



# Still a Big Advantage

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In all the talk of America First—and of the United States as *the* indispensable nation—we Americans sometimes forget this doesn't mean “America Alone.”

“Ultimately, a strong, resolute, and capable network of allies and partners is our key strategic advantage,” U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth recently [informed](#) the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. “China envies what we have together. And it sees what we can collectively bring to bear on defense.”

Hegseth was speaking directly to Indo-Pacific allies, whom he reminded: “it's up to *all of us* to ensure that

we live up to that potential by investing” to “quickly upgrade [our] own defenses.”

Our alliances of free nations in Europe and Asia constitute a huge edge against a bullying, totalitarian China.

My entire life, these past six decades, Big Daddy America was by far the biggest, best military on the block. Still is the best. But it's no longer the biggest: China now has a bigger navy, much greater shipbuilding capacity, and many more soldiers in uniform. Technological and other strategic advantages have been diminished as well.

The defense secretary acknowledged that—after “a lot of ongoing conversations with our military leadership in the Indo-Pacific”—“there is something to be said for the fact that China calculates the possibility and does not appreciate the presence of other countries ... as part of the dynamics or decision-making process, and, if that is reflected in their calculus, then that's useful.”

We cannot afford to squander our “ally advantage.” We need each other.

This is Comon Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.