

# Reimagining the Macro Arctic Region

## Rebuilding Global Trust through Democratic Peace and International Law as a Foundation for an Alliance to Coerce China from Taiwan

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The United States should adopt a strategy of a shared governance based on international law in the Macro Arctic Region (MAR) (future combined areas of the Arctic and Indo-Pacific regions) as a foundation to employ a targeted coercive strategy to influence Beijing to abandon China's expansionist goals in Taiwan. This article first frames how the United States can rebuild global trust. After providing reasons why Washington needs to rebuild trust, particularly in the MAR, the concepts of international law and shared governance are applied to show how the United States should lead the consensus decision making with key MAR players.<sup>1</sup> Next, the article extends the previous arguments for a strategically stronger alliance in the MAR. An Indo-Pacific Alliance (IPA) is needed to influence expansionist countries and to employ a progressive coercive strategy aimed to control China's expansion into Taiwan.

### Regaining Trust among Partner Nations

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) reported that in North America trust is declining in governments,<sup>2</sup> that the European Union is challenged with restoring trust in their elites,<sup>3</sup> and that there is diminishing public trust in many national leaders, their governments, and international institutions.<sup>4</sup> In Asia, "a history of warfare and occupation along with current mutual distrust makes cooperation difficult"<sup>5</sup> and with the Arctic Region being the next frontier of rich resources, it can be expected that trust among partner nations will be needed to face anticipated challenges for resources, shipping lanes, and land rights.

According to the *National Security Strategy (NSS)*, one clear way to regain the trust of partner nations is through a renewal of comparative advantages<sup>6</sup> and through established norms supported by international law, because "in the absence of a world government to enforce rights, [nations] will find it impossible to trust one another, and simply striving for security drives them to seek control of their environment and thus dominance."<sup>7</sup> Sustaining "favorable balances of power will require a strong commitment and close cooperation with allies and partners because allies and partners magnify US power and extend US influence."<sup>8</sup> The

NSS purports that “relationships, developed over time, create trust and shared understanding that the US calls upon when confronting security threats, responding to crises, and encouraging others to share the burden for tackling the world’s challenges.”<sup>9</sup> The ODNI is clear that the United States should have a “strong commitment and cooperation with allies”<sup>10</sup> and key challengers to cooperatively and collectively plan for the unanticipated future or “the contexts that literally have not occurred”<sup>11</sup> in the largest emerging global region that will become the next strategic challenge: the MAR.

While the MAR is comprised of two currently separated regions in literature and governmental reports, it will become Earth’s largest commons over the next two decades.<sup>12</sup> The United States should lead this shared area via law making, law determination, and law enforcement among the centralized consenting states. The approach to shared governance is codified in international law but must be collectively followed and enforced by participating nations.

The Arctic Council (AC) (led by the United States, Russia, and Canada) promotes international cooperation. While some countries have been given permanent observer status (specifically, China, India, the United Kingdom, Japan, and South Korea),<sup>13</sup> the council may need to look at a more inclusive approach to the region, involving additional countries that have interest in the burgeoning region. A Global Arctic Council may be more challenging regarding shared governance, but the norm of collective oversight, coupled with a responsibility to protect Earth’s limited resources, would prove to be a worthy step in global democratic peace. In “Five Pillars of American Grand Strategy,” Paul Miller asserts the very nature of democratic peace and balancing power among the great powers in the foundation of good global governance,<sup>14</sup> which could be a pillar for a global grand strategy, not of domination, but with restraint and toward collaboration. The Indo-Pacific Region (IPR) is fraught with a history of complexity and competing ideologies. Due to the growing competition for accessible waterways and reachable resources, shared governance of the MAR will be challenging.

The multiple countries on the edge and surrounding the IPR should form an alliance, similar to a UN approach. The IPA would be the governing international organization, as the shared governance approach would emphasize “preventing and resolving conflicts between countries”<sup>15</sup> as advocated by Bruce Russett and John Oneal, and a collectivist ideology incorporating cooperative advantage would “require norms and procedures for resolving conflicts and for collective action to render them effective” as argued by Oscar Schachter.<sup>16</sup> Russett and Oneal believe the triangulation of peace is dependent on a democratic approach that is supported by interdependence and international organizations,<sup>17</sup> but this

Kantian Triangle, involving nearly 30 countries, makes the triangulation of peace much more challenging.

A shared-governance approach involving partner countries under international law can ease tensions around mistrust, help close gaps on how other countries view the United States as a pursuer of strategic dominance or being an intrusive bully in far-off regions, and ultimately strengthen cooperation to protect and manage limited resources in the MAR amid alarming global trends.

### **Reimagining the Indo-Pacific Region**

The second part of this article uses the reimagining of the IPR as part of the larger MAR as a foundation. After briefly explaining the strategic significance of the MAR, a targeted coercive strategy augmented with cooperation from MAR partner countries is recommended that will influence China and Chinese allies to abandon expansionist goals in Taiwan.

The ODNI is clear about anticipating the map of the future, which includes glacial melt and sea-levels rising in the Arctic.<sup>18</sup> Along with a weakened regional strategy in a growing network of economic development and population growth in the Asia-Pacific region as assessed by ODNI,<sup>19</sup> the joining of the Arctic and Indo-Pacific regions into a MAR is not a question of if, but when. The Northwest Passage and Arctic basin, when fully accessible for direct freight movement, will complicate economic, resource, and geopolitical issues in the new oceanic global commons in the MAR. The territorial and maritime disputes in the MAR are a prelude to what will similarly occur in the greater Arctic Region; so, there is great geopolitical relevance of those regions in the next five years, which is best addressed through “avenues of cooperation,”<sup>20</sup> particularly when China and Russia are factored in as key players. Reports to Congress by the Congressional Research Service advocate that there are looming geopolitical changes in Asia, which is further supported by ODNI’s near-term and future global trends in their *Global Trends Main Reports*,<sup>21</sup> indicating massive sea change in the next five years in multiple regions (East/Southeast Asia, Russia, North America, and Arctic/Antarctic). The best way to address these unknown challenges in the expected emergence of the MAR is through a combined approach using international law and shared governance. However, there are times when a more targeted coercive strategy may be needed in parallel to the aforementioned law-and-governance approach.

Despite ongoing diplomatic efforts, China continues military operations to invade Taiwan. In his report to Congress, ADM Philip Davidson believed that “By recalibrating theater posture to balance capabilities across South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Oceania, USINDOPACOM will be able to respond to aggression more effectively throughout the Indo-Pacific.”<sup>22</sup> To win before fighting “alongside

like-minded allies and partners, USINDOPACOM must compete in the “gray zone” between peace and war.”<sup>23</sup> Therefore, deterrence and compellence are necessary, effective means.

The deterrence arm aims to prevent an all-out conflict with China and discourage others from intervening. All instruments of power should be brought to bear that take the forms of assurance and dissuasion. Methods of assurance like NATO, the Pacific Island Forum (PIF), the AC, and combined-joint action in the IPR must be elevated. Key partners from Five Eyes, PIF, and the AC should join to form the IPA, a larger formation of PIF or AC.

The IPA should seek to strike a balance with inviting Russia into the IPA based on the argument by Zalmay Khalilzad and Jeremy Shapiro that Moscow “does not trust China and fears that it might become a victim of future Chinese expansionism.”<sup>24</sup> The IPA should endeavor to dissuade China simultaneously by trade wars and sanctions for an economic advantage, while the alliance conducts combined-joint military preparations off the coast of Papua New Guinea, just 2,246 nm from Taiwan, along with strategic air/intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) support extending to the Philippines. If deterrence fails, then compellence would be used to forcibly alter China’s behavior toward Taiwan and divide the opponent coalition based on surprise, using cyber and ISR to set conditions for more coercive windows of opportunity that “shape a new consensus and produce a policy change that furthers our interests.”<sup>25</sup>

The alliance would adjust its force 1,566 nm north to the Philippines. ISR and cyber would be employed to observe and degrade Chinese capabilities and set conditions for strategic strikes on Chinese air and naval forces moving toward Taiwan. Cyber forces would attack Chinese satellites to dominate the area of space. If required, the escalation of aerial punishment on missile, naval, and air forces would be employed to raise the costs of continued aggression toward Taiwan. Specifically, Chinese aircraft carriers (dual-use target) would be strategically targeted due to the symbolic nature they provide to Chinese pride.<sup>26</sup>

The above recommendations are supported by RAND’s lessons learned from Kosovo relating to a coercive strategy: (1) improve capabilities to locate, identify, and rapidly strike enemy mobile targets; and (2) preserve the option to attack dual-use targets<sup>27</sup> and nest with US Indo-Pacific Command focus areas 2–4,<sup>28</sup> which could have prevented Russia’s attack in Ukraine<sup>29</sup> and caused Yugoslavian president Slobodan Milošević to capitulate months earlier in Kosovo. In accordance with USAF doctrine Annex 3-0<sup>30</sup> and analysis by Karl Mueller in “Strategies of Coercion,”<sup>31</sup> the coercive strategy communicates an increasingly elevated threat to China. The costs of further aggression outweigh the benefits.

## Conclusion

The key themes of this article explained why the United States needs to rebuild trust on the international stage, especially in the MAR. To strengthen trust and cooperation on the global stage, Washington should begin shared governance of the MAR under international law. The United States can lead the collaborative efforts via the IPA. To counter China's expansionist strategy toward Taiwan and divide Chinese support, the United States should lead partner nations through the IPA. Based on layers of evidence with historical examples, a coercive strategy of deterrence followed by compellence is the most promising strategic direction to follow. 🌐

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Dr. Hinck serves as an assistant professor of leadership for the USAF's Air University, received the 2020 Secretary of the Air Force Leadership Award, and was the 2019 Air University and AETC Civilian of the Year (Category IV/ Non-Supervisory). A former Army Colonel with more than 22 years of service as a combat leader and Apache pilot, Hinck commanded 2nd Battalion, 314th Aviation Regiment and Task Force ODIN-Afghanistan of 750 people and 43 aircraft comprised of fixed-wing and unmanned systems. The unit received the Army's 2010 Fixed Wing Unit of the Year award. He served with distinction in Korea, Germany, Bosnia, Albania, Iraq, and Afghanistan. After military service, Hinck received his PhD in leadership studies from the University of San Diego. He is a speaker, consultant, and board-certified executive/leadership coach. His current areas of research include designing leadership development programs, leadership coaching, increasing shared authority in eldercare, and improving organizational commitment. Dr. Hinck teaches classes on leadership, coaching, leading change, and research methods. He works with the USAF's Eaker Center for Leadership Development in designing and delivering the Leader Development Course for Squadron Command. Hinck is involved with Leadership Montgomery, a city-wide program that brings together leaders to study and solve critical community issues. He has published books and articles on leadership, coaching, communication, and designing leadership development programs. Hinck is a graduate of the Moller-Burns Learn to Lead Program, University of Cambridge, England, and invited faculty at the Hansen Summer Institute for International Peace and Cooperation, where he teaches leadership and problem solving to international fellows from 22 participating countries.

### **Notes**

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