda-setting authority to the United States and its allies, how would states manage the complex challenges associated with coordinating international action? Making these claims more explicit would clarify the theoretical foundations of a progressive grand strategy and develop the mechanisms by which a democratic international order would stimulate global collective action.¹⁸

¹⁷ The standard non-military tool that states use to deter or punish international aggression is economic sanctions. However, some progressives question the value and ethics of economic sanctions, given that sanctions' costs often fall on the global working class (Mulder 2018; Cashman and Kharrazian 2019; Marcetic 2019). This raises the question of what other tools progressives would use to contain hostile states. An aversion to economic sanctions is also difficult to square with arguments about how the United States should avoid trading with countries that have poor labor standards: both cases involve withholding economic exchange in the hopes that this will incentivize other states to change their behavior. A progressive grand strategy would thus likely be easier to articulate if it set aside doubts about the wisdom of economic sanctions and/or placed limited priority on marginalizing illiberal states.

¹⁸ It is worth noting that these kinds of ambiguities are far from unique to the progressive position. For instance, while proponents of restraint generally support attenuating U.S. security commitments to alliance such as NATO, it remains unclear whether Europe could defend itself autonomously, and thus whether the United States could safely terminate its participation in that alliance (Posen 2020). Proponents of offshore balancing are also vague on many

A third key question, described earlier, is *whether the United States should prioritize collaboration with democracies*. This paper argued that a progressive grand strategy would likely be easier to articulate without pursuing democratic solidarity, because policies that marginalize illiberal states would likely impede efforts to secure those states' cooperation in tackling global problems such as climate change. Yet, all grand strategies involve tradeoffs between competing objectives. Similar tradeoffs surround progressive attempts to use trade negotiations as leverage to raise working-class labor standards: any political leverage that the United States expends promoting economic objectives is leverage that is not devoted to combating other global challenges. Progressives could be more explicit about how they plan to make these tradeoffs.

Progressives do not currently offer a clear vision for handling *nuclear politics*, which is one of the most important topics in the literature on grand strategy. Proponents of deep engagement, liberal internationalism, and conservative internationalism generally argue that U.S. security guarantees suppress other states' incentives to develop nuclear weapons (Bleek and Lorber 2014; Miller 2018). Attenuating America's overseas security commitments might allow the United States to reduce the size of its nuclear arsenal by decommissioning strategic forces whose primary value lies with defending allies rather than protecting the homeland. But restrainers typically argue that nuclear deterrence plays an important role in promoting interstate stability; nuclear force posture is thus one element of U.S. military capability that restrainers are relatively reluctant to retrench (Posen 2015, 21-22, 144). Progressives generally support denuclearization, but they have not yet explained how to make that goal consistent with their opposition to U.S. military primacy (Jackson 2018b; Mount 2018, 31; Tasevski 2020). Progressives could solve this problem by downgrading

elements of their grand strategy: in particular, it is not clear that retrenching America's forward defense positions would lead to substantial cost savings if the United States were still required to retain sufficient power projection capabilities to deter bids for regional hegemony (Brooks, Valentino, and Wohlforth 2022).

their commitment to denuclearization to more limited conceptions of arms control or by arguing that they would prioritize retrenchment over denuclearization if those objectives ever came into conflict.

Progressives could clarify the degree to which they differ from restrainers with respect to *conditions under which it is acceptable for the United States to use military force*. For example, the intensity of progressives' anti-militaristic rhetoric suggests that they would be less likely than restrainers to use military force in order to restrain potential Chinese aggression, but progressives have not yet drawn these distinctions in detail (Bessner 2018a; Wertheim 2020, 27-29). Meanwhile, some progressives – most notably Walzer (2018) – argue that the United States should conduct military interventions for humanitarian purposes, which would go *beyond* the prescriptions of restraint. Walzer's position appears to be an outlier among contemporary progressives, most of whom argue that humanitarian interventions often have unintended consequences and that it is better to focus on preventing humanitarian emergencies from occurring in the first place (Wertheim 2010; Bessner 2018b). But it is not clear what these preventive measures might entail and it seems hard to reconcile progressives' commitment to global solidarity with an unwillingness to stop genocide. Progressive arguments on this front often rest on descriptive claims about how prior humanitarian interventions have backfired, but that is not the same thing as arguing that well-designed humanitarian interventions are normatively inappropriate.

Though this paper has explained how progressives offer a unique perspective on America's global role, future work could spell out the implications of the progressive worldview for *other states' foreign policy decision-making*. For instance, progressives could ask what other states could do to encourage Washington to democratize the international order. Progressives could also

examine the extent to which other states could take steps to combat structural inequality without U.S. support. For instance, could other states that are currently dissatisfied with U.S.-dominated international institutions design better alternatives? Would the United States have an incentive to participate in those arrangements? Answering these questions would help progressives to flesh out their arguments about why U.S. leadership is not as crucial for stimulating international cooperation as liberal internationalists claim.

One last question facing progressives is *how much to base their policy proposals on arguments about promoting global justice versus advancing U.S. interests*. As mentioned in this paper's introduction, many progressives argue that the United States should fight imperialism and promote global welfare as ends in themselves. Indeed, supplementing the theoretical logic of restraint with additional moral obligations is almost certainly the easiest way to justify many of the foreign policy proposals that this paper has described. If progressives base their arguments about combating structural inequality on moral grounds, then they would not need to contest the analytic logics of restraint, deep engagement, or liberal internationalism. Yet, this approach may not find a receptive audience with the American public. Most Americans think that the United States already does more than its fair share in solving world problems and say that the U.S. government should devote a higher priority to managing domestic challenges (Kull and Ramsey 2017; Halpin et al. 2019). Thus, even if progressives believe that the United States has a moral duty to democratize the international system, it would still be pragmatically useful for progressives to explain why their policies would advance traditional conceptions of the national interest better than the alternatives.

In the final analysis, it thus seems clear that progressives do not yet possess a fully developed vision for U.S. grand strategy. Yet, the analytic challenges that progressives currently face on this front are not obviously greater than the obstacles that other scholars initially encountered when

developing grand strategies such as restraint and deep engagement. Those strategies took decades of refinement to reach their current form,¹⁹ and nevertheless still retain significant conceptual and empirical drawbacks of their own (Jervis 2021; Betts 2021; Brooks, Valentino, and Wohlforth 2022). Progressive ideas thus deserve to be taken seriously by mainstream IR scholars: they may not ultimately produce a viable grand strategy, but there is no way to know that without conducting the kind of intellectual exchange from which every camp in this debate has benefited. Progressives would also likely gain from entering into more robust and explicit debates with proponents of other grand strategies, which would raise the salience of progressive voices and help to strengthen their arguments. This paper has sought to clarify what those debates might entail and how they would offer new ways of analyzing America's global role.

¹⁹ To see this, compare Posen and Ross' (1996) seminal description of competing visions for U.S. grand strategy with Avey, Markowitz, and Reardon's (2018) recent review of contemporary debate.

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