**Many experts have warned that a war between the United States and China would be harmful to both nations and also to the rest of the world. Assuming this view is correct,**

***What does the most competent and experienced China expert suggest to prevent a war between the United States and China?***

**W**e have all read the opinions of many experts on China, and most recently we have heard many experts give us advice/information on China. Most of these experts have never been to China and only became experts studying from afar and have no real expertise on the history of China, not even modern China. So who might be really qualified to talk and write about China. Is there anyone who has studied China for many decades, learned to speak Chinese since childhood, studied Chinese history and served as a diplomat in China, and met today's Chinese leaders. Yes, there is one person on this planet who has these credentials. he is ...

**Kevin Rudd**, former Premier of Australia, former Australian Ambassador to China and now President of the Asia Society is one of the world’s best China experts. He speaks fluent Chinese, has lived many years in China (and Taiwan and Hong Kong), and has met all of the Chinese leaders of the past decade, including current Chairman Xi Jin-ping, and knows Chinese history. His views can be found in a half dozen You Tube videos and a number of international periodicals including Time, Foreign Affairs, the Economist and others. His latest book is the best seller, "The Avoidable War, The dangers of a Catastrophic Conflict between the US and Xi Jinping's China."

Rudd states that with growing tensions, war is a prospect that we must now acknowledge is no longer unthinkable.

He warns that the relationship between the U.S. and China has been dangerously deteriorating and if there is no effort to reduce tensions, a war between these two powerful nations could happen. This is the classical example of the Graham Allison’s Thucydides Trap where the competition for domination and power has resulted in war, 75% of the time in the last 500 years.

Now that history has shown that these clashes between powerful nations has frequently led to war, what actions can be undertaken to avoid war.

Rudd notes that both the United States and China are sufficiently large and powerful, that conventional warfare will not force either nation to surrender. Both nations are about 4 million square miles and neither side has ground forces large enough to conquer, occupy, and control their opposition. It would take about 100,000,000 ground troops to invade, conquer, and control any nation 4 million square miles.

An indecisive war between the United States and China could force one side to go nuclear, in order to be victorious.

Regardless of which side initiates a nuclear war, it is not likely that the other side will just surrender and sue for peace. Assuming this scenario, both sides will exchange nuclear attacks, and most nuclear war experts will opine that hundreds of nuclear weapons unleashed against both sides will result in radiation proliferation that will wipe out most life on earth. Ants, roaches and rodents and will inherit the Earth.

Thus, what should be done to avoid destroying humanity.

Premier Rudd sees that competition between the U.S. and China will certainly continue, but suggests that a major effort be made to manage the competing dynamics in managed strategic competition.

Managed strategic competition involves establishing certain hard limits on each country’s security policies and conduct but allows for full and open competition in the diplomatic, economic, and ideological realms. It would also make it possible for Washington and Beijing to cooperate in certain areas, through bilateral arrangements and also multilateral forums. Although such a framework would be difficult to construct, but if leaders from both sides seriously try it,doing so is still possible—and the alternatives are could be catastrophic.

Let's just hope and pray that both Chinese and American national leaders think clearly and give managed competition a real attempt.

==========================================================

**SOURCES:**

**A U.S.-China War Would Dwarf the Destruction in Ukraine. Both Sides Must Act Now to Avoid It**

 **By Kevin Rudd, *TIME*, April 4, 2022**

 The world’s attention is rightly focused on the unfolding horror in Ukraine. Images of destruction and death wrought across that nation, and the harrowing experiences of refugees fleeing in their millions, testify to the tragic reality of war. And in the capitals of Europe, something once thought an impossibility—a large-scale 21st century war on the continent—has now become all too real, awakening once idealistic nations to the hard truth that such senselessness violence has not been eliminated from our modern, globalized world. The scenes in Kyiv and Mariupol should serve as an abrupt wakeup call to those public figures who have talked loosely about inviting open warfare in our world. Most of them have never seen war themselves, or borne witness to its human cost.

 In this grim moment it is important to think through, and coldly reassess the dangers presented by other potential conflicts that could be sparked by today’s geopolitical tensions. The most significant among these is, without doubt, the possibility of a war between the U.S. and China. It is a prospect that we must now acknowledge is no longer unthinkable.

 Were such a conflict to begin, whether over a crisis in the Taiwan Strait, in the South China Sea, or any number of other unpredictable flashpoints, such a war would almost certainly be many times more destructive than what we are seeing in Ukraine today. It would be a conflict with vast scope for escalation across every domain, from the seas to space, and likely to draw in many other countries across the world, including America’s allies in the Pacific. Such a conflict would be a catastrophe for both countries—and for us all. War between the United States and China is not inevitable. But U.S.-China relations continue to spiral downward, their strategic relationship adrift and buffeted by growing global crises. Muddling through will be wholly insufficient to avoid conflict. To avoid sleepwalking into a war, both countries must construct a joint strategic framework to maintain the peace—and quickly.

In my new book, The Avoidable War: the Dangers of a Catastrophic Conflict between the US and Xi Jinping’s China, I offer one such framework, which I call “managed strategic competition.” The idea is relatively simple.

First, the United States and China must have a clear, granular understanding of each other’s irreducible strategic redlines in order to help prevent conflict through miscalculation. Each side must be persuaded to conclude that enhancing strategic predictability advantages both countries, strategic deception is futile, and strategic surprise is just plain dangerous. This will require a focused, detailed diplomatic understanding on Taiwan.

 Second, both countries must then embrace the reality of their competition—that is, to channel their strategic rivalry into a competitive race to enhance their military, economic, and technological capabilities. Properly constrained, such competition can deter armed conflict rather than tempt either side to risk everything by prosecuting a dangerous and bloody war with unpredictable results. Such strategic competition would also enable both sides to maximize their political, economic, and ideological appeal to the rest of the world. The strategic rationale would be that the most competitive national system would ultimately prevail by becoming (or remaining) the world’s foremost superpower and eventually shaping the world in its image. May the best system win. And I’m confident which one I’d bet on.Third, this framework would create the political space necessary for the two countries to continue to engage in strategic cooperation in the areas where their national interests align. These spheres include: climate change, preventing the next pandemic, and maintaining global financial stability.

 Finally, for this compartmentalization of the relationship to have any prospect for success, it would need to be carefully and continuously managed by a dedicated matching of cabinet-level senior officials on both sides. For the U.S., this also means any such framework would need bipartisan buy-in so it could withstand the turbulence of domestic politics. For a priority this important, this should by no means be impossible.

 This approach will face criticism in both Washington and Beijing for not being sufficiently sensitive to each side’s national interests. To some in Washington, it will smack of appeasement. This is false: cold, realistic deterrence is at the core of any comprehensive strategy toward China. Meanwhile many in Beijing will argue it doesn’t sufficiently account for China’s core interests on Taiwan, and broader national pride. But as Moscow just learned in Ukraine, war and economic devastation would suit China’s interests far less.

 Ultimately, my challenge to critics of managed strategic competition, and putting guardrails to the U.S.-China relationship, is simple: Come up with something better. There is little time to waste.

I have long studied, lived in, and come to deeply respect both the United States and China. The prospect of war between the two nations would be catastrophic. And, watching the destruction in Ukraine, I cannot help but recall the memory of marching as a small child in our annual ANZAC Day parade—the Australian equivalent of Memorial Day—in our tiny country town with my father, who had fought in World War II, alongside elders who had fought in World War I.

 The world managed to sleepwalk into the slaughter of that first Great War, which claimed more than 15 million lives. With our eyes now wide open, we will have no excuse if we fail to avoid walking into yet another global catastrophe today**.**

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 ***Kevin Rudd is global president of the Asia Society and former prime minister of Australia. He is the author of The Avoidable War: The Dangers of a Catastrophic Conflict between the US and Xi Jinping’s China, available now.***

***============================================================***

**The Decade of Living Dangerously: The Case for “Managed Strategic Competition” Between Washington and Beijing in the 2020s**

**An essay originally published in Foreign Affairs as “Short of War:**

**“How to Keep U.S.-Chinese Confrontation From Ending in Calamity” February 2021**

OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON AND BEIJING DON’T AGREE ON MUCH THESE DAYS, BUT

THERE IS ONE THING ON WHICH THEY SEE EYE TO EYE: the contest between their two countries will enter a decisive phase in the 2020s. This will be the decade of living dangerously. No matter what strategies the two sides pursue or what events unfold, the tension between the United States and China will grow, and competition will intensify; it is inevitable. War, however, is not. It remains possible for the two countries to put in place guardrails that would prevent a catastrophe: a joint framework for what I call “managed strategic competition” would reduce the risk of competition escalating into open conflict.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is increasingly confident that by the decade’s end, China’s economy will finally surpass that of the United States as the world’s largest in terms of GDP at market exchange rates. Western elites may dismiss the significance of that milestone; the CCP’s Politburo does not. For China, size always matters. Taking the number one slot will turbocharge Beijing’s confidence, assertiveness, and leverage in its dealings with Washington, and it will make China’s central bank more likely to float the yuan, open its capital account, and challenge the U.S. dollar as the main global reserve currency. Meanwhile, China continues to advance on other fronts as well. A new policy plan, announced last fall, aims to allow China to dominate in all new technology domains, including artificial intelligence, by 2035. And Beijing now intends to complete its military modernization program by 2027 (seven years ahead of the previous schedule), with the main goal of giving China a decisive edge in all conceivable scenarios for a conflict with the United States over Taiwan. A victory in such a conflict would allow President Xi Jinping to carry out a forced reunification with Taiwan before leaving power—an achievement that would put him on the same level within the CCP pantheon as Mao Zedong.

Washington must decide how to respond to Beijing’s assertive agenda—and quickly. If it were to opt for economic decoupling and open confrontation, every country in the world would be forced to take sides, and the risk of escalation would only grow. Among policymakers and experts, there is understandable skepticism as to whether Washington and Beijing can avoid such an outcome. Many doubt that U.S. and Chinese leaders can find their way to a framework to manage their diplomatic relations, military operations, and activities in cyberspace within agreed-upon parameters that would maximize stability, avoid accidental escalation, and make room for both competitive and collaborative forces in the relationship. The two countries need to consider something akin to the procedures and mechanisms that the United States and the Soviet Union put in place to govern their relations after the Cuban missile crisis—but in this case, without first going through the near-death experience of a barely avoided war.

Managed strategic competition would involve establishing certain hard limits on each country’s security policies and conduct but would allow for full and open competition in the diplomatic, economic, and ideological realms. It would also make it possible for Washington and Beijing to cooperate in certain areas, through bilateral arrangements and also multilateral forums. Although such a framework would be difficult to construct, doing so is still possible—and the alternatives are likely to be catastrophic.

This will be the decade of living dangerously. No matter what strategies the two sides pursue or what events unfold, the tension between the United States and China will grow, and competition will intensify; it is inevitable. War, however, is not.

ASIA SOCIETY POLICY INSTITUTE THE AVOIDABLE WAR: THE DECADE OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY | 65

BEIJING’S LONG VIEW

In the United States, few have paid much attention to the domestic political and economic drivers of Chinese grand strategy, the content of that strategy, or the ways in which China has been operationalizing it in recent decades. The conversation in Washington has been all about what the United States ought to do, without much reflection on whether any given course of action might result in real changes to China’s strategic course. A prime example of this type of foreign policy myopia was an address that then Secretary of State Mike Pompeo delivered last July, in which he effectively called for the overthrow of the CCP. “We, the freedom-loving nations of the world, must induce China to change,” he declared, including by “empower[ing] the Chinese people.”

The only thing that could lead the Chinese people to rise up against the party-state, however, is their own frustration with the CCP’s poor performance on addressing unemployment, its radical mismanagement of a natural disaster (such as a pandemic), or its massive extension of what is already intense political repression.

Outside encouragement of such discontent, especially from the United States, is unlikely to help and quite likely to hinder any change. Besides, U.S. allies would never support such an approach; regime change has not exactly been a winning strategy in recent decades.

Finally, bombastic statements such as Pompeo’s are utterly counterproductive, because they strengthen Xi’s hand at home, allowing him to point to the threat of foreign subversion to justify ever-tighter domestic security measures, thereby making it easier for him to rally disgruntled CCP elites in solidarity against an external threat.

That last factor is particularly important for Xi, because one of his main goals is to remain in power until 2035, by which time he will be 82, the age at which Mao passed away. Xi’s determination to do so is reflected in the party’s abolition of term limits, its recent announcement of an economic plan that extends all the way to 2035, and the fact that Xi has not even hinted at who might succeed him even though only two years remain in his official term. Xi experienced some difficulty in the early part of 2020, owing to a slowing economy and the COVID-19 pandemic, whose Chinese origins put the CCP on the defensive. But by the year’s end, official Chinese media were hailing him as the party’s new “great navigator and helmsman” who had prevailed in a heroic “people’s war” against the novel coronavirus.

Indeed, Xi’s standing has been aided greatly by the shambolic management of the pandemic in the United States and a number of other Western countries, which the CCP has highlighted as evidence of the inherent superiority of the Chinese authoritarian system. And just in case any ambitious party officials harbor thoughts about an alternative candidate to lead the party after Xi’s term is supposed to end in 2022, Xi recently launched a major purge—a “rectification campaign,” as the CCP calls it—of members deemed insufficiently loyal.

Meanwhile, Xi has carried out a massive crackdown on China’s Uighur minority in the region of Xinjiang; launched campaigns of repression in Hong Kong, Inner Mongolia, and Tibet; and stifled dissent Xi’s standing has been aided greatly by the shambolic management of the pandemic in the United States and a number of other Western countries, which the CCP has highlighted as evidence of the inherent superiority of the Chinese authoritarian system.

66 | ASIA SOCIETY POLICY INSTITUTE THE AVOIDABLE WAR: THE DECADE OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY among intellectuals, lawyers, artists, and religious organizations across China. Xi has come to believe that China should no longer fear any sanctions that the United States might impose on his country, or on individual Chinese officials, in response to violations of human rights. In his view, China’s economy is now strong enough to weather such sanctions, and the party can protect officials from any fallout as well.

Furthermore, unilateral U.S. sanctions are unlikely to be adopted by other countries, for fear of Chinese retaliation. Nonetheless, the CCP remains sensitive to the damage that can be done to China’s global brand by continuing revelations about its treatment of minorities. That is why Beijing has become more active in international forums, including the UN Human Rights Council, where it has rallied support for its campaign to push back against long-established universal norms on human rights, while also regularly attacking the United States for its own alleged abuses of those very norms.

Xi is also intent on achieving Chinese self-sufficiency to head off any effort by Washington to decouple the U.S. economy from that of China or to use U.S. control of the global financial system to block China’s rise. This push lies at the heart of what Xi describes as China’s “Dual Circulation Economy”: its shift away from export dependency and toward domestic consumption as the long-term driver of economic growth and its plan to rely on the gravitational pull of the world’s biggest consumer market to attract foreign investors and suppliers to China on Beijing’s terms. Xi also recently announced a new strategy for technology R&D and manufacturing to reduce China’s dependence on imports of certain core technologies, such as semiconductors.

The trouble with this approach is that it prioritizes party control and state-owned enterprises over China’s hard-working, innovative, and entrepreneurial private sector, which has been primarily responsible for the country’s remarkable economic success over the past two decades. To deal with a perceived external economic threat from Washington and an internal political threat from private entrepreneurs whose long-term influence threatens the power of the CCP, Xi faces a dilemma familiar to all authoritarian regimes: how to tighten central political control without extinguishing business confidence and dynamism.

Xi faces a similar dilemma when it comes to what is perhaps his paramount goal: securing control over Taiwan. Xi appears to have concluded that China and Taiwan are now further away from peaceful reunification than at any time in the past 70 years. This is probably correct. But China often ignores its own role in widening the gulf. Many of those who believed that China would gradually liberalize its political system as it opened up its economic system and became more connected with the rest of the world also hoped that that process would eventually allow Taiwan to become more comfortable with some form of reunification. Instead, China has become more authoritarian under Xi, and the promise of reunification under a “one country, two systems” formula has evaporated as the Taiwanese look to Hong Kong, where China has imposed a harsh new national security law, arrested opposition politicians, and restricted media freedom.

With peaceful reunification off the table, Xi’s strategy now is clear: to vastly increase the level of military power that China can exert in the Taiwan Strait, to the extent that the United States would become unwilling

The CCP remains sensitive to the damage that can be done to China’s global brand by continuing revelations about its treatment of minorities.

ASIA SOCIETY POLICY INSTITUTE THE AVOIDABLE WAR: THE DECADE OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY | to fight a battle that Washington itself judged it would probably lose. Without U.S. backing, Xi believes, Taiwan would either capitulate or fight on its own and lose. This approach, however, radically underestimates three factors: the difficulty of occupying an island that is the size of the Netherlands, has the terrain of Norway, and boasts a well-armed population of 25 million; the irreparable damage to China’s international political legitimacy that would arise from such a brutal use of military force; and the deep unpredictability of U.S. domestic politics, which would determine the nature of the U.S. response if and when such a crisis arose. Beijing, in projecting its own deep strategic realism onto Washington, has concluded that the United States would never fight a war it could not win, because to do so would be terminal for the future of American power, prestige, and global standing. What China does not include in this calculus is the reverse possibility: that the failure to fight for a fellow democracy that the United States has supported for the entire postwar period would also be catastrophic for Washington, particularly in terms of the perception of U.S. allies in Asia, who might conclude that the American security guarantees they have long relied on are worthless—and then seek their own arrangements with China.

As for China’s maritime and territorial claims in the East China and the South China Seas, Xi will not concede an inch. Beijing will continue to sustain pressure on its Southeast Asian neighbors in the South China Sea, actively contesting freedom-of-navigation operations, probing for any weakening of individual or collective resolve—but stopping short of a provocation that might trigger a direct military confrontation with Washington—at this stage, China is not fully confident it would win. In the meantime, Beijing will seek to cast itself in as reasonable a light as possible in its ongoing negotiations with Southeast Asian claimant states on the joint use of energy resources and fisheries in the South China Sea. Here, as elsewhere, China will fully deploy its economic leverage in the hope of securing the region’s neutrality in the event of a military incident or crisis involving the United States or its allies. In the East China Sea, China will continue to increase its military pressure on Japan around the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands; however, as in Southeast Asia, here, too, Beijing is unlikely to risk an armed conflict, particularly given the unequivocal nature of the U.S. security guarantee to Japan. Any risk, however small, of China losing such as conflict would be politically unsustainable in Beijing and would have massive domestic political consequences for Xi.

AMERICA THROUGH XI’S EYES

Underneath all these strategic choices lies Xi’s belief, reflected in official Chinese pronouncements and CCP literature, that the United States is experiencing a steady, irreversible structural decline. This belief is now grounded in a considerable body of evidence. A divided U.S. government failed to craft a national strategy for long-term investment in infrastructure, education, and basic scientific and technological research.

The Trump administration damaged U.S. alliances, abandoned trade liberalization, withdrew the United States from its leadership of the postwar international order, and crippled U.S. diplomatic capacity.

The Republican Party has been hijacked by the far right, and the American political class and electorate are so deeply polarized that it will prove difficult for any president to win support for a long-term bipartisan strategy on China. Washington, Xi believes, is highly unlikely to recover its credibility and confidence as a With peaceful reunification off the table, Xi’s strategy now is clear: to vastly increase the level of military power that China can exert in the Taiwan Strait.

68 | ASIA SOCIETY POLICY INSTITUTE THE AVOIDABLE WAR: THE DECADE OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY

regional and global leader. And he is betting that as the decade progresses, other world leaders will come to share this view and begin to adjust their strategic postures accordingly, gradually shifting from balancing with Washington against Beijing, to hedging between the two powers, to “band-wagoning” with China.

But China worries about the possibility of Washington lashing out at Beijing in the years before U.S. power finally dissipates. Xi’s concern is not just a potential military conflict but also any rapid and radical economic decoupling. Moreover, the CCP’s diplomatic establishment fears that the Biden administration, realizing that the United States will soon be unable to match Chinese power on its own, might form an effective coalition of countries across the democratic capitalist world with the express aim of ounterbalancing China collectively. In particular, CCP leaders fear that President Joe Biden’s proposal to hold a summit of the world’s major democracies represents a first step on that path, which is why China acted rapidly to secure new trade and investment agreements in Asia and Europe before the new administration came into office.

Mindful of this combination of near-term risks and China’s long-term strengths, Xi’s general diplomatic strategy toward the Biden administration will be to de-escalate immediate tensions, stabilize the bilateral relationship as early as possible, and do everything possible to prevent security crises. To this end, Beijing will look to fully reopen the lines of high-level military communication with Washington that were largely cut off during the Trump administration. Xi might seek to convene a regular, high-level political dialogue as well, although Washington will not be interested in reestablishing the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue, which served as the main channel between the two countries until its collapse amid the trade war of 2018–19. Finally, Beijing may moderate its military activity in the immediate period ahead in areas where the People’s Liberation Army rubs up directly against U.S. forces, particularly in the South China Sea and around Taiwan—assuming that the Biden administration discontinues the high-level political visits to Taipei that became a defining feature of the final year of the Trump administration. For Beijing, however, these are changes in tactics, not in strategy.

As Xi tries to ratchet down tensions in the near term, he will have to decide whether to continue pursuing his hard-line strategy against Australia, Canada, and India, which are friends and allies of the United States. This has involved a combination of a deep diplomatic freeze and economic coercion—and, in the case of India, direct military confrontation. Xi will wait for any clear signal from Washington that part of the price for stabilizing the U.S.-China relationship would be an end to such coercive measures against U.S. partners. If no such signal is forthcoming—there was none under President Donald Trump— then Beijing will resume business as usual.

Meanwhile, Xi will seek to work with Biden on climate change. Xi understands this is in China’s interests because of the country’s increasing vulnerability to extreme weather events. He also realizes that Mindful of this combination of near-term risks and China’s long-term strengths, Xi’s general diplomatic strategy toward the Biden administration will be to de-escalate immediate tensions, stabilize the bilateral relationship as early as possible, and do everything possible to prevent security crises.

===========================================================

***The Avoidable War: The Dangers of a Catastrophic Conflict between the US and Xi Jinping's China, Kevin Rudd, released March 22,2022***

***“We in the democratic world need to radically lift our understanding of what makes the Chinese Communist Party think.”***

***The author:***

***The Honorable Kevin Rudd AC served as Australia’s 26th Prime Minister (2007–2010, 2013) and as Foreign Minister (2010–2012). He led Australia’s response during the global financial crisis—the only major developed economy not to go into recession—and co-founded the G20. Mr. Rudd became President of the Asia Society in January 2021, after having joined the Asia Society Policy Institute in New York as its inaugural President in January 2015. He serves as Chair of the Board of the International Peace Institute and Chair of Sanitation and Water for All. He is a Senior Fellow at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government, a Distinguished Fellow at Chatham House in London, a Distinguished Statesman with the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington D.C., and a Distinguished Fellow at the Paulson Institute in Chicago. Mr. Rudd is a member of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Organization’s Group of Eminent Persons. He serves on the International Advisory Board of the Schwarzman Scholars program at Tsinghua University, and is an Honorary Professor at Peking University. Mr. Rudd is proficient in Mandarin Chinese. He remains actively engaged in indigenous reconciliation.***

***The book:***

***A war between China and the US would be catastrophic, deadly, and destructive. Unfortunately, it is no longer unthinkable.***

***The relationship between the US and China, the world’s two superpowers, is peculiarly volatile. It rests on a seismic fault—of cultural misunderstanding, historical grievance, and ideological incompatibility. No other nations are so quick to offend and be offended. Their militaries play a dangerous game of chicken, corporations steal intellectual property, intelligence satellites peer, and AI technicians plot. The capacity for either country to cross a fatal line grows daily.***

***Kevin Rudd, a former Australian prime minister who has studied, lived in, and worked with China for more than forty years, is one of the very few people who can offer real insight into the mindsets of the leadership whose judgment will determine if a war will be fought. The Avoidable War demystifies the actions of both sides, explaining and translating them for the benefit of the other. Geopolitical disaster is still avoidable, but only if these two giants can find a way to coexist without betraying their core interests through what Rudd calls “managed strategic competition.” Should they fail, down that path lies the possibility of a war that could rewrite the future of both countries, and the world.***

***============================================================***

***February 24th, 2021 by Kevin Rudd***

***The year 2020 was a devastating one, but also a year of great change and transformation as the world adapted with difficulty to meet challenges largely unprecedented in living memory, and the trends of global power appeared to shift dramatically. And it was a revelatory year — one that pulled the lid off the true extent and meaning of our globalized, interconnected world, revealed dysfunction present in our institutions of national and international governance, and unmasked the real level of structural resentment, rivalry, and risk present in the world’s most critical great power relationship — that between the United States and China.***

***2020 may well go down in history as a great global inflection point. It is thus worth looking back to examine what happened and why and to reflect on where we may be headed in the decade ahead. The Avoidable War: The Decade of Living Dangerously, the third volume of ASPI’s annual Avoidable War series, does precisely that. It contains selected essays, articles, and speeches by Asia Society and ASPI President the Hon. Kevin Rudd that provide a series of snapshots as events unfolded over the course of 2020 — from the COVID-19 pandemic, through an implosion of multilateral governance, to the impact on China’s domestic political economy.***

***Finally, it concludes with a discussion of the growing challenges the world will face as the escalating contest between the United States and China enters a decisive phase in the 2020s. No matter what strategies the two sides pursue or what events unfold, the tension between the United States and China will grow, and competition will intensify; it is inevitable. The Chinese Communist Party is increasingly confident that by the decade’s end, China’s economy will finally and unambiguously surpass that of the United States as the world’s largest, and this will turbocharge Beijing’s self-confidence, assertiveness, and leverage. Increasingly, this will be a “decade of living dangerously” for us all. War, however, is not inevitable. Rudd argues that it remains possible for the two countries to put in place guardrails that can prevent a catastrophe: a joint framework he calls “managed strategic competition” that would reduce the risk of competition escalating into open conflict.***

***========================================================***

***Former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has raised the alarm over the prospect of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan.***

***According to Mr Rudd, few in the West realise the extent to which Chinese leader Xi Jinping is eyeing a return of Taiwan to mainland control.***

“It’s right up there next to Xi Jinping‘s desire for the party to remain in power and for him to be the predominant leader within the Communist Party of China,” Mr Rudd told ABC’s 7:30 on Wednesday.

Mr Rudd said the only two things preventing an invasion of Taiwan by China are questions of militaristic dominance and avoiding similar sanctions, as have been imposed on Russia following the invasion of Ukraine.

Mr Rudd said few in the West realise the extent to which Chinese leader Xi Jinping is eyeing a return of Taiwan to mainland control. Picture: NCA NewsWire / Gary Ramage

Mr Rudd said few in the West realise the extent to which Chinese leader Xi Jinping is eyeing a return of Taiwan to mainland control. Picture: NCA NewsWire / Gary Ramage

“There has been a little too much excited commentary in the West about how China will seize on this strategic opportunity to move on Taiwan. I don’t think that’s the case,” Mr Rudd said.

However, the fluent Mandarin speaker added: “the balance of power continues to change in China’s favour, both militarily and economically, so that shifts this dynamic.”

Rudd said Russia’s “blitzkrieg” invasion of Ukraine by land had stalled. In comparison, he said an invasion of Taiwan would be largely amphibious.

Based on war game modelling conducted by the US, Mr Rudd says China would come out on top – albeit by a thin margin.

“In most of the war gaming which has been done so far – and these are desktop exercises by and large – if you look at what various US officials have said off the record and partly reported in the American media, the Chinese at this stage win most of the time,” he said.

He added the situation was dynamic, particularly with the recent invasion of Ukraine, which all parties are watching closely.

“Taiwanese, for the first time in a very long time, I think, are now readdressing their national defence idea needs and I think they will be looking very carefully at the fight which the Ukrainians have put up against Russia,” Mr Rudd said.

He added the US has reinvested heavily in military strength in East Asia and the West Pacific.

“I think it really does depend … on how much more the Taiwanese and the Americans do,” he said.

Mr Rudd advocated for Australia’s role to be one of encouraging the US and other allies towards effective deterrence.

He said working with allies in Japan, South Korea and India in a structured way and managing strategic competition were crucial to avoid “sleepwalking into war”.