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*Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs (JIPA)*

600 Chennault Circle

Maxwell AFB AL 36112-6010

e-mail: JIPA@au.af.edu

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# The Assurance Imperative

## Forward Presence in the Indo-Pacific

COL SCOTT “BARNEY” HOFFMAN, USAF

In an era of great-power competition, maintaining a robust and effective presence in the Indo-Pacific theater to assure US allies and partners of America’s enduring commitment to the international rules-based order and thus enabling a free and open Indo-Pacific would seem to be an unnecessary topic. However, the allure of technological solutions, attraction of the physical safety assumed via long-range fires, and the appeal of returning forces to the home front to minimize costs and increase efficiencies is strong. The desire to place forces outside of any threat ring and to provide support from a distance is not an ideal method for maintaining an enduring foundation of trust and confidence among allies and partners—particularly as the threat continues to develop and the ever-expanding antiaccess/area-denial bubble potentially drives US forces further and further away to maintain a desired level of protection. To the contrary, such a withdrawal may be viewed as self-serving, unsupportive, and unreliable to US allies and partners that cannot change their geography or the geostrategic environment relative to China. As Beijing continues to assert itself through malign operations, activities, and investments in the economic, political, and military realms to undermine the international rules-based order—ironically the very rules-based order that has enabled China’s rise and which has rescued tens of millions from tyranny and lifted billions out of poverty—the United States must retain a robust, interoperable, and forward-present force that assures America’s vast array of allies and partners and deters China from undermining the free and open Indo-Pacific.

### Great-power Competition

The recognition that we are in an era of great-power competition is not a novel realization. Dozens, if not hundreds, of thought pieces, articles, and books are dedicated to the very reality of a burgeoning great-power competition between the United States and China. The *National Security Strategy* (NSS) clearly delineates as much: “China and Russia challenge American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity. They are determined to make economies less free and less fair, to grow their militaries, and to control information and data to repress their societies and expand their influence.”<sup>1</sup> To emphasize the great-power contest within the Indo-Pacific theater, the NSS further states “a geopolitical competition between free and repressive visions of

world order is taking place in the Indo-Pacific region.”<sup>2</sup> The *National Defense Strategy (NDS)* reinforces this premise, stating, “the central challenge to U.S. prosperity and security is the *reemergence of long-term, strategic competition* by what the National Security Strategy classifies as revisionist powers. It is increasingly clear that China and Russia want to shape a world consistent with their authoritarian model—gaining veto authority over other nations’ economic, diplomatic, and security decisions” (emphasis in original).<sup>3</sup>

How the United States will operate within the competitive realm needs to be examined frequently to be successful. Learning lessons from the past enables one to adjust strategy for the future. To that end, the *NSS* states that past strategies have not attained the desired results, “these competitions require the United States to rethink the policies of the past two decades—policies based on the assumption that engagement with rivals and their inclusion in international institutions and global commerce would turn them into benign actors and trustworthy partners.”<sup>4</sup>

The term *competition* to define the geostrategic interactions between the United States and China is an apt description; however, our Western style of thinking tends to view competition in the finite sense. In that I mean a competition typically has two opponents who work under a given rule set, operate within a set of defined boundaries, with a predetermined external characteristic that defines the endpoint of the contest (i.e., a game clock in many sporting events), and there is a clear “winner” and “loser.” While the term *competition* helps to describe the tug and pull of geopolitics, it can also lead to false perceptions and errant strategies.

The differences between our standard view of competition and the geopolitics of great-power competition are stark. Within this great-power competition, the divergences include the fact there are significantly more than two entities at play, as the United States has numerous allies and partners in the region and globally; likewise, there is no finite characteristic that defines the end of the competition. However, the greatest difference between our typical perception of competition and the geostrategic struggle in the Indo-Pacific would be the faulty belief that the two sides are operating under the same rule set or adhere to the same set of boundaries. Nothing could be further from the truth. While the United States and its constellation of allies and partners operate within the long-established boundaries and norms of the international rules-based order, China operates in a manner that seeks to alter and to undermine that very paradigm to its singular benefit. Therefore, the United States needs to adjust its mental picture to the competition at hand to plan and operate effectively in the unbalanced geostrategic struggle.

## Competition as an Insurgency

Context, perception, and perspective—at the most basic level, all three are foundational to the development of effective strategy.

*Context* provides the undergirding facts, truths, and lessons generated throughout history up to the present day. Simply stated, context comprises the things that “are” and “have been.”

*Perception* is how the context is viewed and is driven by the lens from which we view it. Perception is our reality.

*Perspective* is the ability to alter the lens by which we view the contextual data. Perspective is the realization of another’s perception.

Often, our perception from a military planning standpoint is to think, plan, and prepare for a grand engagement between peers as the undesirable result of a great-power competition that has reached its zenith. It is emblematic of the standard Western binary approach to conflict in that we are either at war or at peace. However, the Chinese are actively operating in the realm between “peace” and “war” to alter the geopolitical paradigm. As an authoritarian regime, and due to the Chinese Communist Party’s organizational structure, Beijing “can draw upon and integrate a diverse array of political warfare tools... [and has] demonstrated the ability to leverage economic, financial, political, diplomatic, news media, social media, educational, civic, social, military, paramilitary, and other tools to achieve their aims.”<sup>5</sup> Knowing the adversary is operating in a manner that does not align with US perceptions, we need to alter our perspective and realize that America is already “at war” and adjust our planning accordingly.

One perspective is to view great-power competition as analogous to fighting a whole-of-government counterinsurgency (COIN), with the People’s Republic of China (PRC) as the adversary. In this case, in the simplest of terms, the United States is not only attempting to win “hearts and minds” but also seeking to retain international diplomatic, political, economic, and military legitimacy and influence to uphold the international rules-based order to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Joint Publication 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, defines an insurgency as “The organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region. Insurgency can also refer to the group itself.”<sup>6</sup> However, if one views the Indo-Pacific as a whole, we can apply the insurgency analogy aptly to the strategic context and help us shed the typical Western concept of finite competition.

Applying the insurgency analogy, it is clear the malign actions of China seek to change the political control of the Indo-Pacific. While political, economic, and diplomatic subversion are Beijing’s primary tools, threats of violence have also



been employed. The recent altercation between India and China at the Line of Actual Control, the PRC's actions in the South China Sea against Vietnamese<sup>7</sup> and Malaysian oil exploration,<sup>8</sup> and the persistent intimidation tactics used to pressure regional nations regarding disputed claims in the South China Sea and East China Sea can certainly be considered bordering on violence—or the threat thereof—to achieve Beijing's goals. China's man-made militarized islands in the South China Sea, its assertiveness toward Japan in the East China Sea,<sup>9</sup> and the continuing threats to invade Taiwan<sup>10</sup>—among a host of other menacing actions—lead one to conclude the characteristic of violence is present in China's quiver of malign activities.

Threatened by the liberties enjoyed by the United States and its allies and partners, this type of warfare used by Pres. Xi Jinping and the PRC seeks to rally domestic support, keep China's enemies off balance, and weaken and potentially overthrow democratic states and is accomplished at relatively low cost and low risk. President Xi appreciates “that by operating aggressively and in a nimble fashion in the gray zone between the Western conceptions of peace and war, [he is] exploiting a substantial advantage over the United States and its allies, who are more traditionally minded, conventionally structured, and bureaucratically sluggish.”<sup>11</sup> As well, China can “employ a much wider range of instruments, many of which involve highly intrusive intelligence operations and deeply subversive espionage, cyber, military, and other active measures to disorientate, distract, confuse, coerce, undermine, and potentially cause the collapse of targeted societies.”<sup>12</sup>

The term *great-power competition*, while useful, tends to lead our minds in the direction of events on a global and massive scale, including any potential armed conflict. However, if we view China's actions through the lens of an insurgency that seeks to “obtain regional hegemony in the near-term and displacement of the United States to achieve global preeminence in the future,”<sup>13</sup> we can apply lessons learned and generate an appropriate and coherent framework to uphold the international rules-based order and ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific.

## **Presence and Counterinsurgency**

How to execute COIN has reemerged to the forefront of military thinking and writing for the past two decades for obvious reasons. Techniques and operational concepts to defeat an insurgency are numerous, as the context for each insurgency is different and, thus, requires different methods to be applied to be successful. Nevertheless, one recurring theme for successful counterinsurgencies over the past century is to focus on the population. Joint Publication 3-24 states the overall focus of COIN efforts is “to help the [host nation] government marginalize insurgents and win the support of the population.”<sup>14</sup> In this case, the population

consists of the diverse nations of the Indo-Pacific. Additionally, counterinsurgencies require a long-term commitment: “The population should have confidence in the staying power of both the US counterinsurgents and the [host nation] government. Insurgents and the relevant population often believe a few casualties or a few years will cause the USG [US government] to abandon COIN. Constant reaffirmations of commitment, backed by deeds, can overcome that perception and bolster US credibility.”<sup>15</sup>

However, this is not an article to illuminate a wide-ranging whole-of-government strategy to confront the *NDS* priority adversary via a counterinsurgent strategy—although a whole-of-government strategy is needed. Rather, the focus of this article is on one particular recurring action to take when confronting an insurgency: the need to remain physically present in a robust and long-term manner to assure allies and deter the adversary.

While numerous quotes from various strategists could be used to further enlighten concepts for a great-power counterinsurgency, the most often quoted when discussing the PRC and its overall philosophy is Sun Tzu. Nearly everyone is intimately familiar with the quote, “For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.”<sup>16</sup> While that particular ideal is prescient in this discussion when considering fighting via a whole-of-government counterinsurgency approach, the dictums from Sun Tzu that immediately follow are equally as important, “Thus, what is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy’s strategy,” followed by, “Next best is to disrupt his alliances.”<sup>17</sup> It is only after attacking the strategy and disrupting the alliances that a discussion on attacking the army or cities is brought into play.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, we must ensure our alliances and partnerships remain intact with a shared strategy to uphold the international rules-based order and oppose China’s malign intentions.

The preeminent means by which to counter a great-power insurgent strategy is to maintain forward presence within the theater that complements the respective host-nation security capabilities and capacity in such a manner as to add to the collective security of the region as a whole and protects the population that lies therein. This is manifested through a robust and committed long-term presence that meets each individual ally’s or partner’s security and defense needs in a manner that shares their burdens, understands their requirements, and experiences mutual sacrifices. With this approach, the United States can marginalize China’s malign influence, enhance security for the region, and provide a visible and powerful manifestation of US resolve, commitment, and trust to America’s allies and partners.

## **Forward Presence Primer**

The geopolitical dynamics of the theater make being forward present in the Indo-Pacific more difficult. Within the Indo-Pacific, the United States has multiple bilateral treaty allies and dozens of willing and able partners, but there is not a NATO-like structure with which to holistically build a theater-wide interoperable defense force. The nations of the theater are exceptionally diverse, have dynamic and complex histories, and have varying and unique security dilemmas that makes the development of a similar cohesive, interoperable, and focused alliance unlikely in the near-term. However, the United States must strive continually to advance our current alliances and to expand our partnerships with all the nations to maintain the collective benefits of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

US forward presence must be reflective of the requirements of America's respective allies and partners. Geography, history, and geopolitics are such that each ally or partner will have different defense and security needs, and therefore each is able to provide unique and synergistic capabilities to strengthen the security foundation. As the *NDS* states, "Our allies and partners provide complementary capabilities and forces along with unique perspectives, regional relationships, and information that improve our understanding of the environment and expand our options."<sup>19</sup> However, as the strategic context changes, many US allies and partners in the region do not have the capacity to fend off the PRC without additional support.

While we often speak of the "tyranny of distance" in the Indo-Pacific, it is more accurate to state there is an issue of the "physics of distance." Most everything can be broken down to a time-distance problem—the greater the distance, the greater the time required to respond. The PRC's military advancements and capabilities seek to take away the precious resource of time and generate quick victories. The Indo-Pacific is an expansive theater that requires herculean logistical movements for the United States to act, while the PRC can execute on internal lines of operation. US allies and partners "provide access to critical regions, supporting a widespread basing and logistics system that underpins the Department's global reach."<sup>20</sup> The PRC has learned from past US military actions and will not provide America time to build up forces within the theater. It is through robust forward presence that US forces provide senior leaders the requisite time and resulting political and military maneuvering space to solve theater issues peacefully.

Forward presence can neither be piecemeal—as the US commitment will be viewed as half-hearted—nor can it be focused solely on US strategic requirements, as it will be deemed to be purely self-serving. At its optimum, forward presence enhances interoperability, nurtures positive relationships, generates confidence, accepts shared risk, and assures the respective nation of US commitment to

their defense while upholding the international rules-based order. Having the right forces and capabilities in the right locations in full cooperation and coordination with America's constellation of allies and partners creates stability and predictability in the region and is the preeminent means to assure US allies and partners and deter the PRC to ensure an enduring free and open Indo-Pacific.

## Conclusion

A singular truism that underpins the need for robust forces forward is that *virtual presence is actual absence*. The economic and military power of the PRC dwarves many of the respective nations within the Indo-Pacific, and without a present and reliable partner who understands their needs and shares their risk, the urge to acquiesce to PRC demands and malign intentions exponentially increases. The allure and promise of technology can drive strategists and policy makers to look inward and retreat to safer pastures. Long-range fires and defending from afar is alluring but may appear as withdrawal, retreat, and strategically indecisive to US allies and partners. Increased distance tends to decrease trust, and reduced trust inherently provides inroads to an adversary, resulting in lost ground in the great-power insurgency.

In the era of COVID-19, engagements between leaders, execution of business, and cooperation among allies have been comprehensively altered to accommodate virtual meetings in lieu of actual, physical presence. While each actor will adjust to accomplish as much as possible virtually, nothing is as meaningful or as powerful as when you are physically present. The same is true for US allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific. The United States can impress them with technology and attempt to convince them with promises to respond rapidly in a crisis, but nothing is as reassuring as being physically present with one's allies and partners, sharing their risk, and defending the rules-based order that enables their sovereignty and assures a free and open Indo-Pacific. ✪

### **Col Scott "Barney" Hoffman, USAF**

Colonel Hoffman is the Deputy Director of Strategy, Plans, and Programs, Headquarters Pacific Air Forces, Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, where he provides oversight of the strategy for operational plans, international relations, theater security cooperation, and programming of resources to support the PACAF mission of providing ready air and space power to promote US interests in the Indo-Pacific region. His most recent command was as the commander of the 447th Air Expeditionary Group, Incirlik Air Base, Turkey.

Colonel Hoffman is a command pilot with more than 3,300 total flying hours, including more than 2,700 hours—and over 800 combat hours—in the A-10. He has flown sorties in support of Operation SOUTHERN WATCH, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Inherent Resolve.

Hoffman has a master's degree in aerospace engineering from Virginia Tech, a master's degree in national security studies from the Naval Command and Staff College, a master's degree in airpower art and science from the USAF School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, and a master's degree in strategic studies from the USAF Air War College.

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## Expanding Cooperative Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance with Allies and Partners in the Indo-Pacific

COL JACOB J. HOLMGREN, USAF

Throughout its history, the United States of America has relied on extensive cooperation with allies and partners to compete with and, when necessary, defeat adversaries. Australian and American forces worked closely in concert during World War II to find and destroy enemy air and naval forces, perhaps most famously through the utilization of Australian national and indigenous Coastwatchers throughout the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. This arc of history continues today, especially on the Korean Peninsula, where US and Republic of Korea (ROK) intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets work together to maintain 24-hour-a-day eyes and ears on North Korea. Although the United States has a rich history and strong current relationship with partners and allies regarding ISR, the future challenges of the region will require even closer cooperation. The decision advantage that ISR provides can be the deciding factor in success or failure.

The *National Defense Strategy* acknowledges a move toward interstate strategic competition as the primary concern for US national security.<sup>1</sup> The role of ISR in this complex and volatile environment is vital—ISR provides decision advantage to planners, operators, and military and civilian decision makers. It ensures not only the ability to fight tonight but a deterrence value in understanding enemy intentions to prevent the fight tomorrow. Whether countering the People's Republic of China (PRC) moves in the South China Sea, interdicting Russian Long-Range Aviation flights, or providing a continued deterrence of North Korea, ISR is vital.

Gen Charles Q. Brown, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, has challenged the service to “accelerate change or lose,” and it is clear that US adversaries in the Indo-Pacific are a central focus of the need to accelerate. Within General Brown's strategic approach, he explicitly states that what is good enough today will fail tomorrow. Among the areas the Chief knows we must concentrate is “how to achieve improved interoperability and data sharing with our closest allies and partners so that we can fly, fight and win together.”<sup>2</sup>

It is without doubt that one of America's greatest strengths is its robust, mature, and strong constellation of partnerships and alliances. This network of like-

mindful and willing participants ensures America's advantage, especially in the Indo-Pacific. Rather than transactional coalitions or a zero-sum approach to geopolitics, the *National Defense Strategy* makes clear the US commitment to alliances built on free will and shared responsibility.<sup>3</sup>

Current ally and partner capabilities are especially appropriate within the umbrella of ISR platforms and processes. While ISR is integral to war fighting, it is also the capability that is absolutely critical during competition as well as Phase 0 and Phase I shaping and deterring operations. While America needs strong ally and partner war-fighting capability, the ISR realm allows for close work in areas that prevent and predict conflict or provocation.

### **Current ISR Cooperation**

The United States has already made significant strides in building cooperative ISR with allies and partners across the region. The Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) in particular, and US Air Force in general, have worked hand-in-hand with the Republic of Korea Air Force (ROKAF) on the fielding of the latter's high-altitude unmanned aerial vehicle (HUAV) program, an RQ-4 Global Hawk platform that literally takes the ROKAF to higher levels of airborne ISR capability. The time on station, sensor range, and beyond line-of-sight capability of the HUAV allows the ROKAF to keep persistent watch of the North Korean threat and allows the flexibility to respond to other regional threats to ROK interests.<sup>4</sup> As longtime allies on the peninsula, the ROK RQ-4 program has been built with interoperability as a key factor from the start.

Japan has also stated an intent to procure the RQ-4 Global Hawk platform for high-altitude ISR.<sup>5</sup> This platform has the same advantages of all RQ-4s, and its long endurance and range make it ideally suited to the great distances that face Japanese forces in securing their borders and territory—a distance of nearly 1,400 miles separates Sapporo from Okinawa. Tokyo has also expressed interest in the MQ-9 platform, which would be easily integrated into existing ISR architectures.<sup>6</sup> These new capabilities will complement an already strong alliance structure with the United States and ensure continued interoperability and sharing of critical data and intelligence.

Australia has a long history of partnering with the United States within the Indo-Pacific region and as a close ally in conflicts abroad. Several interoperable ISR platforms already are fielded within the Australian inventory, including the MQ-9 Reaper and the MQ-4 Triton. Australia has also focused on the processing, exploitation, and dissemination of intelligence in an interoperable and distributed fashion. The adoption of Distributed Ground Station—Australia, a system for analysis and processing of ISR information similar to that employed by the

United States, was envisioned and designed to optimize partner and coalition operations.<sup>7</sup> These centralized nodes allow a broad range of allied and partner information to be ingested and disseminated to key decision makers and allow the flexibility to share workload and analysis.

The Philippines and the United States already boast a very mature relationship cooperating in countering violent extremist organizations (VEO). While to date the ISR cooperation has been focused on more tactical ISR assets, such as the Scan Eagle and MQ-1C in the counter-VEO role, the continued disputes in the South China Sea provide opportunity for greater cooperation to reinforce and bolster Philippine interests within their territorial boundaries.

These are just a few examples of the current ISR cooperation that continues between the United States and its key partners and allies in the Indo-Pacific region and are by no means all-inclusive of the efforts across the theater. Although these achievements have moved all nations forward in securing common interests, the United States must seek to further improve and expand such cooperation.

### **Expanding Interoperability**

Several areas within current and future ISR cooperation must be improved to move allied and partner integration to a position where we can compete in the future operating environment. Just as the United States has often struggled with common standards for data, these present the same challenges for the integration of partners and allies. While the Department of Defense (DOD) has developed department-wide data standards, the reality is that data formats remain nonstandard. It is imperative that staff elements and planners working ISR interoperability remain focused on data standardization. If the problems are difficult among the services, it is not hard to imagine the exponential increase in complexity dealing with key partners and allies.

The *DOD Data Strategy* specifically lays out the desire to apply data standards at the earliest practical point in the data lifecycle and that industry standards should be used whenever practical.<sup>8</sup> These same standards must be shared and the concept promulgated to partners and allies. Working back from nonstandardized data is time-consuming and costly. Whenever possible, ISR assets and systems should be developed with data standards in mind and using industry standards as a starting point, allow for collaboration and future compatibility.

With a solid approach to standardized data, the next step is to ensure partner and allied integration with the cloud environment and access to the data lake. These concepts are relatively well-understood but remain challenged by requiring standardized data, interoperable systems, and, as will be discussed later, an information-sharing environment. The *data lake* is a repository for all information



that is collected by any sensor and any coalition member. With the data lake existing in a cloud environment, any member of the coalition can access it. While robust firewalls and security protocols are absolutely necessary, the overall move to cloud environments allows continuity and failover operations. These concepts are especially useful in the Indo-Pacific environment, where there are great distances between partners and allies and some elements may be operating in austere locations.

Another aspect of expanded interoperability is a coalition understanding and linkage with the sensing grid. The *sensing grid* delivers a cross-functional understanding of both the changing environment and the constantly adapting adversary. ISR systems feed the sensing grid and support its key purpose in delivering predictive and timely characterization of the operating environment.<sup>9</sup> As the Air Force matures Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2) networks, we must remain cognizant of the key contributions partners' and allies' systems and information can have in a sensing-grid environment.<sup>10</sup>

### **Expanding Information Sharing**

The United States already has robust information sharing arrangements with partners and allies throughout the region based on shared interests, values, and common adversaries. While discussion of a "NATO for Asia" would perhaps be a useful long-term concept, there can be no denying that the geopolitics, history, and economic linkages of Asia and the Pacific region make such an arrangement challenging. The key for Air Force and the Intelligence Community is the laser focus on analytical write to release. This concept assumes that any actionable information should attempt to be presented at the most accessible level to allow its utility across a broad range of partners and allies.

The importance of information sharing has been documented in the *National Intelligence Strategy (NIS)* as one of the core intelligence-enterprise objectives. Linked with the NIS Enterprise objective of partnerships, including foreign allies, the US Intelligence Community is committed to increasing access to information to meet mission needs and to institutionalizing strategic approaches to partner engagement to facilitate collaboration and understanding.<sup>11</sup>

The continued expansion and commitment to information sharing matches the course of PACAF's mission, vision, and priorities. The diversity priority specifically notes the requirement for integrated international partners to compete with near-peer adversaries. These partnerships are not possible without extensive information-sharing structures and apparatus. The United States and its allies and partners must continue to keep information-sharing protocols in the cross-check as they look to enhance their ISR collaboration.

## **New Approaches to Accelerate Cooperative ISR**

Expanded interoperability and intelligence sharing are the building blocks that enable current constructs of command and control for airpower to utilize and integrate intelligence across a large coalition environment. The emerging model of Air Force next-generation processing, exploitation, and dissemination (PED) is a transformation from a purely production-based model of PED to a problem-centered model of analytical teams and nodes. Often referred to as DCGS Next Generation, the problem-centered approach allows analysts access to a broad spectrum of intelligence-sourced information to tackle the toughest questions presented by commanders through their Priority Intelligence Requirements and Essential Elements of Information. By moving Airmen away from being locked to exploitation of an intelligence source from one specific platform, they are freed to look at a much broader range of questions.<sup>12</sup>

The implications for DCGS Next and the problem-centered approach are especially compelling when linked to a comprehensive coalition of partners and allies. While the key steps outlined previously of interoperability and sharing are necessary to fully leverage a problem-centered model, it exponentially increases the intelligence problems that can be attacked and answered. A simple first step is the accessibility of partner and ally data into a DCGS Next node, and the natural progression of the model is to expand the analytical exploitation team model to include partners and allies. The power of having Australian expertise on the South China Sea readily available and with access to all coalition intelligence sources is exciting to contemplate. ROK analysts could contribute directly to answering a commander's questions on North Korean intentions. Questions about Chinese special mission aircraft activities near the Ryukyu Islands could be answered by Japanese experts who watch the activity every day, year after year. Likewise, the sharing of data between and among the partners and allies allows an expansion of their collective contributions. The cross talk and collaboration that could potentially be allowed through an expanded problem-centric model across multiple partners and allies would ensure a multitude of advantages to the United States and its partners and allies.

## **Conclusion**

The Indo-Pacific region remains one of the most dynamic and strategically vital regions in the world. The United States cannot continue business as usual in its approach to ensuring this region remains free and open. The critical role of ISR in maintaining and securing the status of the region is manifest during competition and conflict. It is absolutely essential that the United States works closely with its

partners and allies and continues to nurture enhanced cooperation in ISR. From platforms to data standards, information sharing, and future concepts, all these areas require concerted and relentless pressure to get it right. With energy and initiative put forward immediately, the United States can provide capabilities that are relevant to coalition operations. Decision advantage is a commodity that is always in high demand—all intelligence professionals must do their utmost to deliver this benefit to maintain the advantage in great-power competition. ✪

### **Colonel Jacob J. Holmgren, USAF**

Colonel Holmgren is the Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) Director of Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR), Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, where he advises the PACAF Commander on all ISR matters across the Indo-Pacific area of responsibility, the largest in the Department of Defense. Prior to his current assignment, Holmgren served as the Director of ISR, Seventh Air Force, Osan Air Base, Republic of Korea. Additionally, he has three previous tours in the Indo-Pacific theater and served as the commander of the 548th ISR Group at Beale Air Force Base, California.

Colonel Holmgren has deployed experience as a targeting officer during Operation Joint Forge in Bosnia, as an Intel analyst during Operation Southern Watch and Iraqi Freedom in Saudi Arabia, and deployments to Iraq as an ISR operations officer and Corps Tactical Air Control Party intelligence chief.

Colonel Holmgren is a graduate of the National War College, Air Command and Staff College, and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

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# Scenario Planning Methodology for Future Conflict

DR. ANDREW DOWSE, AO

Scenario planning has become an important tool for organizations to consider possible futures, how they might compete in those futures, what are the key trends and uncertainties, and what changes might be implemented to make the organization more competitive. The intent of scenario planning is to broaden and challenge decision makers' perspectives, allowing them to reconsider the standard assumption of "business as usual."<sup>1</sup> Scenarios are part of Australia's military capability planning processes, including the conduct of experimentation and analysis to assess Australian Defence Force (ADF) capability and capacity against possible futures.<sup>2</sup>

Australia's 2020 *Defence Strategic Update* has highlighted new and accelerated drivers that indicate a changing and less benign strategic environment.<sup>3</sup> In this light, using effective processes to prepare for new challenges is a critical task for defense planners. Feasible Scenario Spaces is an embryonic tool that may be instrumental in military scenario planning. To be effective, however, it needs to be further evolved to embrace the potential for unconventional threats, including the emerging primacy of information warfare (IW) in future conflict.

## The Rise of Scenario Planning

Planning is a fundamental military activity, with force planning undertaken to ensure that a modern military has the appropriate personnel and capabilities to meet potential security challenges. Scenario planning was used by RAND to support the US Department of Defense after World War II, with increasing use of scenario methodologies to support public policy in the 1960s.<sup>4</sup> Royal Dutch Shell pioneered the use of scenario planning in business, with its advantages being chronicled in Pierre Wack's seminal *Harvard Business Review* article.<sup>5</sup> Interest increased as authors such as Michael Porter and Henry Mintzberg highlighted the potential competitive advantage of applying scenario planning in business.<sup>6</sup> In the twenty-first century, academic interest in scenario planning has substantially increased.<sup>7</sup>

Scenario planning is a disciplined method for imagining possible futures relevant to an entity's mission. Whereas uncertainties of possible futures result in a multitude of influential variables, scenario planning simplifies the future into a

manageable number of possible states. In this way, it differs from contingency planning in that it addresses the combined effect of multiple variables. Organizations may benefit from scenario planning if they operate within certain conditions, such as high uncertainty relative to ability to predict; tendency toward costly surprises; limited ability to perceive or generate new opportunities; poor strategic thinking; significant change in the sector; the need for common language/framework; differences of opinion; or competitors who are better at planning.<sup>8</sup> Many of these conditions are relevant considerations in planning the future military force; hence, scenario planning is a priority for defense strategic analysis.<sup>9</sup>

A scenario planning process will involve a sequence of steps, typically including scoping; identification of stakeholders, trends, and uncertainties; construction of scenarios; and then testing of those scenarios.<sup>10</sup> Whereas the different techniques for scenario planning can be classed within three schools of methodology,<sup>11</sup> most efforts fall within the intuitive logics school. Intuitive logics analyzes the relationships among trends, uncertainties, and the behavior of actors with a stake in the particular future.<sup>12</sup> Validity of a scenario depends on five key criteria: *plausibility* (must be capable of happening), *consistency* (the logics in a scenario must not introduce contradiction), *relevance* (must contribute some insights to inform decisions), *challenge* (should help question the organization's ideas about the future), and *differentiation* (should be substantially different from other scenarios).<sup>13</sup>

Scenario strategies may be *rationalist*, focusing on optimum solutions given a level of predictability; *evolutionist*, developing a winning strategy based upon previous experiences; or *processurist*, developing organizational processes to help it adapt to changing circumstances.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, the culture of an organization may be *inactive* (where change is ignored), *reactive* (changing with the environment), *preactive* (where changes are anticipated), or *proactive* (where changes are anticipated and shaped).<sup>15</sup>

For a defense organization, there will be occasions when it needs to be reactive, although with a recent emphasis on shaping,<sup>16</sup> there is a growing intent for the ADF to be proactive. Nevertheless, the intent of military capability planning is more preactive, in terms of developing a credible force structure that can defeat anticipated threats. Such capability planning is primarily a rationalist strategy, with the intended outcome to develop and acquire solutions. Complementary capabilities such as doctrine, experimentation, and wargaming also contribute to evolutionary and processual strategies, strengthening adaptive capacities by building human systems that are able to cope with an unpredictable future.<sup>17</sup> A combination of all three strategies are widely accepted as contributing to effective scenario planning.<sup>18</sup>

Notwithstanding the potential advantages of scenario planning, there are limitations. Mintzberg acknowledged fallacies of strategic planning, including the ability to predict an uncertain future.<sup>19</sup> Unlike situations where risks are quantifiable, the potential for future conflict involves Knightian uncertainty.<sup>20</sup> Even in situations where individual factors seem relatively predictable, the compounding effect of individual variables can lead to an unexpected outcome.<sup>21</sup> The complex relationships between such individual variables often leads scenario planners to simplify design by creating master scenarios based around guiding themes or notions.

The development of rationalist strategy through organizational consensus can reinforce business-as-usual thinking and inertia to change.<sup>22</sup> Another limitation is that the intuitive logics process can give too much emphasis on the Aristotelian efficient cause, which, by neglecting other forms of causality, may narrow decision makers' perspectives as to the range of plausible futures.<sup>23</sup> Most importantly, for many organizations, there is a significant gap between the complexity of possible futures and the need for simplicity in assessing strategy options. This gap is one that Australia's Defence Science and Technology (DST) Group has sought to address.

### **Feasible Scenario Spaces**

Although early scenario planning work by RAND was focused on military planning, little emphasis since has been placed on the need to update methodologies to adapt to the changing nature of warfare and the increasing complexity of potential futures. A DST team, led by Brandon Pincombe, developed a methodology for scenario planning in complex situations, by identifying factors that might confound successful achievement of a key objective.<sup>24</sup> This built on earlier work<sup>25</sup> to show that situations can be remedied by generalizing scenario elements, recombining scenario elements to uncover critical interactions, and including opposing trends in a single scenario. This approach addressed a key conundrum of scenario planning: that it needs to deal with the complexity of the world and interactions between scenario elements, while retaining sufficient simplicity to be implemented by practitioners and subject matter experts.

The complexity gap is characterized by a divergence between manageable shared mental models of possible events and the diversity of events that actually happen, with people tending to focus on singular scenarios and singular strategies to deal with them. Pincombe's team developed the concept of Adversarial Scenario Analysis, in which a core strategy to achieve an outcome is developed, then scenarios are altered to make the strategy fail.<sup>26</sup> Such failures would assist development of mitigation strategies, in a similar manner to Mintzberg's utility of "right-hand" planners.<sup>27</sup>

More work was needed to develop the Adversarial Scenario Analysis concept into a scenario planning methodology. Subsequently, the DST team described a survey-driven approach to construct scenarios hierarchically, using dimensions developed through an iterative Delphi engagement with military experts, followed by thematic analysis.<sup>28</sup> This analysis derived six dimensions, being physical environment, human terrain, operational partnerships, sociopolitical issues, the threat, and own forces. These dimensions were developed with Australian Army participants and specifically in the context of land warfare scenarios. The DST team noted that a similar exercise would need to be undertaken with appropriate participants to produce a hierarchical dimensional framework for joint scenarios.<sup>29</sup>

A DST team, led by Fred Bowden, subsequently used the six dimensions as the basis for a more universal appreciation of scenario planning. Feasible Scenario Spaces (FSS) is defined as a surface that covers the set of scenario parameters for which a given capability set can achieve success within acceptable levels of risk.<sup>30</sup> FSS may be used to map capability options against scenario dimensions to compare relative advantages of options. This approach considers friendly force capabilities and those of a potential adversary, differentiating between the two to determine the overall impact of change in the future force. In this case, FSS was used to model a joint offensive support scenario, with a fictional assessment of different assets against three of the six dimensional components.

Although the FSS methodology was demonstrated in a joint offensive support scenario, this example was admittedly a simple one.<sup>31</sup> While brevity within a publication necessitated such simplicity, two questions arise. First, with the dimensions of FSS being derived from a land warfare scenario, how different would they be in the context of a future scenario that involves IW? Second, would the complexity of such scenarios be able to be simplified to inform decision makers about future force options?

## **Information Warfare**

The prospective loss of advantage and the changing threats landscape have been recognized in Australia, with its leadership noting the emergence of “grey-zone” threats in the information environment.<sup>32</sup> In particular, cyberthreats have evolved past the notion of attacks on enterprise computer systems to the potential to interfere and disable weapon systems.<sup>33</sup> This elevates IW from a secondary consideration for our defense forces to being a primary form of warfare that can be decisive in achieving military effects in its own right.

IW may be defined as the process of protecting one’s own sources of battlefield information and, at the same time, seeking to deny, degrade, corrupt, or destroy the enemy’s sources of battlefield information.<sup>34</sup> In this regard, this focus on hav-

ing an information advantage dates back through the history of warfare to Sun Tzu's teachings.<sup>35</sup>

Modern technologies integrate systems and enhance outcomes across the information, cognitive, and physical domains; however, this integration represents a vulnerability that can be exploited. The increasing dominance of the information environment can be attributed to technology advances of the fourth industrial revolution, with cyber-physical systems allowing information systems to control actions in the physical world.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, advances in information technology, the ability to manipulate information, and the broad adoption of social media mean that cognition is more readily controlled by the information environment. Therefore, the ability for actions in the information environment to impact all three domains represents the critical importance of IW, meaning that control of the information environment will confer complete control.<sup>37</sup>

This change in the influence and centrality of the information environment, in warfare as in broader society, heralds a shift in the nature of IW: from an enabling component of traditional warfare, with physical activity and kinetic effects having primacy, to one in which gaining an information advantage in itself can be singularly decisive. Not only can information effects create an advantage in awareness, but they can also create military advantage by disabling or misguiding physical systems or by influencing the cognition of warriors, leaders, and citizens.

The increasing power of IW is not only this potential to dominate across the domains but also the ability to achieve objectives at minimum risk and cost. Thus, IW activities are key tools in grey-zone warfare, conducted below the threshold of war. There is also evidence of the value of coordinating such activities with a range of other elements of national power, also known as hybrid warfare.<sup>38</sup> Whereas China and Russia are prominent actors in the use of hybrid and grey-zone warfare,<sup>39</sup> a variety of actors—state and nonstate—have pursued the idea that information-centric and liminal strategies provide an asymmetric offset to traditional Western, especially US, military power.<sup>40</sup>

The nature of IW and broader hybrid and grey-zone warfare is broader than a matter between military forces, with targets including critical national infrastructure, economies, and the well-being of citizens. This has implications for scenario planning, opening possible future threats to an even more complex array of possibilities. If the Australian Defence organization uses a methodology such as FSS, the underlying dimensional framework may need to be updated. Even then, a balance may need to be reached in exposing Defence to such an expanded range of future threats while simplifying them to support decision making.



## **Asymmetry**

During the first two decades of the twenty-first century, prevalent among defense and security experts was a belief that the primary threats to national security were insurgencies and terrorism, with a lesser concern for conventional state-on-state conflict.<sup>41</sup> The basis of such views were the West's demonstrated ability in the late twentieth century to deliver precise application of force within a symmetrical contest. Over the same timeframe, potential state and nonstate adversaries have been able to develop asymmetric strategies to defeat the West's conventional technological advantage.<sup>42</sup>

David Kilcullen characterized this overconfidence and lack of insight as potentially marking the decline of Western dominance, unless Western militaries adapt to the changing nature of warfare.<sup>43</sup> While the First Gulf War was very successful for the United States and its allies, the war had two contrasting effects on the West and its adversaries, both state and nonstate. For the United States and allies, their success created an excessive confidence that the augmentation of conventional force with networking and precision guidance would be unmatched into the future. For potential adversaries and rivals, the war's lessons led to asymmetrical and offset strategies that could be used to confound, surprise, and frustrate the West.

While terminology may change, the concept of seeking an advantage through such an offset has featured in one way or another in works by many military strategists, and surprise is one of the principles of war in most military doctrines. Liddell Hart interpreted this principle in terms of his "indirect approach."<sup>44</sup> The indirect approach diverged from previous strategists, such as Clausewitz, who had emphasized the importance of directing force against the main body of an adversary.<sup>45</sup> The two key axioms of the indirect approach are choosing the least line of expectation and exploiting the least line of resistance.<sup>46</sup> Hart described these two axioms as two faces of the same coin, representing the psychological and physical aspects of efforts to dislocate an adversary.

It could be said that using asymmetry and exploiting an indirect approach is not *a* strategy, but *the* strategy.<sup>47</sup> The key takeaway for scenario planning is that potential adversaries will undoubtedly take unpredictable actions to dislocate us, both psychologically and physically. A challenge will be to undertake scenario planning that allows us to understand and test our ability to succeed in the face of a complex variety of adversary acts.

A lesson to learn from Kilcullen may be that asymmetry is not just an inherent characteristic of a potential adversary but instead a deliberate strategy by an adversary to expose our vulnerabilities. In scenario planning therefore, it may be valuable to consider that the threat is more than a set of system variables, as pre-

dictable as environmental dimensions, but an adversary who is capable of planning and of rational decisions to make choices to succeed against us.

## Anticipation

Military scenario planning can be considered an anticipatory system in which predictions can help the organization adapt via a feedforward mechanism.<sup>48</sup> The human realm introduces a further complexity to an anticipatory system in that the system being modeled is itself anticipatory, continually reassessing and modifying itself in relation to its environment.<sup>49</sup> In a similar way, game theory has shown the potential for an infinite regress of prediction between decision makers.<sup>50</sup> A simplified approach to understanding adversary decision making may mitigate such a regress in scenario planning, although this may impact the outcome.<sup>51</sup>

The Sun Tzu principle of knowing the enemy remains more critical than ever in future conflict. In information-intensive future warfare, knowledge of an adversary's potential strategies may be as important as awareness of the capabilities of their military platforms. In this environment, grey-zone activities will be designed in anticipation of our level of tolerance and responses. Scenario planning must account for the fact that adversaries will anticipate how our armed forces may act and develop ways to achieve an advantage.

Susceptibility to the indirect approach means that methodologies should give emphasis to *plausibility*, not just the *probability*, of a scenario. Potential Surprise Theory is an example of such a methodology, in which consideration of plausibility with potential gains and losses of courses of action may overcome bias.<sup>52</sup> Such bias arises from an analogical view of risks, rather than embracing Knightian uncertainty. Balancing competing priorities of "most likely" versus unexpected scenarios therefore is a dilemma in military scenario planning.<sup>53</sup> Adopting a foresighting approach to prediction, using abductive rather than deductive reasoning, may improve anticipation of uncertainty by expanding the view of plausible futures.<sup>54</sup>

Organizations tend toward most likely challenges due to their experiences, culture, processes, and embedded technology. Clayton Christensen characterized this tendency in terms of a system-of-use, which essentially is a negative connotation of Porter's concept of value chains.<sup>55</sup> This inertia blocks management anticipation of change and allows external actors to take advantage of disruption and discontinuity.<sup>56</sup> The inertia may be further entrenched with the use of traditional intuitive logics scenario planning methodologies, which typically are concerned with a high degree of predictability.<sup>57</sup>

The organization's intellectual capital nevertheless remains important. Combining the human power of analogical reasoning with counterfactual experiences through scenario planning may create greater adaptability to disruptive future

challenges.<sup>58</sup> However, to ensure the planning process exposes the potential for disruption and discontinuity, care might need to be taken not to reinforce analogical beliefs about probable futures into the scenario design.

## **Concurrency**

An adversary may choose not only an indirect approach but also indirect approaches. This may involve complexity of maneuver within the physical domain—but also variety through the employment of hybrid warfare. Hybrid warfare in the future will involve concurrent pressure, disruption, and attack within different domains and with an aggregated effect.

Notwithstanding, Australia's *Defence Strategic Update* acknowledges concurrency;<sup>59</sup> concurrent threats may be a challenge to the ADF and allied military forces. Australia's military doctrine simplifies the Clausewitzian principle of concentration, focusing on a singular center of gravity to provide cohesion of the force.<sup>60</sup> The Joint Military Appreciation Process (JMAP) used by Australian military planners draws upon Clausewitz to focus efforts on a center of gravity to align ways and means with desired ends. Admittedly, hybrid and asymmetric threats may represent different ways and means to target a singular center of gravity. However, depending upon the context, there may also be several centers of gravity that are only related in terms of their support for the grand strategic objective. Clausewitz recognized the possibility of multiple centers of gravity in his eighth book, *On War*, albeit at the strategic level.<sup>61</sup>

The emergence of hybrid warfare has raised doubts about the validity of traditional approaches to center of gravity analysis, although clear consensus on an alternative remains elusive. While some see greater complexity in the need for multimodal analysis,<sup>62</sup> others see simplicity in the ultimate target being the nation's population.<sup>63</sup> Even though indirect hybrid attacks on the nation may not be seen as directly relevant to military scenario planning, they will have implications for our armed forces.

The plausibility of concurrent threats should not be underestimated. The challenge of coordinating and resourcing responses to multiple lines of effort are central to the hybrid warfare concept, but also there is significant potential for concurrency through compounding crises, as evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Armed forces will be required to increase preparedness to meet a range of concurrent hybrid threats, and scenario planning could be used to validate preparedness and identify issues.

## **Scenario Planning Implications**

The FSS methodology developed by Pincombe and Bowden provides a reasonable framework for a defense organization to measure potential capability options against key variables. It simplifies scenario testing in which options can be tested against uncertainty of future scenarios. Available examples have demonstrated its suitability for situations that are bound in complexity, especially with tactical scenarios, where variables are considered in the physical domain. It is unclear how effective the methodology may be to support decision making in more complex scenarios, where multiple interdependent dimensional variables are relevant.

Given the dimensional structure of FSS was derived for land warfare using land warfare experts, there is no reason a broader structure could not be derived through a similar Delphi-based process. Selection of a suitable range of experts may establish a dimensional structure that could be suited for scenarios that reflect asymmetry, the emergence of hybrid threats, and IW. Care should be taken however in selection of the experts: external participants may not be sufficiently aware of military capabilities, whereas internal defense participants may reinforce the embedded and sustaining nature of the system-in-use. Whereas the land warfare dimensions of FSS relied on internal participants,<sup>64</sup> consideration might be given to a balance of stakeholders, expanding on plausible futures and providing a more rigorous test for future force designs against disruption and discontinuity.

It is important not only for our military planners to anticipate plausible futures in scenario planning but also to recognize the unpredictability of adversary behavior. This complexity may be addressed by use of confounding actions to help generate appropriate strategies, as in Adversarial Scenario Analysis.<sup>65</sup> Additionally, the methodology could include more dynamic inclusion of adversarial decision making through use of a red team construct within the activity.<sup>66</sup> However, such a shift toward a contest of decision makers may complicate the conduct of scenario planning.

The primary intent of scenario planning in defense organizations is to support decision making of future force structure. The conduct of scenario planning may also help develop organizational adaptability. With the long timeframes of changes in defense force structure compared to the shorter disruptive cycles in warfare, our armed forces will need to be more agile and adaptable. This is the essence of Australia's Army Accelerated Warfare concept.<sup>67</sup> Incorporating elements of organizational learning within scenario planning processes would represent a processual strategy for dealing with change in parallel with the formal rationalist approach used in capability planning. Such an initiative would contribute to the intent of Accelerated Warfare by strengthening the force's adaptive capacities. As

Helmuth von Moltke, Winston Churchill, and Dwight Eisenhower have noted, planning is more important than plans.

Among the drivers of change noted in the Australia's *Defence Strategic Update* are the emergence of grey-zone warfare, the influence of disruptive technologies, and the erosion of strategic warning.<sup>68</sup> Such drivers will need to be reflected in scenario planning to help shape future defense force structure. Ironically, these same drivers demand greater agility to anticipate and react to disruption than is possible through traditional acquisitions alone. Hence, the department's scenario planning processes could be used to also enhance organizational adaptability.

## **Conclusion**

National defense and protection of national interests are vital tasks that are only possible through methodical planning and preparation of the force. A changing and unstable strategic environment, in which specific threats and tasks are difficult to predict challenges effective planning and preparation. In such an environment, the conduct of scenario planning is an indispensable activity. Moreover, with the increasing attention on hybrid threats, disruptive technology, liminal warfare, asymmetry, and the indirect approach, surprise will only be mitigated if scenarios consider plausible events rather those that are predictable based upon experiences.

FSS is an embryonic methodology that simplifies decision making by distilling complex scenarios and focusing on the set of parameters for which a given capability set can achieve success. With revision of the associated dimensional structure, the methodology could be applied to assess capability implications of joint and future warfare, including consideration of the increasingly dominant information environment. In addition to helping to test the future force design, such scenario planning may help improve the force's organizational ability to adapt to future challenges, which are evolving at a rate faster than traditional military processes, concepts, capabilities, and structures were designed for. In doing so, use of disruptive scenario planning activities, rather than being a matter of going through the motions, may contribute to the preparedness of our armed forces to meet an uncertain and accelerated environment. ✪

### **Dr Andrew Dowse, AO**

Dr. Dowse is the director of defence research at Edith Cowan University. Before starting in this role in early 2018, he had a 37-year career with the Royal Australian Air Force as an electronic engineer, reaching the rank of Air Vice-Marshal. His last few positions at Defence were associated with capability development, strategic planning, and the operation of Defence's communications and information technology. He has a bachelor of electronic engineering from RMIT University, a master's of science degree from the University of New South Wales, a graduate diploma in law from Queensland University of Technology, and a PhD from the University of New South Wales. He is a fellow chartered professional engineer of the Institute of Engineers Australia.

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# Comparing Space Agency Intervention in Taiwan and South Korea

NICHOLAS BORROZ

To develop their space sectors, Taiwan's and South Korea's space agencies intervene differently. This is despite the developmental state literature indicating that the agencies' ideologies, mechanisms, and preferences will be similar. This article recounts the literature's expectations about the two agencies. It then reviews what the two agencies are actually doing to develop their space sectors. This article ends by discussing the implications of the two agencies' differences for stakeholders in Taiwan's and South Korea's space sectors and identifying questions to guide future research that builds off this article's findings.

## Introduction

An increasing number of countries are establishing their own space agencies. These agencies intervene to influence the development of their space sectors. For practical and academic reasons, it is worth studying the following question: How do different space agencies vary in terms of intervening to influence the development of their space sectors? Knowing how space agencies' approaches to intervention differ gives insight into how different space sectors will develop over time. Such insight is useful for a variety of stakeholders, including firms working in the space sector, market analysts assessing trends in the space sector, and policy makers directing space agencies' actions.

To learn more about space agencies' approaches to intervention, this article compares two different space agencies, those of Taiwan and South Korea. The reason for choosing Taiwan and South Korea is that this article builds on developmental state literature that explains how "developmental states," which Taiwan and South Korea both are, intervene to guide economic development. This article assesses whether empirical reality reflects the literature's expectations about how the Taiwanese and South Korean space agencies intervene to develop their space sectors.

## Literature Review

The origin of the developmental state literature focused on explaining Japan's economic success in the years following World War II. The founding piece of scholarship in the literature is *MITI and the Japanese Miracle* by Chalmers Johnson, written in 1982.<sup>1</sup> In it, Johnson provided a detailed account of how Japan was able to achieve economic success. Several factors were at play, according to John-

son, but chief among them was Japan's "plan rationalism," as opposed to the United States' "market rationalism;" in Japan, government's legitimate role was to steer business activity toward developmental goals, whereas in the United States, government's legitimate role was to remove barriers to firms' doing business.<sup>2</sup> Several other scholars subsequently identified plan rational characteristics in governments elsewhere—most notably in Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore.<sup>3</sup> Today, these developmental states—Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore—all continue to display plan rational tendencies in their approaches to intervention.<sup>4</sup> This is despite the homogenizing effects that globalization has had on countries' economic policies, which has arguably undermined governments' ability to control business activity.<sup>5</sup>

The developmental state literature is unlike some other comparative political economy literatures in that its scholars have been reluctant to theorize; there is little consensus about a developmental state "model," which abstracts beyond any particular set of empirical circumstances. This reluctance ties back to Johnson's 1982 book, which was primarily an empirically driven account of Japan's economic interventionism. Subsequent developmental state scholars have also tended to place great emphasis on providing lengthy empirical accounts of how governments go about intervening in economies.<sup>6</sup> Such empirical specificity means many developmental state researchers are region- or country-specific scholars. This is noticeably different than the Varieties of Capitalism literature, another literature in the comparative political economy discipline, which focuses on developing theoretical frameworks to explain how and why different countries organize economic activity differently.<sup>7</sup>

Despite theory rarely being explicitly stated in the developmental state literature, it is implicitly present. Implicit theoretical propositions about how developmental states intervene become clearest considering some of the newer developmental state scholarship, which examines "regulatory states," the market rational counterparts like the United States against which scholars often contrast plan rational developmental states.<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that the term "regulatory state" is in quotes because, in fact, there is no consensus about the appropriate term for the developmental state's market rational counterpart. Scholars focusing on regulatory states describe a process of intervention that parallels, yet differs from, the intervention in developmental states. It is through comparing these parallel approaches to intervention that the implicit theoretical propositions about intervention in developmental states become clear.

When compared to the regulatory states, three implicit theorized propositions about how developmental states intervene come to light. These propositions relate to ideology, mechanisms, and preferences. The first proposition regards ideology:

developmental states are indeed plan rational, rather than market rational, in that they see their legitimate purpose as guiding business behavior toward national development goals.<sup>9</sup> The second proposition regards mechanisms: developmental states prefer intervening via financial incentives such as grants, contracts, and loans, whereas regulatory states prefer intervening via customized support such as innovation or networking services.<sup>10</sup> The third proposition regards preferences: developmental states prefer intervening to support domestic firms that are already active in planned business areas, unlike regulatory states that prefer supporting firms that are competitive.<sup>11</sup>

This is, of course, a simplified summary of the salient characteristics of developmental states. There is no consensus in the literature that these three characteristics—ideology, mechanisms, and preferences—are what define developmental states' approach to intervention. There is, for instance, significant emphasis in the literature on how government bureaucrats in developmental states have "embedded autonomy;" on the one hand, they are business-savvy enough to understand how to best devise intervention efforts, and on the other hand, they are professional enough to put state interests before their personal interests.<sup>12</sup> However, in comparison to regulatory states, such a combination of mission drive and business-savviness does not appear to be a core differentiator; bureaucrats in regulatory states also have embedded autonomy.<sup>13</sup>

This article takes these three characteristics regarding ideology, mechanisms, and preferences as those that define developmental state intervention, but it should be noted explicitly here before proceeding that what developmental states' core characteristics are is still subject to debate. Hopefully, future research that contrasts developmental and regulatory states will, over time, advance consensus about core characteristics of both developmental and regulatory states.

The rest of this article is devoted to reviewing evidence for these three core characteristics in Taiwan's and South Korea's space agencies, to assessing the implications of the space agencies' characteristics for various stakeholders in the two space sectors, and to discussing opportunities for further research. Taiwan and South Korea are suitable countries of focus for this article because they are widely regarded as developmental states.<sup>14</sup> They are furthermore similar regarding their space sectors' status; they are both actively developing their reputations as space powers. This is unlike the two other countries widely regarded as developmental states, Japan and Singapore. Japan, on the one hand, is a well-established space power; the Japan Aerospace Exploration (JAXA) is an accomplished space agency. Singapore, on the other hand, is a nonexistent space power; it does not have a space agency, nor is space sector development a priority for the government.

## **Empirical Evidence for Space Agency Intervention in Taiwan**

### ***Empirical Evidence for Ideology***

Regarding Taiwan, there is significant evidence to support the theorized proposition about its ideology. Taiwan's space agency, the National Space Organization (NSPO), clearly sees its role as guiding business activity in the space sector in ways that align with national economic development plans. NSPO is a member organization of the National Applied Research Laboratories (NARLabs), which is in turn overseen by the Ministry of Science and Technology.<sup>15</sup> NARLabs' mission is fourfold: (1) to support research and development; (2) to cultivate academic research; (3) to promote "frontier" science and technology; and (4) to develop high-tech human capital.<sup>16</sup> NSPO specifically focuses on conducting this mission in the space sector. Its primary goal is developing indigenous technology capabilities, principally in the areas of satellite construction and operation.

Over the past several years, NSPO has organized the construction and operation of a series of Earth observation satellites: the FORMOSAT-3 satellites in 2006, the FORMOSAT-5 satellites in 2017, and the FORMOSAT-7 satellites in 2019.<sup>17</sup> Over time, the agency has gradually been indigenizing hardware and human capital. A stated goal of the FORMOSAT-5 program, for instance, was to "build up Taiwan's self-reliant space technology."<sup>18</sup> An external private contractor in the United Kingdom built the satellite bus for the FORMOSAT-7 batch of satellites, but the bus for the next iteration will be "NSPO-built" (though still using some of the contractor's hardware).<sup>19</sup> It is worth noting that NSPO documents rarely emphasize foreign firms' participation in the satellite program. Taiwanese firms' participation in the satellite program, on the other hand, is often highlighted (particularly with regards to scientific payloads).<sup>20</sup>

NSPO's satellite program is concerned not only with the construction of satellites but also with their operation. Taiwan's ground stations, for instance, are the "primary commanding" sites for FORMOSAT-7 satellite operations; two sites in Taiwan, located in Chungli and Tainan, belong to a network of ground stations in several countries to ensure regular contact with the satellites.<sup>21</sup> Thus, through its satellite program, NSPO helps Taiwan accrue space-sector expertise not just in terms of constructing satellites but also in terms of operating them after they reach orbit.

NSPO's ideological orientation clearly aligns with what one would expect of a government agency in a developmental state. It sees its legitimate purpose as building up a particular part of Taiwan's economy in line with government's larger economic development policy; NARLabs' goal is to develop indigenous technology capabilities, and NSPO is doing this in the realm of space technology. Through

its satellite program, NSPO develops local expertise on how to build and operate satellites. This is a form of intervention that matches the “husbandry” or “mid-wifery” that scholars expect to see coming from a developmental state government agency like NSPO.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Empirical Evidence for Mechanisms***

Turning now to the second theorized characteristic for NSPO, which regards the mechanisms it uses to intervene in the space sector, the literature indicates NSPO intervenes via financial incentives. A review of available information certainly indicates that this is what is happening with regards to NSPO’s interactions with Taiwanese firms; NSPO contracts them to provide specific components that are incorporated into the satellites. Such firms include: CAMELS Vision Technologies; CMOS Sensor, Inc.; the SYSCOM Group; Advanced Control & Systems, Inc.; and Victory Microwave Corporation.<sup>23</sup> At least some of these firms have well-established histories of fulfilling government contracts; one firm, for instance, has had many other government clients besides NSPO.<sup>24</sup>

It is interesting to note that NSPO also contracts several foreign firms. These firms, which provide NSPO with components for its satellite program, include the German firm SpaceTech GmbH Immenstaad; the British firm Surrey Satellite Technology (SST); the Canadian firm COM DEV; the American firm Red-Eye; and the British firm Ball Aerospace.<sup>25</sup> The reason for NSPO contracting these firms appears to be facilitating knowledge transfer. SST, for instance, built the bus for the FORMOSAT-7 satellites, but now NSPO is developing the next-generation bus on its own, albeit with some of SST’s technology.<sup>26</sup> Contracting foreign firms thus helps NSPO develop local expertise.

Many of the entities NSPO involves in its satellite program are other government entities, not just firms. These other government entities’ participation in the program appears to be a consequence of policy-making coordination, not NSPO contracts. The National Chip Implementation Center (CIC), for instance, which is involved in the satellite program, shares lines of reporting with NSPO (it is affiliated with NARLabs, which is NSPO’s parent organization); it is thus likely that policy makers coordinate the budgets and goals of both entities.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, the Instrument Technology Research Center (ITRC) is a member of NARLabs like NSPO.<sup>28</sup> Besides the CIC and ITRC, other government entities involved in the satellite program include the Chung-Shan Institute of Science and Technology, a state-owned corporation; the Institute of Space Science at National Central University, a public school; and the Aerospace Industrial Development Corporation, a government entity privatized in 2014 but whose largest shareholder remains the Ministry of Economic Affairs.<sup>29</sup>

Several US government entities are also involved in NSPO's satellite program. In fact, observers sometimes describe the entire FORMOSAT program as a "joint constellation meteorological satellite mission" by the Taiwanese and US governments.<sup>30</sup> US government entities tend to call the program COSMIC, whereas Taiwanese government entities tend to call the program FORMOSAT.<sup>31</sup> US government entities involved in the program include the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which is NSPO's primary partner; the US Air Force (specifically its Space and Missile Systems Center and its Air Force Research Laboratory); and NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.<sup>32</sup> Utah State University's Space Dynamics Laboratory and the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research have also been involved in the satellites' development.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, facilities located not just in Taiwan but also in the United States process data collected by the NSPO satellites.

In summary, NSPO's mechanisms of intervention are more varied than the literature expects. NSPO does use contracts, which are a type of financial incentive, but the organization furthermore involves other government entities by policy-making coordination. It is, of course, notable, that NSPO uses both mechanisms—contracts and policy-making coordination—with not just domestic firms and government entities but also with foreign ones.

### ***Empirical Evidence for Preferences***

In terms of which sorts of market actors NSPO prefers engaging, its preferences do not align with expectations from the literature. The implicit theorized proposition about the preferences of government agencies in developmental states, like NSPO, is that they prefer engaging domestic firms that are already active in the business areas the government agencies are trying to develop. For the purposes of assessing whether NSPO conforms to this theorized proposition, it is useful to think of this proposition as having two elements: (1) a preference for domestic firms, and (2) a preference for market actors that are already active in planned business areas.

Regarding the first element, NSPO clearly does not conform to expectations in that it engages a wider set of market actors than just domestic firms. While it is true that in some cases NSPO prefers engaging domestic firms, in other cases NSPO also prefers engaging other sorts of entities. As discussed in the previous section, beyond just engaging domestic firms, NSPO also engages foreign firms, domestic government agencies, and foreign government agencies.

Regarding the second element, NSPO does conform to expectations. The market actors NSPO engages—be they firms or government entities, domestic or foreign—already work in the business areas NSPO is trying to develop. SST, for

instance, is a well-established satellite bus maker in the United Kingdom. Similarly, CAMELS Vision Technologies in Taiwan develops imagery devices, which has obvious relevance to Earth observation. The CIC in Taiwan and NOAA in the United States, on the other hand, already work in business areas NSPO is trying to develop.

Thus, one can conclude that NSPO's preferences somewhat match expectations. On the one hand, NSPO engages many types of market actors, not just domestic firms, which is not as the literature expects. On the other hand, NSPO holds true to the expectation about it preferring to work with entities that already have experience in the business areas it is trying to develop.

## **Empirical Evidence for Space Agency Intervention in South Korea**

### ***Empirical Evidence for Ideology***

South Korea's space agency is the Korea Aerospace Research Institute (KARI). Like NSPO in Taiwan, KARI has an ideological orientation that aligns with what one would expect of a government agency in a developmental state. KARI describes itself as "a specialized institution founded for national development through the research and development of aerospace scientific technologies."<sup>34</sup> KARI is explicit about how it sees its role in terms of intervening in markets: "secur[ing] core technologies to enhance . . . national competitiveness and [to act as a] future growth engine in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution."<sup>35</sup> In other words, KARI sees its role as ensuring particular types of business activities happen. KARI is not content to let business activity occur as it would without government intervention; the agency rather sees its role as necessarily guiding business activity toward economic development objectives. This is the *husbandry* or *midwifery* the literature expects to see of a government agency like KARI.<sup>36</sup>

KARI is involved in many areas of the aerospace industry, but there are two that are particularly high priorities: the development of a launch vehicle, and the continued development of Earth observation satellites. Regarding launch vehicles, KARI is developing an indigenous one called KSLV-II, or Nuri, which it plans to launch in 2021.<sup>37</sup> Regarding the satellite program, called KOMPSAT, KARI has launched many satellites to orbit over the past decade.<sup>38</sup> The most recent satellite launched in February 2020.<sup>39</sup> So far, KOMPSAT satellites have launched from other countries on non-South Korean vehicles. Thus, there is an obvious confluence of interest between the two business areas for KARI, with the intent for South Korea to be able to build, launch, and operate its own satellites.

Like NSPO in Taiwan, there is an indigenization aspect to KARI's mission. Particularly with regards to the satellite program, KARI regularly awards con-



tracts to foreign firms to provide components.<sup>40</sup> Such contracts appear designed to, over several generations of satellites, facilitate knowledge transfer so that South Korea can build its own satellites with less reliance on foreign firms. To this end, KARI highlights increasing rates of self-sufficiency in terms of satellite design and fabrication.<sup>41</sup> This indigenization is also occurring with regards to the launch vehicle; the previous generation of the launch vehicle, KSLV-I, relied on Russian technology. Now, for KSLV-II, KARI has awarded contracts to a South Korean conglomerate to build more domestic components.<sup>42</sup> There is little indication of foreign firms playing central roles in KSLV-II's design and fabrication.

### ***Empirical Evidence for Mechanisms***

KARI does not totally conform to expectations in terms of the mechanisms it uses to intervene in the space sector. On the one hand, it certainly does use financial incentives, mostly in the form of contracts. For KSLV-II, for instance, KARI is contracting Hanwha Techwin to develop the launch vehicle's rockets and other components.<sup>43</sup> KARI awarded the firm approximately 12 million USD in January 2016 to develop KSLV-II's 75-ton and 7-ton liquid rocket engines, and it previously awarded Hanwha Techwin contracts to develop other KSLV-II components and infrastructure.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, for the satellite program, KARI contracted Qnion, a South Korean company, to provide some of the instrumentation for the KOMPSAT satellites.<sup>45</sup>

KARI also awards contracts to foreign firms, especially for its satellite program. KARI has contracted the global conglomerates Northrop Grumman and Airbus to provide satellite subsystems, for instance.<sup>46</sup> The agency has also contracted the British firms Ball Aerospace and Dartcom to provide, respectively, a spectrometer and a communications system.<sup>47</sup> KARI has contracted American firms like Harris Corporation and ITT Exelis to provide satellite components.<sup>48</sup> The European firm Thales Alenia Space has furthermore collaborated with the Korean firm Qnion to provide instrumentation.<sup>49</sup>

There is more evidence of foreign firm involvement in the satellite program than in the launch vehicle program, which may be because indigenization is further progressed in the latter. As mentioned before, Russian technology played a role in KSLV-I's development, but now Hanwha Techwin is manufacturing many parts of KSLV-II. It may be that due to knowledge transfer that happened during the development of KSLV-I, KARI can now rely on local businesses like Hanwha Techwin to build most components of the launch vehicle without needing to include foreign firms. Given time, if KARI's satellite program goes according to plan, then indigenization will also progress in that business area; there will be less satellite-related contracts for foreign firms and more for domestic firms.

Like NSPO in Taiwan, KARI also involves other government entities in its programs. Like in Taiwan, this does not appear to be because KARI is awarding those government entities contracts but rather due to policy-making coordination. Unlike in Taiwan, no foreign government entities play significant roles in KARI's launch vehicle or satellite programs. Other South Korean government entities involved in KARI's programs include the Korea Institute of Ocean Science and Technology, which provided components to the KOMPSAT program (in conjunction with Airbus); the Korea Institute for Advancement of Technology, which partially funded the development of satellite instrumentation; and Kyunghee University, which provided space monitoring equipment.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, the Korea Meteorological Association manages data from the satellite program.<sup>51</sup>

### *Empirical Evidence for Preferences*

As is the case for NSPO in Taiwan, KARI's preferences do not totally align with expectations from the literature. Recall that the theorized proposition about KARI's preferences is that it prefers to engage domestic firms that are already active in the business areas it is trying to develop. Like for NSPO, it is useful to assess if KARI is conforming to expectations by splitting the theorized proposition into two elements: (1) a preference for engaging domestic firms, and (2) a preference for engaging market actors that are already working in the planned business areas. For both elements, KARI does not hold true to expectations.

On the one hand, KARI works with more than just domestic firms. It contracts many foreign firms, and it also works with many other government entities to support the development of satellites and the Nuri launch vehicle. It is worth noting that, in comparison to NSPO, KARI does not involve foreign government entities in its programs to any significant extent. The one identified instance of a foreign government entity being involved in KARI's program relates to satellite instrumentation jointly developed by Qnion and Thales Alenia Space; Spain's quasi-government institute, the Center for Industrial Technology Development, partially funded the instrumentation's development.<sup>52</sup>

It is also not clear that KARI prefers the market actors it engages—be they firms or government entities—to have experience in the business areas it is trying to develop. Generally, this seems to be true, but there are notable exceptions. On the one hand, foreign firms like Northrop Grumman and South Korean government entities like the Korea Meteorological Association have obvious relevant experience. However, in the case of domestic firms, it is more debatable to assert that they have relevant experience. Particularly, with Hanwha Techwin appearing to be responsible for developing most of KSLV-II's components, it is difficult to ignore the fact that the conglomerate has never built such large rocket engines before. It is

true that Hanwha Techwin previously built KSLV-I’s “upper propulsion unit,” which provides last-minute trajectory changes to reach orbit; however, the larger first-stage rocket was provided by Russia’s Khrunichev State Space Science and Production Center.<sup>53</sup> Hanwha Techwin describes its provision of KSLV-II’s main engine as a “revving up” of its capabilities.<sup>54</sup> Whereas the firms NSPO engages are quite clearly working in business areas in which they have experience, KARI’s contracting Hanwha Techwin raises questions about how much KARI prefers engaging firms that are already working in business areas it wants to develop.

### Comparing Taiwan and South Korea

The literature indicates NSPO and KARI will intervene in their space sectors similarly. According to the literature, NSPO and KARI’s ideologies, mechanisms, and preferences will be as follows:

**Table 1. Expected ideologies, mechanisms, and preferences**

Ideology	Guiding business behavior toward national development goals
Mechanisms	Intervening via financial incentives
Preferences	Engaging domestic firms already active in planned business areas

The empirical situation aligns with these expectations in some ways, but as indicated in the previous sections, NSPO and KARI also intervene in their space sectors in ways that do not align with expectations. Their ideologies, mechanisms, and preferences are summarized in the chart below:

**Table 2. Actual ideologies, mechanisms, and preferences**

	NSPO	KARI
Ideology	Expected—guiding business behavior toward national development goals	Expected—guiding business behavior toward national development goals
Mechanisms	Unexpected—intervening via financial incentives (for firms), but also via coordination (for government entities)	Unexpected—intervening via financial incentives (for firms), but also via coordination (for government entities)
Preferences	Unexpected—engaging firms (domestic and foreign) and government entities (domestic and US); already active in planned business areas	Unexpected—engaging firms (domestic and foreign) and government entities (domestic); debatable whether already active in planned business areas

Both agencies align with expectations about ideology; they are indeed developmental in that they see their missions as guiding business behavior to align with national development goals. Both space agencies also use financial incentives to engage firms, as expected, but they also notably diverge from expectations by co-

ordinating with other government agencies to involve them in intervention programs. In terms of preferences, there is again divergence, both in terms of not matching the expectations from literature and in terms of differing from each other. NSPO does not simply engage domestic firms but also foreign firms and government entities from Taiwan and the United States. Thus, the types of market actors that NSPO prefers engaging are much wider ranging than expected. NSPO appears to align with expectations in terms of preferring to engage market actors that are already active in planned business areas.

For KARI's preferences, beyond engaging just domestic firms as expected, it also engages foreign firms and other domestic government entities (though not foreign government entities like NSPO). It is worth noting that KARI furthermore does not appear to require the market actors it engages to have significant experience in the business areas it is planning. Hanwha Techwin, for instance, does not have experience building large rocket engines, but that is precisely what KARI has contracted the firm to do.

### **Implications for Stakeholders**

It is worth considering what the implications of these findings about NSPO and KARI are for stakeholders in Taiwan's and South Korea's space sectors. The term *stakeholders* can mean many things. For the purposes of this article, three groups of stakeholders will be considered: firms, market analysts, and policy makers. The discussions below are not comprehensive—they are simply illustrations of some implications, the full array of which is too broad to be addressed in this article. It is also worth noting that just because this article does not mention other groups of stakeholders, this does not mean that there are no relevant implications for them. Similar discussions can focus on other stakeholder groups to consider implications of NSPO and KARI's ideologies, mechanisms, and preferences.

#### ***Implications of Ideology***

Turning to ideology first, the two space agencies are similar in that they see their missions as guiding business activity. For firms, this has obvious implications, since the space agencies' ideologies are likely to impact business opportunities. Something a firm should consider is whether its business plans align with the space agencies' ideology-derived goals. It seems likely, for example, that both NSPO and KARI will continue to push for indigenization of space technologies. Firms should be aware of these indigenization plans and decide how they will respond. In some cases, an appropriate response for firms could be to promote their businesses as facilitating knowledge transfer to build up domestic space-

sector expertise. In the case of some foreign firms, on the other hand, they could decide to work in business areas that the space agencies are not trying to indigenize, thus avoiding appearing to conflict with the agencies' agendas. There is no single appropriate response for how firms should respond to NSPO and KARI's ideologies; the point is rather that firms should be aware of the space agencies' ideologies and respond intelligently.

From the perspective of market analysts, any assessment of market trends should address the space agencies' ideologies, since those ideologies have clear implications for market trends. If a market analyst attempts to forecast the development of Taiwan's space sector, for instance, the analyst should assume that NSPO will likely continue intervening to cultivate certain business areas. The analyst should assess what the consequences of those intervention efforts will be. Will Taiwan's reputation as a state-guided economy affect its ability to attract foreign investment? Will changes in political leadership affect the space agency's prioritization of certain business areas? There are a host of such questions to consider, and rarely will they have clear answers. That being said, market analysts should address them to provide assessments that can help their audiences better understand market trends.

For policy makers, too, there are implications stemming from NSPO and KARI's ideologies. The pertinent issues for policy makers have to do with assessing the effectiveness of the space agencies' ideologies. Are the ideologies effective? Should they be changed? Can they be changed? Answering these questions requires considering the costs and benefits of the ideologies and comparing them to the costs and benefits of alternative ideologies. It may be, for instance, that policy makers conclude that the space agencies' ideologies cause them to behave in ways that have benefits but that an alternative ideology (e.g., a market rational one) would result in more net benefits according to a key performance indicator. Like for firms and market analysts, there is no one way policy makers should react to awareness about the space agencies' ideologies; the point is rather that they should consider the space agencies' ideologies when making policies.

### ***Implications of Mechanisms***

In terms of mechanisms, NSPO and KARI are similar in that they intervene via contracts and policy-making coordination. Like ideology, these mechanisms have implications for space-sector stakeholders. For firms, it is important to be aware that the main way the space agencies engage firms is via contracts. This means if firms are seeking government assistance, they should seek it in the form of contracts instead of in some other form (e.g., consulting or innovation support). Firms should also be aware that since the space agencies coordinate with

other government entities, this may have consequences that affect their business. These consequences depend on how the other government entities are involved; if, for instance, the other government entities provide funding opportunities, then this would be useful to know for firms because they could apply for funding from more sources.

The mechanisms NSPO and KARI use also have implications for market analysts. Regarding the space agencies' use of contracts to engage firms, market analysts should consider the potential consequences of such contracts in terms of market trends. Financial incentives are known, for instance, to potentially warp market demand, influencing firms to modify their business plans to depend on continued government financial support. If the space agencies suddenly remove or reduce such contracts, then this could lead to economic shocks. If, however, the space agencies use contracts intelligently, they can in the long term end up fomenting the emergence of new self-sustaining business areas. Whatever market analysts' assessment of the contracts' consequences, no assessment of Taiwan's or South Korea's space sectors would be complete without addressing them.

The space agencies' coordination of other government entities also has implications for market analysts. Market analysts should, for instance, expect that other government entities will assist the space agencies in their intervention efforts. Market analysts should anticipate which other government entities will likely assist. They should assess how those entities will become involved. They should then forecast what the consequences will be of those entities' involvement. If, for instance, the other government entities also provide contracts or other sorts of financial incentives to the private sector to become more involved in planned business areas, this could have a similar distorting effect as the space agencies' contracts. Market analysts, regardless of their assessment of the consequences of the other government entities' involvement, should address their involvement in their market assessments.

For policy makers, too, NSPO's and KARI's intervention mechanisms have implications. When deciding how effective the space agencies are and considering whether they ought to change, for instance, it is worth policy makers taking the time to consider the mechanisms. It is worth considering, for instance, whether it would make more sense for the space agencies to use other mechanisms (such as state-provided consulting services, innovation assistance, or networking support). To make such a determination, policy makers should calculate the costs and benefits of different combinations of mechanisms and then adjust policy to modify the space agencies' behavior accordingly. Policy makers should also contextualize decisions about the appropriate amount and mix of mechanisms within a larger awareness of other issues. Policy makers may, for instance, be aware of an impend-

ing need to reduce government spending, which potentially necessitates switching the space agencies over from awarding contracts to using different mechanisms that spend fewer fiscal resources.

With regards to the space agencies' coordination with other government entities, this too has implications for policy makers. Policymakers may, for instance, when taking stock of which other government entities the space agencies are working, realize the space agencies should work with different government entities. It may be, for instance, that KARI works with another government entity because KARI personnel are familiar with that government entity, but policy makers may be aware that another government entity would be better suited to assisting KARI. In general, policy makers should be aware of the space agencies' tendency to coordinate with other government entities, and they should be prepared to change such coordination if doing so makes sense from a policy-making perspective.

### ***Implications of Preferences***

NSPO's and KARI's preferences are similar, but different. On the one hand, the two space agencies are similar because they prefer engaging both domestic and foreign firms, as well as domestic government entities. NSPO differs from KARI, though, in that it also prefers engaging foreign government entities, specifically US government entities. Another difference regards what NSPO and KARI require of market actors they engage—be they firms or government entities, domestic or foreign—in terms of the extent to which they have experience in planned business areas. NSPO prefers the market actors already be active in planned business areas, whereas KARI does not necessarily require actors to already be active in planned business areas. Below is a brief discussion of some potential implications of NSPO's and KARI's preferences for firms, market analysts, and policy makers.

For firms in Taiwan, one implication of NSPO's preferences is that, since NSPO prefers to engage both domestic and foreign firms, there may be opportunities for firms to access contracts regardless of whether they are domestic or foreign. Another implication for firms relates to NSPO's preference that firms be experienced in relevant business areas; firms should be aware that having relevant experience may help them access NSPO contracts. If they have minimal experience, on the other hand, it may be best for firms to decide to not pursue any contracts. NSPO prefers to coordinate with other government entities from both Taiwan and the United States, which also has implications for firms. An American firm, for instance, may be able to gain knowledge about potential NSPO contract opportunities by leveraging its contacts within relevant US government entities to learn about NSPO's intervention programs.

In South Korea, KARI's preferences are different, presenting a separate set of implications for firms. On the one hand, KARI, like NSPO, prefers contracting both domestic and foreign firms. This implies that firms, regardless of where they are from, may be able to access KARI contracts. Unlike NSPO, though, KARI appears to not require that firms have significant experience in the business areas related to the contracts, at least in the case of domestic firms (as is the case for Hanwha Techwin's contracts to build KSLV-II's rocket engines). This implies that domestic firms may be able to win KARI contracts even if they do not have significant direct experience; this seems more likely to be the case if the domestic firms are applying for contracts in business areas where KARI is particularly intent on building up domestic expertise and is thus more willing to prioritize domestic firms regardless of their experience. Another KARI preference is for working with other South Korean government entities, but not US government entities like NSPO does. One implication of this for firms is that there is no other set of government entities outside South Korea they can access to learn about contract opportunities related to KARI.

The preferences also have implications for market analysts. For market analysts studying Taiwan, they should expect that domestic and foreign firms will be involved in NSPO's programs; the space agency prefers providing contracts to both. Any analysis of Taiwan's space sector that examines just contracts for domestic firms and not for foreign firms, therefore, is incomplete. Market analysts should also be aware that NSPO prefers to contract firms that already have relevant experience. This implies that NSPO will contract only certain types of firms, and analysts should take this into account; they should not, for instance, overemphasize the possible range of firms that may be involved in NSPO's programs. A final implication of NSPO preferences for market analysts is that they should expect there to be a combination of Taiwanese and US government entities supporting NSPO's efforts. This has myriad implications for market analysis, perhaps most notably that the presence of US government entities lowers the likelihood of other types of market actors being present in Taiwan's space sector; it is unlikely, for instance, that NSPO will collaborate with firms that are tied to governments with which the United States has a hostile relationship.

KARI's preferences have a distinct set of implications for market analysts. On the one hand, analysts should be aware that, like in Taiwan, the space agency awards contracts to both domestic and foreign firms. Any analysis that focuses purely on domestic or foreign recipients of KARI's contracts will thus be incomplete. Market analysts should also be aware that KARI does not necessarily prefer firms it contracts to have significant experience in the business areas it is developing; analysts should be aware that South Korean conglomerates like Hanwha Techwin may re-



ceive large contracts, particularly in business areas where KARI is intent on indigenizing expertise. The fact that KARI appears to prefer working with only other government entities from South Korea is also relevant for market analysts. This implies that they should not generally expect foreign government entities to play an influential role in space-sector development in South Korea. This leads to many potential analytical takeaways, one being that South Korea's space-sector development efforts may be unlikely to be influenced by foreign governments.

The final group of stakeholders to address is policy makers, for whom the findings about NSPO's and KARI's preferences also have implications. Starting with Taiwan, policy makers should question whether the distribution of contracts between domestic and foreign firms is appropriate. Should more domestic firms be awarded contracts, for instance? Policy makers can contextualize NSPO's work within larger government initiatives to make such a determination. They should also question the suitability of NSPO requiring firms to have significant experience in the business areas it is developing. Perhaps it would instead be appropriate to contract Taiwanese firms that do yet not have considerable experience, since doing so could speed along indigenization. NSPO's tendency to prefer working with Taiwanese and US government entities also has implications for policy makers. Should, for instance, US government entities continue to play such central roles? To answer this question requires policy makers to consider many other factors besides space-sector development, such as Taiwan's foreign policy.

In South Korea, KARI's preferences have implications for policy makers. Like in Taiwan, analysts should question whether the distribution of contracts between domestic and foreign firms is appropriate and ought to be changed. Policy makers should also question the appropriateness of KARI's requirements in terms of firms the agency contracts having relevant experience. Perhaps contracted firms ought to have more experience, for instance. KARI's preference to work with other government entities only from South Korea is also something worth policy makers' consideration. Should KARI take a page from NSPO's playbook and work more with government entities from other countries?

### **Implications for Research**

This article contributes to the developmental state literature because it shows that although both Taiwan and South Korea are developmental states, they have different sets of ideologies, mechanisms, and preferences. These findings generate several questions worthy of further research. Four in particular stand out with regards to gaining a better understanding of how Taiwan and South Korea go about developing their space sectors. The first question has to do with confirming whether these differences do indeed exist. More information must be collected

and analyzed to confirm that NSPO's and KARI's ideologies, mechanisms, and preferences are indeed how this article portrays them. Might it be, for instance, that KARI does in fact significantly work with foreign government entities?

A second research question worth studying, particularly if further research confirms this article's portrayals of NSPO and KARI are accurate, is why the differences exist. The literature indicates that there should be consistency between ideologies, mechanisms, and preferences. Is it possible that consistency still exists, even if NSPO's and KARI's ideologies, mechanisms, and preferences are not as anticipated? Might it be, for instance, that the differences in terms of NSPO's and KARI's mechanisms and preferences simply reflect slight differences between the two space agencies' ideologies?

A third research question this article raises is whether NSPO's and KARI's approaches to intervention have changed over time. Both space agencies are approximately 30 years old. Has the past decade differed from the first two? If there have been changes, why did they occur? Have the changes, if they exist, paralleled each other in Taiwan and South Korea, or have each changed in their own particular ways?

A fourth research question worth studying has to do with transposing this article's findings from agency-specific to government-wide analysis. There are differences between South Korea and Taiwan in terms of their overall government structures and how the space agencies are situated within these structures. It might be that Taiwan and South Korea are more similar or different than portrayed in this article if one takes a government-wide perspective. It is possible, for instance, that space-sector intervention projects are concentrated in the space agency in Taiwan but are widely dispersed across various agencies in South Korea. Looking at government-wide approaches to intervention in the space sector might identify more or less similarities between Taiwan and South Korea than are identified in this article.

Besides these four suggestions for further studies of Taiwan and South Korea, this article concludes with a suggestion for a grander area of future research: comparing space-sector development efforts by a wider variety of governments, including those in both developmental states and in regulatory states. The reason for this suggestion is that, to date, there has been little direct comparison of developmental states like Taiwan and South Korea on the one hand and regulatory states like the United States on the other. Much of the scholarship in the literature, as mentioned in the review section at the beginning of this article, is country- or region-specific. The literature has shied away from making theoretical propositions about how governments go about intervening outside of any particular empirical context.

More comparisons between developmental and regulatory states would help advance this unpursued endeavor; by explicitly comparing space agencies in the two political economy types, it may be possible to arrive at theorized propositions that can be applied to many contexts. For example, it may be possible to gain a better understanding about the relationships among ideologies, mechanisms, and preferences. Such a focus would be useful for the literature, since it would expand its relevance and allow it to begin tackling new subject matter. It would also be useful outside academia, since better understandings of space agency intervention would improve awareness of how different national space sectors are likely to develop. This would in turn give insight into how the space sector on a global level is likely to develop. More broadly still, such research would contribute to ongoing discussions about the differences between different governments' approaches to market intervention. ♣

#### **Nicholas Borroz**

Nicholas Borroz is a doctoral candidate at the University of Auckland's Department of Management and International Business, where he compares how different governments intervene to support business internationalization. He also consults for firms in the space sector and furthermore manages a website, *Filling Space*, which features weekly interviews with experts in the space sector: <https://filling-space.com/>.

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# Competing with China Today

MAJ CAMERON ROSS, USAF  
LT COL RYAN SKAGGS, USAF

## Abstract

As the national security apparatus continues to shift toward great-power competition, there is still a significant lack of understanding about the nature of the current competition and how the armed forces can engage within the strategic reality. This article outlines the road to competition with China, as well as the nature of the struggle, to provide clarity on the challenge such competition poses. Within that context, this article provides recommendations for how the military can translate the strategic concepts found within the *National Defense Strategy* into more tangible actions.

## Introduction

In 1997, the First Vice Premier of China, Zhu Rongji, stood up to give a toast at a lunch for hundreds of businesspeople in Sydney, Australia. When Zhu rose to speak, his country stood on almost two decades of remarkable economic growth as Beijing gradually opened China's economy to the outside world. With a broad grin, he declared to the delight of his audience, "Let's all get rich together!"<sup>1</sup> Such capitalist sentiment was music to the ears of Western leaders, despite that it came from a representative of an avowed communist party that ruled through a system known as "socialism with Chinese characteristics."

While the West welcomed the opening of the Chinese economy, leaders also hoped that economic liberalization would naturally lead to political liberalization. The expectation was that further engagement with the West would logically lead the Chinese to adopt Western attitudes about governance, international commitments, and economic practices. As H.R. McMaster summarized, the persistent assumptions that guided American policy since the 1970s were that "After being welcomed into the international political and economic order, China would play by the rules, open its markets, and privatize its economy. As the country became more prosperous, the Chinese government would respect the rights of its people and liberalize politically."<sup>2</sup> Three decades later, those assumptions are proving to be completely wrong.

The United States instead finds itself in a resurgence of great-power competition with an increasingly assertive China. As the 2018 *National Defense Strategy* (NDS) outlines, "The central challenge to US prosperity and security is the re-

emergence of long-term, strategic competition by what the National Security Strategy classifies as revisionist powers.”<sup>3</sup> While the national security apparatus is sluggishly awakening and adjusting to that reality, there is a significant lack of understanding as to the nature of the current competition and what competing with China actually means, especially as it relates to the armed services. Former Secretary of Defense James Mattis regularly spoke about expanding the competitive space and having a competitive mind-set. While the services have readily accepted that parlance, there is still much work to be done in translating the strategic concepts into tangible realities. What does a competitive mind-set entail? What does it mean to compete with China if we are not at war with them? While the *NDS* makes clear that the goal is not to be blindly confrontational but instead to uphold the international order, what is the role of the armed forces in that political endeavor? Before we can begin to answer these questions, we must first thoroughly understand the current competitive space and how we arrived here. Once we grasp the nature of the problem, several recommendations for action become apparent and provide more concrete ways for members of the armed services to engage within the current strategic reality.

### **The Road to Competition**

In his groundbreaking book, *The United States and China*, John King Fairbank argued that historical perspective “is not a luxury but a necessity” for understanding Chinese actions.<sup>4</sup> While many national identities are grounded in a territory or a people, China defines itself in terms of a history.<sup>5</sup> Familiarity with that history, particularly the period following the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) rise to power, is fundamental to understanding how we reached the current competitive environment.

The reign of the CCP began in 1949 after a 20-year guerilla insurgency in the bloody civil war against the nationalist Kuomintang government. The communists’ victory ended a period in China’s history now referred to as the Century of Humiliation, which was marked by foreign intervention and subjugation of the empire to external entities. Both points are critical to appreciating the thinking and approach of the CCP.

China’s expressed foreign policy aims have progressed through several phases since that time. Mao Zedong’s tenure was largely marked by efforts to consolidate domestic control and achieve international recognition as the legitimate government of China. That focus began to change after the death of Mao in 1976, when Deng Xiaoping commenced economic reforms to open China to the international economy to spur growth and speed up modernization.<sup>6</sup> While these reforms opened the door to increased engagement with the West, including Pres. Richard

Nixon's visit to China in 1972 and the United States' eventual recognition of the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) in 1979, such engagement faced a major setback with domestic protests in 1989 that ended with brutal suppression at the Tiananmen Square massacre. Immediate international condemnation followed, and the United States imposed sanctions on China, citing human rights violations.

In response to the immense internal strife and external pressure, Deng introduced the idea of keeping a low profile while working hard over the long term to become an international political power. This later evolved into his "24-Character Principle," which translated to "observe calmly, secure our position, cope with affairs calmly, never seek leadership, hide brightness and cherish obscurity, get some things done."<sup>7</sup> He encouraged China to hide its light and keep a low profile internationally, an approach that became known as "hide and bide." This remained the ruling thought of the CCP into the 2000s, as Chinese leaders worked to avoid conflict and improve relations with industrial nations to advance China's domestic situation.

The turning point for Chinese international thought occurred in 2008. Several events throughout the year served to boost China's confidence and help jumpstart an internal dialogue about revising its hide-and-bide strategy: they showcased China as hosts of the summer Olympics; they surpassed Japan as the second-largest economy in the world; they navigated the worst global recession since 1929 largely unscathed and resumed double-digit gross domestic product (GDP) growth only a year after it began;<sup>8</sup> and they also increased in relative power with the United States, as America's global influence waned under the strain of the economic collapse and two stagnating wars. Emboldened by these developments, China's paramount leader, Hu Jintao, declared that Beijing should adopt a strategy of maintaining a "*continuously* low profile and *proactively* get[ting] some things done."<sup>9</sup> Although this seems a tame alteration, its significance cannot be underestimated. CCP leaders spend an enormous amount of time vetting terms before they become policy concepts. The change indicated Beijing's sober understanding of the international order and its own rising power within it.<sup>10</sup> While Beijing was still in a period of "strategic opportunity," Chinese leaders started to sense the time was approaching for a shift away from Deng's 24-Character strategy.

That shift came swiftly after Xi Jinping came to power in 2012, fueled by the great ambitions and fears that sit at the root of so many Chinese activities today—ambitions to restore China's greatness in the world and fears that the party was vulnerable to pressures at home.<sup>11</sup> Xi immediately discarded Deng's hide-and-bide strategy and replaced it with his own "striving to achieve the Chinese dream of great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."<sup>12</sup> His dream includes making China a "moderately well-off society" by 2021 and a fully rich China "closer to the center



of the world stage” by 2049, the hundredth anniversary of Mao’s founding of the PRC.<sup>13</sup> Xi proposed a “New Type of Great Power Relations” between the United States and China, where the two nations would come together as equals.<sup>14</sup> He approved maritime policies in the South China Sea that Hu deemed too aggressive.<sup>15</sup> Xi also launched three ambitious and overlapping policies and programs to expand China’s influence and grow its power: Made in China 2025, Military-Civil Fusion, and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).<sup>16</sup>

China’s assertiveness has only intensified with the rising tensions with the United States over trade practices, intellectual property theft, and the outbreak of COVID-19. What was once thought of as the peaceful rise of a nation destined to settle responsibly into the existing world order has gradually given way to the grim reality that the West is in the midst of a renewed great-power struggle with a rival that holds a fundamentally opposing worldview. As McMaster succinctly stated, “We had undervalued the degree to which ideology drives the Chinese Communist Party. As a result, we had indulged in this conceit over the years that we could change China by welcoming China into the international order. It was pretty obvious by 2017 that that didn’t work.”<sup>17</sup>

## **Current Challenge**

The ideology that we undervalued lies at the very core of the current challenge China poses. Fundamentally, this is a war of ideas that centers on competing visions for the international order. In the aftermath of World War II, the United States and the West built a world order that aimed to keep the peace through collective military strength and shared prosperity. Such an order rested on security relationships between like-minded Western democracies and a network of international institutions implementing a rules-based order to enforce collective norms and values. Universal values, human rights, and the benefits of democratic ideals were among the primary concepts extolled by the order’s initiators. China, with its market-Leninism and authoritarian rule, explicitly rejects and derides the core tenets undergirding that world order and, thus, seeks to destroy it. As Andrew Michta has said, “What is unfolding before our eyes—and has been underway for three decades since the end of the Cold War—is the second, and possibly decisive and final stage of conflict between liberal democracy and communism.”<sup>18</sup>

While Western leaders have, at times, appeared ignorant to the fact that they are engaged in an ideological struggle, the CCP clearly defined Western values as an existential threat. As an example, a restricted memo known as Document no. 9, issued by the administrative engine room of the central leadership in 2012, reiterated China’s views about the centrality of ideology in this struggle and highlighted specific conceptual perils that they must guard against if they want to

avoid the fate of the Soviet Union.<sup>19</sup> This document outlined seven taboos forbidden in public discourse, including Western constitutional democracy, universal values and human rights, promarket neoliberalism, Western ideas of an independent press, and Western concepts of civic participation.<sup>20</sup> Since the CCP views the realm of ideas as the primary threat to its domestic rule, it is only natural that an international system based on threatening ideas would be viewed as an existential issue, particularly in light of the Party's attempts to balance further engagement with the West with political control at home.

Ironically, the CCP has utilized many of the liberties they abhor to undermine international order from within and make way for something new. Beijing has exploited the free exchange of ideas, open civic participation, and free-market policies to wage China's campaign against those same liberal norms and the institutions that uphold them. In doing so, China's leaders are attempting to establish a modern-day tributary system in which countries can trade and enjoy peace with China in exchange for submission. Beijing is also not particularly shy about it. In a meeting at the 2010 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Chinese foreign minister bluntly told his counterparts, "China is a big country, and you are small countries."<sup>21</sup> In the eyes of the CCP, the pathway away from liberalism leads to an alternative that is safe for authoritarianism—and one where China is sitting center stage.

China's attempts to reshape the current environment have also benefited from differing perspectives on war and peace. The Western tradition views war as an extension of politics with clean breaks between the two. For China, there is no binary difference between war and peace, there is only a continuum of struggle. China's lack of major geographical barriers forced its rulers to be innovative when planning their defenses and pushed them to harness all the resources of Chinese society for the effort. Sun Tzu, as early as 500 BCE, argued for using political, psychological, and noncombative means to achieve one's ends before fighting.<sup>22</sup> This mentality, coupled with the CCP's familiarity with protracted warfare and its extensive experience with insurgency, has resulted in a much more fluid and continuous view of competition. Agnus Campbell, chief of the Australian Defence Force, described this broader view of war in a speech in 2019: "Its reach extends from what we would see as 'peace' right through to nuclear war. In other words, it is a constant of life. For these states, the strategic landscape requires a never-ending struggle. It's a struggle that has been maintained throughout history, and it's a struggle that's happening right now."<sup>23</sup>

Clearly, the challenge facing the West is not simply the potential for war to interrupt the current peace, it is an ongoing and enduring struggle of ideology and interests. The fundamental driver of conflict with the CCP is the inherent clash

between liberalism and illiberalism.<sup>24</sup> Washington seeks to maintain the current world order built on liberal and democratic principles; the CCP seeks to undermine those principles, which it views as an existential threat to its rule, and replace the current arrangement with a modern-day tributary and mercantilist system that serves China's interests. What is more, China seeks to achieve those ends without its opponents ever knowing that it was happening. Like the analogy of a boiling frog, Beijing is pursuing China's objectives using methods that are so covert and seemingly benign that its adversaries never realize the trouble until it is too late. Sun Tzu captured it best: "attaining one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the pinnacle of excellence. Subjugating the enemy's army without fighting is the true pinnacle of excellence."<sup>25</sup> Political warfare is Beijing's means to achieving that excellence.

### **Political Warfare and Comprehensive Coercion**

George Kennan famously described *political warfare* as "the employment of all the means at a nation's command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives."<sup>26</sup> While this definition broadly encapsulates the activities of China, others have used the term *comprehensive coercion* to capture the uniquely subversive, intrusive, and wide-ranging nature of the CCP's political warfare as compared to other nations, such as the United States.<sup>27</sup> Regardless of the term, the methods have been standard instruments of statecraft for the Chinese for centuries. Subversion, co-option, and coercion were essential to the survival, rise, and consolidation of power of the CCP. Years of being on the defensive against an international system that regularly challenged the legitimacy of the Party's political and economic system and reinforced norms that were inimical to its domestic control have only furthered Chinese leaders' paranoia.<sup>28</sup> That insecurity has fueled Beijing's aggressive use and continual refinement of these tactics for decades.

Even more than his predecessors, Xi has massively expanded CCP political warfare efforts to shape foreign opinions and influence foreign decision making. Consequently, CCP operations are vast and wide-ranging. The following is an overview of their primary characteristics<sup>29</sup>:

- **Mobilizing ethnic diasporas**—Xi's strategy to harness the overseas Chinese population includes surveilling, recruiting, and "guiding" residents to push Chinese narratives, undertake basic intelligence functions, and report "unpatriotic" behavior. Refusal to cooperate has led to threats of adverse consequences for relatives in China and for their own prospects should they return home.<sup>30</sup> The CCP has also used ethnic Chinese as a political weapon. In 2017, a top Chinese official threatened leaders of the Australian Labor

party with mobilizing the 1.2 million ethnic Chinese in Australia against the party over an extradition treaty with the PRC, stating, “It would be a shame if Chinese government representatives had to tell the Chinese community in Australia that Labor did not support the relationship with between Australia and China.”<sup>31</sup>

- **Tasking Chinese students abroad to suppress anti-China views**—CCP organizations encourage students and academic organizations to confront and submit formal complaints against anyone who offers views contrary to Beijing’s narratives. Further, well-organized groups of students have descended on peaceful demonstrations supporting issues sensitive to the CCP and attempted to out-shout participants or break up the demonstrations, at times even resorting to violence.<sup>32</sup>
- **Sponsor pro-regime educational institutions to promote pro-Beijing views**—Chinese companies and Chinese-funded associations have donated hundreds of millions of dollars to Western universities to influence research and public support.<sup>33</sup> Confucius Institutes, Beijing-administered centers devoted to language and cultural classes at universities, are a primary organ for funding and messaging, with more than 160 centers at US colleges. The CCP pays for all operational costs, textbooks, and teachers, which gives them complete control of the research and teaching agenda, while operating under the banner of academic freedom that comes with university association.<sup>34</sup>
- **Providing substantial financial support and other assistance or favors to individuals or institutions that can or will support China’s interests**—CCP-associated entities fund numerous “independent” research institutes and prominent individuals, including politicians, officials, and reporters. Many are offered all-expenses-paid trips as well as access to senior CCP officials to foster pro-Beijing research and public opinion. After an Australian politician was caught softening his policies against Chinese activities to secure a 400,000 AUD donation, investigations unearthed that Chinese-linked businesses were the largest donors to both the Labor and Liberal parties, totaling more than 5.5 million AUD in two years.<sup>35</sup>
- **Large-scale operations to influence and coerce Western media**—China has gone to great lengths to establish a “new world media order” under the control of Beijing. Along that vein, China has expanded the presence of China Global Television (CGTV) and state media organizations to virtually all key regions and cities throughout the world. Pro-Beijing entities have aggressively purchased almost all Chinese-language newspapers and social media platforms as well as shares in Western media. In April 2018, Bloom-

berg News reported that the CCP had invested three billion euros in acquiring shares in various media companies in Europe over the preceding decade. Where they cannot buy ownership, they have purchased space within prestigious international dailies across 20 countries, including *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal*, for their *China Watch*, an advertorial insert that appears to be part of the paper but is written entirely by the English-language propaganda newspaper *China Daily*.<sup>36</sup>

- **Commercial pressure**—On numerous occasions, CCP officials have threatened “consumer-led” boycotts of organizations or companies that support policies antithetical to China. Chinese state-owned enterprises led a mass boycott of Lotte department stores, forcing the company to sell its assets in China, after Lotte permitted an American Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defense system to operate on land it owned in South Korea.<sup>37</sup> After the owner of the Houston Rockets tweeted support for the antigovernment protests in Hong Kong, CGTV and Tencent suspended all broadcasts of the National Basketball Association preseason in China.<sup>38</sup>
- **Leveraging trade and investment dependencies**—Beijing is notorious for its pattern of economic clientelism, as exemplified in the BRI. China offers developing countries loans for large-scale infrastructure projects without the strings that often come with lending from Western banks. Once the countries are in debt, the CCP uses the leverage to force alignment with China’s agenda. The debt trap becomes more ruthless when countries are unable to service their loans. For example, after agreeing to high-interest loans to finance construction on a port, Sri Lanka was forced to sign a 99-year lease to China for the port when Colombo could no longer afford the payments.<sup>39</sup>
- **Mobilizing Chinese-owned companies to pursue strategic objectives**—Chinese companies are required by law to establish party organizations, which allows the CCP massive control over corporations. It is not unusual for the Party to encourage or even command companies to purchase a foreign asset or take part in a strategic international investment project. The pretense of companies operating independently of the CCP was laid bare to the Treasurer of Australia when the Finance Minister of China brazenly told him, “All I want is to buy 15% of your top 200 listed companies.”<sup>40</sup> If the Party tells Chinese businesses to partake in some venture, the companies do it.
- **Penetration of Western research and other institutions to access cutting-edge technology**—Chinese nationals with direct ties to the CCP, including a People’s Liberation Army (PLA) officer at Boston University, have been involved with research projects that have national security applications.

While testifying in Congress, FBI Director Christopher Wray said, “The use of non-traditional collectors, especially in the academic setting—whether it’s professors, scientists, students—we see in almost every field office that the FBI has around the country.”<sup>41</sup>

- **Theft of intellectual property**—China’s efforts to steal intellectual property, primarily through cyber means, are well documented. Gen Keith Alexander, then National Security Agency Director and Commander of US Cyber Command, said US companies lose about 250 billion USD a year through the theft, which he called “the greatest transfer of wealth in history.”<sup>42</sup> Much of the theft has directly facilitated modernization of Chinese defense enterprises.
- **Use of paramilitary forces to seize, occupy, and militarize select areas**—China has used a series of maritime and land constabulary and militia forces, as well as commercial organizations, to conduct strategically important operations in places like the South China Sea. These gray-zone tactics provide some distance between the Party and the operations, but they are always backed by PLA forces lurking on the horizon.<sup>43</sup>

This summary only scratches the surface of Chinese activities and is devoid of many specifics for brevity’s sake.<sup>44</sup> However, it serves to highlight how the nature of the current conflict is not one of conventional war but is instead grounded in political warfare and geo-economics.

## Competing Today

Having outlined the road to competition and the nature of the current struggle, recommendations for how the armed forces can employ a competitive mind-set, expand the competitive space, and compete today begin to come into focus. Such recommendations entail not only generic prescriptions for competing that extend to the entirety of the United States, including the armed forces, but also specific steps that the military must take to contend with China.

As a start, *we must recognize that we are already in a competition.* The China problem is not just one of a growing military power and the potential for war—it is an enduring struggle of ideology over competing visions of the future. For clarity’s sake, we define *competition* as “the application of attention and resources necessary to gain and maintain a sustainable position of advantage while remaining a dominant player in the enduring struggle of international politics.” To compete, therefore, we must accept the perpetual rhythm of struggle that characterizes international relations. It does not necessarily mean we should partake in all their methods, but it does mean that we need to operate with eyes open to the reality of political warfare. It also does not mean that we should lose ourselves in com-

peting just for the sake of competition—we cannot exchange the wishful thinking of engagement with wishful thinking of competition. China is too big of an economic power and too integrated within global institutions to merely be challenged on all fronts. We must be prepared to live with it as a major power and a significant trading partner, which means our attitude should entail elements of both competition and cooperation. As Kurt Campbell and Jake Sullivan outlined, “The best approach, then, will be to lead with competition, follow with offers of cooperation, and refuse to negotiate any linkages between Chinese assistance on global challenges and concessions on U.S. interests.”<sup>45</sup>

Next, given the nature of political warfare and China’s current efforts, *we must enable transparency and exposure of their activities*. The effectiveness of Beijing’s coercive methods is contingent on ambiguity and remaining below the level of awareness. An informed public reduces such coercion’s impact and increases the scrutiny of such activities. As we have seen in Australia, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Singapore, the Philippines, and India, exposure led to more public inquiry, tighter legislation against foreign influence, controls on foreign investments, and enhanced resourcing of defense initiatives.<sup>46</sup> Increased awareness of the extent of Chinese incursions into Australia led to a 20-percent drop in the number of Australians who trusted China, and 75 percent of respondents said authorities should do more to restrict China, even if it means sacrificing some economic benefits.<sup>47</sup> Further, in Western countries it allows for two of our biggest strengths to come in to play—a boisterous and independent press as well as robust public discourse. The free exchange of ideas can be an enormous advantage and an engine for innovation that can help generate new approaches to dealing with China’s tactics. As Princeton professor Aaron Friedberg said, “sunlight is the best disinfectant.”<sup>48</sup>

The *United States and the West must also re-enter the arena of ideology*. After years of contending with communism, we victoriously emerged with the assumption that universal values, the importance of human rights, and the virtues of representative government would go unchecked. To make matters worse, a values-based foreign policy fell out of favor after the Iraq War. Ideology became dangerous and idealistic rather than a source of American strength. We need to reinvest in our societal resilience by reaffirming the republican principles that have driven the country throughout its existence, and we must begin defending them on the international stage once more. This has the added benefit of raising the cost on China. In championing liberalism and contrasting it with the brutal, oppressive, corrupt, and controlling characteristics of the CCP, we strike the Party’s most sensitive nerve. The CCP fears ideas above all else and, thus, is hypersensitive to criticism and frightened of information that does not support its fabricated narrative. Consequently, efforts to compete ideologically will have a disproportionate

effect on Beijing's calculus. All attempts to do so must be sensitive to that reality and ensure that they are measured rather than excessively provocative, but we should no longer ignore those differences in hopes to not offend.

Defensively, there are several steps that should be taken. *Foremost among them is upholding and strengthening alliances.* Alliances are one of our greatest strengths and serve as the foundation of the international order that we seek to uphold. We need to offer an alternative to which our allies and partners still want to be connected. Further, all our efforts should accord with the rules-based system we work to maintain, as deviations undermine our message and challenge our reliability as a partner. If we cannot stand as a dependable ally and defender of the order, others will be forced to succumb to China's wishes out of necessity. We should also fortify our alliances through sharing intelligence on China's activities as well as best practices for addressing the challenges these activities pose. Our allies provide complementary capabilities, perspectives, access, relationships, and information that are critical to competing with China.

We also need to *harden our telecommunications infrastructure* against Chinese equipment, companies, and penetration. For too long we have operated as if Chinese companies were outside of the reach of the CCP. While awareness is growing, much more attention and resources should be devoted to securing our telecommunications backbones and protecting our country from cyber vulnerabilities. It is an incredibly difficult task devoid of easy answers, but our current exposure demands that we explore all options, including measures like regulation of service providers and public investment in future technologies. These two steps will go a long way toward defending against further Chinese aggression.

While these prescriptions apply to our nation as a whole, including our armed services, they also have specific manifestations within the military. *We need to do a better job at understanding the current threats and educating our entire force on the challenges they present.* Not only do we need a more robust effort to learn about Chinese culture, history, and language, but the lowest levels of the military need to understand that we are in competition today as well. Our mind-set and behaviors change when we step off a plane in a combat zone, because we are aware of the threat before us—we need to think along those lines now. Some support missions and career fields have traditionally operated as if they were immune to the threat because they were not directly involved in the fight. Knowing it is overmatched conventionally, Beijing has made it a point to deliberately target areas like communications, transportation, acquisitions, and logistics as strategic pressure points to allow China to compete asymmetrically. Therefore, every member of the defense enterprise must adopt a competitive mind-set that assumes they are a target and



think through the implications within their own work centers. It is not merely the combat forces that need to prepare for great-power competition, all of us do.

Not only does a competitive mind-set entail a realization of the threat and the existence of struggle even in what is ostensibly peacetime, it also consists of an *entrepreneurial approach to pushing back*. The US Embassy in Beijing subtly but brilliantly challenged the CCP by beginning to regularly post the air quality for Beijing in its Twitter feed.<sup>49</sup> Pollution is a hot button issue for citizens in China, and simply posting hourly updates challenged the CCP's own reports that downplayed the problem, irritating the Party to no end. Our military commanders need to foster and reward that kind of innovative thought in their organizations. Long before any fires are exchanged, members need to be taught how to understand risk and become more comfortable with prudently accepting some in order to compete with China.

With regards to applying the attention and resources necessary to gain and maintain influence from a position of advantage, the entire defense enterprise must *continue to reassess mission sets and force posture in accordance with the strategic reality of great power competition*. The past two decades have served as a reminder that the military and America cannot do everything and be everywhere. Consequently, tough decisions will need to be made with regards to force posture and support levels. This is an area where we can lean on the strengths of our alliances. We cannot continue to underwrite global security by ourselves; many of our allies and partners can and should do more by taking a more active role within their sphere of influence. We should help them do so and assist any other nation willing to uphold the international order and struggling against the overreach of authoritarian states.

Finally, we will have to *rethink how we compete in great-power competition*. Up until now, it has meant more planning for war in China's backyard as well as increased spending on big defense acquisitions. Increasing the US ability to project credible power and survive in a contested environment is necessary and should not be abandoned wholesale, but we need to devote more time toward planning for war in the information space as well as investing in capabilities that allow us to control and operate in that space. If the United States solely focuses on prevailing in a high-end, break glass war, China will achieve its aims without firing a shot. The competition has already begun, and we need a proactive and integrated information operations campaign to compete in the grey zone now. We need to pursue actions designed to impose costs, create surprise, magnify misperceptions, demonstrate capability, and divert attention to shape the calculus of Chinese leadership. China is intent on winning without fighting. If we continue to focus on winning in the fight, Beijing will achieve China's ends before we can push back.

The gears are beginning to turn in the shift toward great-power competition, but much more attention and reprioritization is required before the United States is fully ready to meet the challenge.

## Conclusion

Little doubt remains about the aims, intentions, and challenges of China's rise. The United States is in an ideological struggle over the future of the international order, and we must compete now if we want to maintain the rules-based order that enabled our security and prosperity for the past 70 years. Understanding that the CCP is engaged in enduring political warfare helps the United States and its armed forces to grasp what competition entails today. We need to realize potential venues to gain or maintain advantage where we can, while also operating in the rules-based system we seek to uphold. It requires commanders at all levels to accept risk to foster a culture of aggressiveness, opportunism, and innovation to be able to prevail within this environment. If we take the steps to compete now, we might be able to maintain a strategic advantage in the realm of international politics. If we do not, we will lose the war before the battle even begins. 🌟

### Maj Cameron Ross, USAF

Major Ross is an intelligence officer within the 566th Intelligence Squadron and has extensive expertise in signals and cyber intelligence. He has a BS in American history from the United States Air Force Academy and an MA in theology from Biola University.

### Lt Col Ryan Skaggs, USAF

Colonel Skaggs is the Commander of the 566th Intelligence Squadron at Buckley AFB, Colorado, and previously served as the director for defense policy and strategy at the National Security Council and as an airpower strategist in CHECKMATE for the deputy chief of staff for operations in the Pentagon. He holds master's degrees in strategic intelligence, military art and science, and military strategy. He is currently finishing his PhD dissertation.

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# India's Catalytic Reforms for Space 2.0 Era

DR. CHAITANYA GIRI

India has one of the world's most proficient space programs, with a wide portfolio of space technologies and operations.<sup>1</sup> These proficiencies were achieved despite low access to technical, human, and monetary resources and in a developing economy milieu and difficult times.<sup>2</sup> Currently, India's space economy constitutes almost 2 percent of the global space economy,<sup>3</sup> which is estimated to be worth 423 billion USD.<sup>4</sup>

Since its inception in 1969, India's civilian space agency, the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), has laid a strong foundation for diverse space launch, remote sensing, space-based communications, and space science competencies. However, while pursuing these competencies, the Government of India (GoI) has made sure that the ISRO diligently focuses on socioeconomic applications and serves as an agency of constructive space diplomacy.<sup>5</sup> In May 2020, the GoI initiated far-reaching policy reforms in the Indian space program, taking into consideration many fast-paced global technological, geopolitical, and economic developments.<sup>6</sup>

If one is to sort spacefaring nations, only for a clear distinguishing analysis, India can be placed as a second-generation spacefaring nation along with the People's Republic of China (PRC), Japan, Germany, France, and Brazil. This categorization makes the United States and Russia the first-generation spacefaring countries, as they have been the only ones to utilize their World War II-era military industrial complex to make pioneering forays into outer space and sustain their space dominance.

When India emerged independent from British colonization in the mid-twentieth century, New Delhi had neither the extensive World War II military industrial complex nor the innovation ecosystems that the first-generation spacefarers had accrued. Thereafter, New Delhi attempted to balance, often successfully, space-technology imports from the West and the Soviet Union, along with simultaneous avid efforts for space-technology indigenization. India's nonalignment, despite it then being a developing economy, the ensuing geopolitical factional tug-of-war, and a hostile neighborhood have repeatedly hindered indigenization and kept space research and development (R&D) tightly under the government's control—with access to only few private sector players. Therefore, India's technol-

ogy policy makers have long realized that India's innovation prowess will be directly proportional to the consolidation of the Indian economy.<sup>7</sup>

With this direct proportionality in consideration, the GoI, in 2014, formulated some conducive and attractive high-technology innovation and manufacturing policies for the private sector under their flagship policy projects: Make in India for the World; Invest India; Startup India; and Digital India.<sup>8</sup> The Make in India for the World program has a strong space-technology component, which offers 100-percent foreign direct investment for satellite construction and operations with some oversight from the Department of Space, the government's primary space policy body.<sup>9</sup> These flagship policy projects were not effective enough to make the space sector future ready. This was because, New Delhi was not counting on the role of private sector in developing a vast repertoire of Industry 4.0-based space technologies that are rewriting the scope of commercial, civilian, and military space programs.<sup>10</sup> Neither was the GoI analyzing the progresses of the third-generation spacefaring countries—particularly, Australia, New Zealand, Luxembourg, and the United Arab Emirates—that are piggy-backing on private sector-spawned new and emerging Industry 4.0-enabled space technologies.<sup>11</sup> With the advent of these third-generation nations' efforts, space activities are becoming extensively democratized and privatized globally. Although the Indian space agency was performing up to its mark, the organization lacked a private sector to operate with it on an equal pedestal. The COVID-19 global pandemic, the ripples the virus has caused in the global high-value technology supply chains,<sup>12</sup> and India's quick policy-riposte have witnessed a positive upswing in India's techno-economic growth.<sup>13</sup>

This article briefly highlights the May 2020 space reforms and the domestic, geopolitical, pandemic-related, and Industry 4.0-driven causal factors that are influencing the evolution of India's space industrial ecosystems.

### **Domestic Factors Responsible for India's Space Reforms**

Despite the disruptive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 has been a catalytic year for the GoI, which has begun to extensively reform the nation's high-technology sector.<sup>14</sup> In the months prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic, New Delhi was aiming to expand India's gross domestic product to 5 trillion USD by the year 2025.<sup>15</sup> However, such calculations failed to anticipate a Black Swan event that would derail such progress;<sup>16</sup> the pandemic has spawned two distinct factions among policy makers, one claiming New Delhi's goal cannot be met by the target year and another claiming all is in order.

The GoI was quick to initiate a comprehensive pandemic rehabilitation plan: Aatmanirbhar Bharat (Self-reliant India). The high-technology component of

Aatmanirbhar Bharat is aimed at reducing India's dependency on supply chains originating from hostile nations and their proxies,<sup>17</sup> implementing stringent anti-dumping policies on various products originating from this cohort, imposing bidding restrictions with sunset review probes,<sup>18</sup> and providing incentives to high-technology companies from friendly nations willing to shift their manufacturing units to India.

The GoI has started a production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme to boost manufacturing of assembly, testing, marking, and packaging (ATMP) units such as logic microprocessors, microelectromechanical systems, light-emitting diodes, memory chips, semiconductor manufacturers, fabs, and foundries,<sup>19</sup> which had long been elusive to India's electronics industry landscape. In the short span of six months, the GoI successfully attracted numerous electronics and semiconductor manufacturers to India.<sup>20</sup> Given the timeliness and efficacy of Aatmanirbhar Bharat and despite a near manufacturing standstill in the months of April and May 2020, India recorded a Purchasing Managers' Index of 56.8 in September 2020, the highest in the past eight years.<sup>21</sup>

The GoI, with the space reforms of May 2020, has expanded the scope of the Indian space program from the confines of the ISRO and has committed to create a favorable policy environment for the private space sector to flourish by giving it a level playing field and generating large-scale employment through privatization. To this end, the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe), a new facilitating agency was established in May 2020.<sup>5</sup> The IN-SPACe will provide the private sector enabling innovation and industrial policies, steering companies through simplified and promising guidelines and friendly regulations and giving them the necessary access to use ISRO-built space infrastructure. In 2019, to complement IN-SPACe, the GoI had already established a public-sector company, the New Space India Limited (NSIL), to offer a huge repertoire of ISRO-built technologies and spin-offs to the private sector for commercial applications.<sup>22</sup>

The new space reforms and the establishment of IN-SPACe and NSIL are aimed at enabling the Indian industry and innovation ecosystems to be vital players of the global space economy and increase India's share in that market from the current 2 percent. As a sign of progress toward this goal, many Indian space startups and technology companies, amid the ongoing pandemic-related lockdowns, have accrued inward investments; demonstrated progress in the R&D of their space-technology prototypes; formed strategic partnerships with their US,<sup>23</sup> Australian,<sup>24</sup> French,<sup>25</sup> Canadian,<sup>26</sup> and British<sup>27</sup> counterparts; and made outward strategic investments in global space-technology companies, particularly in the telecommunications, space-launch, and remote-sensing verticals.

## Geopolitical Factors Responsible for India's Space Reforms

India's space reforms have been influenced by the geopolitical game, particularly as played by the PRC in the Indo-Pacific. A belligerent PRC attempted to encircle India with a String of Pearls in the first decades of the current century. The PRC has made geopolitically motivated investments in India's growing digital and electronics market.<sup>28</sup> Beijing has prompted countries indebted to it via Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) loans and grants to undertake covert actions against India,<sup>29</sup> through guerilla actions and noncontact warfare.

The United States is a key driver of the global space economy and is a major benefactor to many of the new third-generation spacefaring countries and their Space 2.0 industries, start-ups, and commercial R&D laboratories.<sup>30</sup> China, in a bid to compete with the United States, has been attempting to develop its own quasi-private-sector space industrial ecosystems, capitalizing on markets in countries that are politically aligned with Beijing and those that are indebted to China under BRI-related commitments. The PRC is carrying out its satellite diplomacy with countries like Venezuela, Laos, Pakistan, Algeria, Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Belarus, and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has set up overseas satellite and spacecraft telemetry, tracking, and deep-space communications ground stations in Namibia and Argentina.<sup>31</sup> The PRC's antisatellite test of 2007, its pathbreaking progress with quantum-encrypted satellite-based communications, and the completion of the Beidou navigation satellite constellation,<sup>29</sup> with the closest ground station merely 100 kilometers away from the Line of Actual Control in the Ngari Prefecture of Tibet<sup>32</sup> have prompted New Delhi to reduce the technology gap with the PRC and cut trade with China that is inimical to India's national security.

Although China is engaging in a great-power contest with the United States, Beijing views India and its other neighbors—particularly Japan, Russia, and Vietnam—as challengers. The PRC also realizes that a hot war with any of these four will be perilous, hence Beijing is focusing on developing technological competence to undertake informationized warfare and achieve space dominance. To this end, the PLA Strategic Support Force, with its constituent Network Systems Department and the Space Systems Department, which were created in 2015, is playing a vital role.<sup>33</sup>

China's expansionist attitude in the subcontinent, its repeated territorial claims over Indian sovereign territory, and Beijing's sponsorship of state and nonstate proxies against India, in addition to China's growing military space operations, have forced New Delhi to restructure India's civilian-only national space program into a more comprehensive one with ample scope for commercial, civilian, and military space operations. Therefore, in 2019, India not only demonstrated deter-



rence capabilities with the Mission Shakti kinetic hit-to-kill antisatellite test<sup>34</sup> but also immediately established the Defence Space Agency (DSA)<sup>35</sup> as a new tri-service unit under the Chief of the Defence Staff.

The PRC aside, the founding of the DSA is concomitant with the other new military space units established all over the world. France founded its Joint Space Command in 2010,<sup>36</sup> Russia created the Russian Space Forces in 2015,<sup>37</sup> Germany created the Cyber and Information Domain Service Headquarters in 2016,<sup>38</sup> United States with its US Space Force in 2019,<sup>39</sup> and Japan established the Space Operations Squadron under the Air Self-Defense Force in 2020.<sup>40</sup> India's space reforms are aimed at creating a vast self-reliant industrial ecosystem that succors the DSA along with the civilian and commercial sides of the Indian space program.

### **The Role of COVID-19 in India's Space Reforms**

India's socioeconomic goals and projections for the decade of 2020s were taking into consideration a robust Chinese economy and China's continuing clout over the global supply chains. The projection estimates were not anticipating any Black Swan events, like the COVID-19 global pandemic has turned out, nor a series of events that could stir India's indigenization goals or rapidly shift high-technology manufacturers from the PRC to India. The COVID-19 pandemic, the dispute initiated by the PLA in the Ladakh-Tibet region in June 2020 during a period of economic lockdown, and the strong military and economic riposte by the GoI has unpredictably kick-started these aspirations.<sup>41</sup>

India does not intend to replace the PRC as a global manufacturing hub only by increasing exports via the backward participation of multinational manufacturers. New Delhi's aspirations are holistic, as India also aims to increase exports via forward participation and by creating national, regional, and continental champions.<sup>42</sup>

New Delhi has begun to comprehend that the successful implementation of space reforms resides in developing a robust foundational innovation and industrial ecosystem, including the missing link of electronics and semiconductor R&D and manufacturing. For that, in addition to the Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Electronics Manufacturing, India has initiated numerous new policies in the electronics system design and manufacturing (ESDM) sector. These include the Scheme for Promotion of Manufacturing of Electronic Components and Semiconductors (SPECS)—aimed at meeting the growing domestic demand in this sector, generating skilled employment and increasing value addition—and the Modified Electronics Manufacturing Cluster Scheme (EMC 2.0), which seeks to strengthen supply-chain responsiveness and reduce time to market by

providing incentives to develop common facility centers, ready-built factories, sheds, and plug-and-play facilities.<sup>43</sup>

New Delhi is also planning to initiate production-linked incentive schemes for the automobile, solar-power, specialty chemicals, pharmaceutical, and other high-tech industries.<sup>44</sup> These policy regulations, triggered by the COVID-19 global pandemic, are expected to create an immense supply-chain bandwidth for the private space sector, which largely depends on these allied sectors for provisions of raw materials and components.

### **The Role of Industry 4.0 in India's Space Reforms**

Another major driver of India's space policy reforms is the impending Fourth Industrial Age that is redefining the technical specifications of existing space technologies as well as complementing many new and emerging Industry 4.0 technologies for space applications. For many years, the ISRO largely interacted with the private sector through the classical vendor-supplier relationship. This private sector was mostly working on the templates offered by the ISRO and had little scope for innovation. Today, New Delhi realizes that although the ISRO and its sister national laboratories possess the necessary competence and wherewithal in terms of conventional space technologies, the private sector is present on equal footing in terms of its know-how in R&D, manufacturing, and commercialization of Industry 4.0-enabled space technologies.<sup>45</sup> The privatization of the US, European, and Japanese space programs and the new operating models demonstrated by third-generation spacefaring countries have influenced New Delhi's space privatization drive. New Delhi now aims to increase India's share in the global space economy using this privatization.

Unlike the United States, which has global private-sector behemoths with specific space, aerospace, defense, electronics, advanced materials, information-communication technologies, and semiconductor portfolios, India's largest private-sector companies are mostly multisector conglomerates or are from the automobile, oil and gas, and information-communication technology sectors. Those companies that have had the history of liaising with the ISRO are anticipated to begin innovating and enhancing technologies they have been working on for several years. Those companies that have less frequently worked with the ISRO will become intrepid. In either case, India's private sector—including the large players, smaller enterprises, and start-ups—will plug into the global space economy in no time. Bharti Global's majority purchase of the US-based global communications company OneWeb<sup>46</sup> and the cooperation agreement between Nelco, a Tata subsidiary known for a satellite-ground station technology, and the Canadian satellite communications provider Telesat<sup>47</sup> are two recent examples that

highlight such rapid connectedness. Early-stage Indian space start-ups are also seeking access to commercially favorable partners and investors from across the world, particularly from Australia, the United States, and other friendly countries.

The ISRO has also initiated a Space Entrepreneurship & Enterprise Development (SEED) project to assist space-related start-ups that seek greater support. The GoI's premier technology-policy think tank—the NITI Aayog—has inculcated Industry 4.0 technologies including green, electric, and advanced air-breathing propulsion, robotics, augmented and virtual reality, and machine learning and artificial intelligence for geospatial applications for the upcoming rounds of funding, under its Grand Challenges program.<sup>48</sup>

### **Space Reforms and India's Path Forward in the Indo-Pacific**

India's space reforms cannot be presumed to be a strictly sectoral undertaking. They must be understood in the context of earlier reforms undertaken in other sectors that have resulted from domestic economic needs, geopolitical drivers, COVID-19-related aftereffects, and Industry 4.0 ramifications. It is certain that the outcome of the space reforms will contribute to India's positioning in the Indo-Pacific, the new geopolitical pivot of the world. The PRC's back-to-back hostilities in the otherwise relatively peaceful and COVID-19-afflicted neighborhood have pushed a strategically reticent New Delhi to review India's role in the Indo-Pacific. New Delhi appears more sure-footed than ever.

India has a successful track record of using space affairs for diplomatic purposes. It has launched satellites for numerous countries, shared space data, assisted in times of disasters and crises, and mentored countries from the developing world. With a comprehensive expansion of India's space capabilities, New Delhi is bound to increase the nation's space-related diplomatic pursuits at bilateral, multilateral, and minilateral levels.

India's space diplomacy has long been dependent only on space agency-level cooperation agreements. With greater private-sector participation and Indian companies' eagerness to join the global space economy, industry-led bilateral and minilateral space cooperation agreements will come into vogue. However, the first preference for cooperation can be extended to friendly and economically and politically stable countries—particularly with those with negligible investments from the Chinese Communist Party. Therefore, the space diplomacy and other industrial engagements are bound to make an impact on the growing protectionism within the global economy.

With greater multipolarization of global geopolitics, New Delhi will engage India's strategically important space industry only with countries with whom it shares comprehensive, special, and strategic partnerships. It is very likely that In-

dia will forge greater agency-, industry-, academia-, and start-up–driven partnerships with many countries, including the United States, Australia, Japan, Israel, Germany, France, South Korea, and Russia.

New Delhi's ability to defend India's interests and uphold a consensus-driven global order in the Indo-Pacific will depend heavily on the utilization of cutting-edge space competence and swift bilateral, minilaterals, and multilateral space diplomacy. Where, the ISRO has been at the forefront of numerous bilateral diplomatic initiatives—the South Asia Satellite launched in 2017 being a solid exemplar—the space component of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (better known as Quad, and comprised of India, Australia, Japan, and the United States) will largely include private space players from all the member countries. India will also exhibit its private space sector's prowess as it engages in space diplomacy with Indian Ocean and Pacific Rim countries, South Asian neighbors, and Oceania.

After the recent space reforms, New Delhi is certain to use space diplomacy to bolster India's outreach via joint industrial and economic partnerships, academic cooperation, joint start-up ventures, acquisition of subsidiaries, attraction of investments, and strategic overseas investments. This outreach will be synchronized with the existing governmental policy megaprojects—the Aatmanirbhar Bharat, Make in India for the World, Digital India, and Startup India—that have been discussed above.

## Conclusion

India's space activities were unusually discreet during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, the government has been successful in pushing long-pending space-sector reforms. These reforms have created ample latitude for India's private sector to participate in national space activities in cooperation with the more space-experienced ISRO and to venture out into international space activities autonomously.

The space industrial ecosystem in India is growing at a pace faster than ever. This growth can be further accelerated with the enactment of a comprehensive set of parliamentary space activities legislation; a policy framework for the private sector participating in space hardware and software services, manufacturing, and operations; and a clear national space vision illustrated by the prime minister.

However, beyond these domestic rearrangements, what will be of far greater importance is the way these reforms assist the Indian space sector in engaging with the global space economy. This engagement will depend on strong bilateral and multilateral strategic space partnerships with the United States and other friendly countries. India has so far been a bright spot in the global economy, and

if it continues with this favorable economic standpoint, New Delhi is likely to become one of the key drivers of the global space economy. 🌐

### **Dr. Chaitanya Giri**

Dr. Giri is a senior fellow of space and ocean studies at Gateway House: Indian Council for Global Relations, India, and an affiliate scientist at the Earth-Life Science Institute at Tokyo Institute of Technology, Japan. He earned his PhD in astrochemistry from the University of Nice Sophia Antipolis, France, and the Max Planck Institute for Solar System Research, Germany. Dr. Giri researches on aquapolitics and astropolitics, the new-age techno-geostrategy, the space and marine industrial complex, and the science of space and planetary exploration.

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# The Quad Factor in the Indo-Pacific and the Role of India

DR. AMRITA JASH

While the world has come to a grinding halt under the Covid-19 pandemic, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, commonly called the Quad, took traction under this very crisis. While countering China ranks high on the Quad's agenda, the unfolding security environment makes it appear to have become the *key* agenda. That is to argue, although the Quad has not outright stated this fact, China, undeniably, is the elephant in the room. The fact that Beijing is excluded from the four-member grouping itself quantifies the very logic behind the making of the Quad. In this case, the Quad can be seen as a new kind of twenty-first-century security alliance.

What adds to the complexity of the grouping is the increasing polarization caused by the US–China rift, with both nations calling for others to “join” its side. The growing contingencies are pushing the Quad to take a greater role in fighting against nontraditional and traditional security risks. Here, the key queries remain: Has the Quad adopted a “fire-fighting” mode? If so, does that make China anxious? What is the role of India in the Indo-Pacific?

## In Tokyo, Quad Strategically Switched off the Virtual Mode

On 6 October 2020, the United States, India, Japan, and Australia held the second Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Tokyo since the organization rebooted in November 2017. It was the second such meeting after the first virtual meeting held in June and marked the first high-level Quad meeting since the 2019 foreign minister-level meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meeting in New York. The Tokyo meeting was definitely not symbolic in orientation, but surely significant in approach, as it was convened as an “in-person” event amid the pandemic—displaying the significance by defying the new norm of virtual meetings.

Furthermore, the timing and circumstance of the meeting, given the rising concerns over Beijing's aggressive behavior and the growing speculations over China's handling of the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan, gave added significance to the Tokyo meeting. The attendees called for stepping up coordination to realize a free and open Indo-Pacific, taking aim at what Washington called China's “exploitation, corruption, and coercion” of smaller states in the region.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, US



Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, in addressing the press conference, stated, “Once we’ve institutionalised what we’re doing—the four of us together—we can begin to build out a true security framework.”<sup>2</sup>

From Beijing’s perspective, the Quad represents a Cold War mentality—a united front against China—hence, Beijing continues to accept the old Asia-Pacific construct rather than subscribing to the new Indo-Pacific nomenclature. Unsurprisingly, China expressed its discontent regarding the Tokyo meeting, railing against “forming exclusive cliques,” “targeting third parties or undermining third parties’ interests” and that such cooperation should “contribute to regional peace, stability and development rather than doing the opposite.”<sup>3</sup>

With these systemic dynamics at play, one can argue that while the pandemic, on the one hand, has pushed the Quad to further act on nontraditional security objectives—aiming at human security against fighting the virus—on the other hand, the situation has also stretched the security envelope of the Quad, given the need to counter China’s growing adventurism and “wolf warrior” diplomacy.<sup>4</sup>

Undoubtedly, one can argue that the health emergency caused by the pandemic has boosted the strategic alignment of regional and external powers as they seek to expand their influence and counter the threats from others—as exemplified by the active role of the Quad amid COVID-19.

### **Quad in Action: China Is the Elephant in the Room**

The circumstances of the twenty-first century have called for a shift in the security architecture from the Asia-Pacific to the Indo-Pacific, triggered by the rise of China, the growth of India’s economic and strategic clout, and, most importantly, the growing importance of the Indian Ocean as a strategic trade corridor that carries almost two-thirds of global oil shipments and a third of bulk cargo. These factors have led to the rise of regional stakeholders calling for a free and open Indo-Pacific, which in turn has led to the reestablishment of the Quad. Member states have a shared Indo-Pacific vision based on their commitment to maintaining a free, open, inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous Indo-Pacific built on a rules-based international order, underpinned by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) centrality, rule of law, sustainable and transparent infrastructure investment, freedom of navigation and overflight, mutual respect for sovereignty, and peaceful resolution of disputes. To note, Australia was one of the first countries to officially adopt the term *Indo-Pacific* in its 2013 *Defence White Paper*,<sup>5</sup> however, the term gained traction with US President Donald Trump’s call for a “free and open Indo-Pacific,” a region where independent nations could “thrive in freedom and peace” and all states “play by the rules,” in his 2017 trip to Asia.<sup>6</sup>

It was the 2004 Tsunami that provided the initial momentum for the formation of the grouping of the four Indo-Pacific democracies—calling for collaboration in humanitarian assistance/disaster relief operations. However, over time, the grouping has evolved into one with a strategic outlook centered on the rising concerns over free and open seas and a rules-based order. With formal dialogue resuming in late 2017, after a 10-year hiatus, with the four countries meeting on the sidelines of the ASEAN and East Asia Summit meetings in Manila; since then, the Quad has met twice a year, with the “Quad Plus video-conference” held regularly under the pandemic and bringing other interested states into the dialogue. This confirms the transition of the Indo-Pacific from its initial conception as a geographical construct to that of becoming a political and strategic construct, which is perceived differently by different countries.

Notably, in 2019, the grouping upgraded the dialogue to the level of foreign minister/secretary of state. With COVID-19 becoming a key focus, the group was upgraded to “Quad Plus,” adding three additional Indo-Pacific countries—New Zealand, South Korea, and Vietnam—and some external stakeholders: Israel and Brazil. This expansion is driven by the logic of convergent security interests under the pandemic and jointly looking at a way forward. Additionally, the China factor has loomed large in the security and political discourse of the Quad—with each member experiencing heightened tensions with China. For instance, Washington has been at loggerheads with Beijing since 2018 over a bilateral trade war and successive diplomatic fallouts. India and China are engaged militarily at the Line of Actual Control since April 2020, with a violent confrontation on 15 June in the Galwan Valley that resulted in the first casualties in more than 45 years. Canberra’s diplomatic fallout with Beijing has escalated sharply, centering on a series of defense, trade, and foreign policy disputes. Likewise, Japan’s growing tensions with China in the East China Sea have worsened in relation to China’s growing aggression in the region.

In a gambit showing signs of discord with China, the bottom line being fighting an aggressive and assertive China defined by unilateral behavioral dispositions. This is well-witnessed in China’s ramped-up island-building activities and militarization of the South China Sea, establishment of the air defense identification zone in the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, the debt-trap lending of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and the military standoffs in Doklam in 2017 and eastern Ladakh in 2020 and growing Chinese footprints in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Notwithstanding these unilateral Chinese behaviors, the Quad has, in principle, maintained that the grouping is not against any country, but China’s increasing expansionist designs are manifesting the increasingly anti-China approach of

the Quad. As noted, China is no more the unidentified threat. This was apparent at the Tokyo meeting, where members leveled direct criticism of China regarding COVID-19 and Beijing's growing adventurism in the Indo-Pacific. The implications of this new anti-China position are profound, with the South China Sea, Taiwan, East China Sea, and the Himalayan border poised as the likeliest triggers of direct conflict with China and rendering the security of the Indo-Pacific region a top priority.

### **The Quad Makes China Worry**

China's once phantom concerns regarding the Quad are quickly becoming a reality. This is fueled by the increasing potency of the Quad. Arguably, adding to the political aspect, the strategic dimension that forms the core of the Quad is also finding a greater relevance and boost. Australia joining the United States and Japan in the India-led 24th Malabar Naval Exercise,<sup>7</sup> in November 2020, set a precedent, marking the grouping's first such joint military exercise and illustrating their commitment to work together toward shared security interests.<sup>8</sup> Previously, Malabar exercises were held with the United States since 1992 and with Japan since 2015; however, Australia had been excluded from the exercise since 2007, when the first iteration of the Quad had collapsed. Thus, Australia's participation in the 2020 exercise seemed to put to rest questions of the members' commitments to the revamped grouping.

This show of force in the Indian Ocean adds to Beijing's anxiety in the region, particularly in the maritime domain, as China's great-power aspirations in the Indo-Pacific fall short given that it is not a primary player in the IOR. To build China's foothold in the IOR, Beijing has adopted several proactive measures.<sup>9</sup> First, China has deployed the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) in anti-piracy operations in the western Indian Ocean, docking PLAN ships and submarines in the IOR and conducting of live-fire drills in the region. These actions reflect Beijing's intention to safeguard China's strategic interests in the Indian Ocean. Second, China has established its first overseas permanent naval military base in Djibouti, claiming it to be a support base meant to supply missions for implementing China's escorting, peacekeeping, and humanitarian aid missions in Africa and West Asia.<sup>10</sup> Third, the grand "21st Century Maritime Silk Road," part of the BRI, under which China has a hand in developing ports such as Gwadar in Pakistan, Hambantota in Sri Lanka, and Kyaukpyu in Myanmar, has boosted China's maritime connectivity to the IOR and essentially filled the void of its "offshore" status. This is significantly changing the status quo and, most importantly, shaping the new Indo-Pacific security architecture.<sup>11</sup>

With these dynamics at play, one can strongly argue that COVID-19 has provided a much-needed boost to the Indo-Pacific security framework, as evident from the growing activism of the Quad, which indeed is making China anxious, more than ever. With the international tide turning against China, the proponents of a free and open Indo-Pacific are gaining greater incentive to rally together in fighting common threats—traditional and nontraditional.

### **India's Bigger Role in the Indo-Pacific**

India's geographic and geopolitical centrality in Indo-Pacific provides a counterbalance to China's growing presence in the Indian Ocean. The need for such a counterbalance is primarily driven by India's security concerns, focused largely on China's encirclement policy through port facilities in India's neighborhood—particularly, Gwadar and Hambantota—and the desire to maintain and protect open and free sea lanes of communications against concerns regarding China's chokepoint in the South China Sea and increasing maritime presence in the Indian Ocean under the guise of antipiracy operations.

One can observe India's strategic weight in the Indo-Pacific as a fourfold framework. First, unlike the Asia-Pacific architecture, the Indo-Pacific construct provides New Delhi with an opportunity to rise above its long-labeled middle-power status. This is reinforced by India joining the league of great powers—particularly, the United States and Japan—and fostering close strategic relationships with Washington and its allies in the region. This significantly advances India's great-power aspirations and ability for power projection in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

Second, New Delhi's active engagement in the Indo-Pacific automatically boosts India's Act East Policy and Extended Neighbourhood Policy. This boost is reinforced by New Delhi's closer ties with the member states of ASEAN, including Vietnam, Singapore, Thailand, and Myanmar.

Third, the strengthening of the India-US Strategic partnership, mainly through defense ties, acts as a strong counterweight to India's rivals. This is exemplified by increased engagements between New Delhi and Washington as noted in terms of the four foundational agreements signed between the two countries, comprising the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA, 2002); Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA, 2016); and Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA, 2018); and finally, Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA, 2020)—promoting interoperability between the two militaries and making provision for sale and transfer of high-end technologies. Most importantly, the enhanced relationship provides a significant boost to India's military capability, especially in striking targets with pinpoint accuracy—an imperative need for India to keep close watch on

Chinese movements along the Himalayan border and in mapping China's growing presence in the Indian Ocean.

Additionally, in terms of arms transfer, American arms exports to India have risen from negligible to 15 billion USD. Moreover, increased military exercises between India and the United States—such as Tiger Triumph, the first bilateral triservice amphibious military exercise between the two nations—have greatly enhanced interoperability and comradery. Additionally, being party to the Blue Dot Network provides New Delhi with an attractive alternative to counter China's BRI.

Fourth, India's strategic role is further boosted under India–Australia relations, which were upgraded to of a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2020. Additionally, Canberra and New Delhi signed nine arrangements, key among these being the Australia-India Mutual Logistics Support Arrangement and the Defence Science and Technology Implementing Arrangement providing a framework to deepen defense cooperation between the two countries.

Fifth, and most importantly, under COVID-19, India also proved itself as a first responder to a regional crisis, providing its immediate neighbors—such as Maldives, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, and Seychelles—with medical aid. Indeed, such assistance was provided on a more global scale, with New Delhi providing assistance to Italy and Iran, two of the countries hit hardest by the pandemic. Comoros and Kuwait also received medical rapid response teams from India to augment their preparedness in tackling the pandemic. Additionally, India evacuated nine Maldives nationals from Wuhan, China, the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak.

In addition, India championed the idea of building a global response to fight the pandemic, championing virtual summits: i.e., the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) web conference (15 March 2020) and the “Extraordinary Virtual G20 Leaders' Summit” (26 March 2020). Moreover, New Delhi established a SAARC Emergency Response Fund for COVID-19, with an initial 10 million USD contribution from India. Additionally, India's Armed Forces have been actively engaged in carrying forward India's mission abroad. In February, an Indian Air Force (IAF) relief aircraft evacuated 76 Indians and 36 foreign nationals from Wuhan. In cooperation with the Indian Army, the IAF launched the 18-hour Operation Sanjeevani to deliver 6.2 tons of essential medicines and hospital consumables to the Maldives, and the Indian Navy's warship INS *Khatri* (5,600-ton landing ship) deployed under Mission Sagar, carrying medical teams, consignments of essential medicines, and food supplies to Maldives, Mauritius, Madagascar, Comoros, and Seychelles.

In addition, India is seen as one of the world's new “preferred” destination for investment, as countries seek to shift production out of China. What makes India

a preferred choice is the large size of its market and, most importantly, cheap cost of labor. Notably, Apple established a manufacturing base in collaboration with Foxconn in India, and South Korea's Samsung has closed operations in China and relocated manufacturing units to India. In response to these developments, India is identifying land parcels across the country to support these anticipated investments. This further adds to India's role in the global supply chain system.

There is little doubt regarding the emerging role of India not just as a key player but also as a responsible actor in the Indo-Pacific. With New Delhi's active role, India has already assumed greater responsibility in the region, calling for a bigger and more influential role in the post-COVID world. Thus, the post-COVID international order is likely to witness greater maneuvering space for India, wherein India is deemed to be one of the key drivers in steering policy and defending allied interests in the Indo-Pacific. Indeed, COVID-19 has enlarged the Quad framework, allowing key players to take active roles in tackling pressing traditional and nontraditional regional challenges.

## **Conclusion**

Given the increasing pace and scope of the group's activity, the Quad indeed is emerging as one of the key multilateral fora committed to an enhanced security partnership in the post-COVID-19 world order. Moreover, an active Quad helps dispel the long-held speculation over the Indo-Pacific being a largely dormant construct. With the stakes higher than ever, each of the Quad's four members must play more significant roles in balancing the threats and power plays in the Indo-Pacific. Every step forward by the Quad will put Beijing in a challenging position in fulfilling China's great-power ambitions. Thus, the Quad's emergence as a unified front that champions a free and open Indo-Pacific will definitely unsettle China. Moreover, if China continues to push the security envelope and test the Quad members' resolve, the grouping will turn into exactly the sort of anti-China squad that Beijing fears. 🌟

### **Dr. Amrita Jash**

Dr. Jash is a research fellow at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies. She was a visiting fellow at the Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Cambridge. Dr. Jash holds a PhD in Chinese studies from Jawaharlal Nehru University. She is the managing editor of the *CLAWS Journal* (KW Publishers). Dr. Jash co-edited the book *COVID-19 & Its Challenges: Is India Future Ready?* Her research interests focus on China's foreign policy and Chinese military, strategic, and security issues.

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# 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

DR. JOHN M. HINCK

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. 🌐

### Dr. John M. Hinck

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.

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# The Economics of Repression

## The Belt and Road Initiative, COVID-19, and the Repression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang

DR. SUNGMIN CHO  
LT JOSHUA TURNER, USAF

Since President Xi Jinping started his second term in 2017, Chinese forces have imprisoned up to two million Uyghurs in detention camps, which Beijing claims are educational centers for vocational training.<sup>1</sup> The international community has alleged human rights violations in Xinjiang, but Beijing defends that China's measures are necessary to eradicate the so-called "three evils of terrorism, separatism, and extremism."<sup>2</sup> Regarding Beijing's motivations behind the repressive measures in Xinjiang, much analysis has focused on the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) views of internal security, social control, and Han-ethno nationalism.

However, it is important to note that China also has economic interests at stake in Xinjiang's political stability. Experts have pointed out that the intensification of repression in Xinjiang coincides with Beijing's growing emphasis on Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects.<sup>3</sup> If the BRI projects facilitate the repression in Xinjiang, then one can also assume that the outbreak of COVID-19 has a secondary impact on Xinjiang through its immediate effects on the BRI projects. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the developments in Xinjiang, it is vital to track and identify the effects of the BRI and COVID-19 on the repression of the Uyghur minority.

### BRI and Its Impacts on the Repression in Xinjiang

Xinjiang is a critical region to the success of the BRI projects, as its location connects China with the countries in Central Asia and Middle East.<sup>4</sup> Four of the six major BRI land routes—including the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)—run through Xinjiang.<sup>5</sup> The massive investment in the infrastructure projects carries high risks for the periodic turmoil in the Xinjiang area.<sup>6</sup> As part of CPEC, for example, a significant amount of funding has been injected to develop Kashgar, a hub city on the ancient Silk Road that Central Asian countries have historically competed over. Given its significance as a strategic point for commercial networking, Beijing made Kashgar a special economic zone. It is noteworthy that Kashgar also has been traditionally regarded as the "spiritual heart" of

the Uyghurs.<sup>7</sup> Thus, China's commercial interests with BRI projects intersect with the Uyghur's cultural identity problems.

The strategic importance of BRI projects has driven the CCP to intensify its repression of Xinjiang Uyghurs for two major reasons. First, the BRI projects will enhance Xinjiang's connectivity with countries in Central Asia and the Middle East, and that means the Muslim population in Xinjiang will be more widely exposed to the external influences from those regions. The CCP has good reason to be worried about such increased connectivity. In 2014, the East Turkistan Islamic Party threatened to conduct a jihad in China, a year after Beijing announced the launch of the BRI projects.<sup>8</sup> In the same year, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) also threatened to seize the territory of Xinjiang, which it identified as a legitimate part of Islamic Central Asia.<sup>9</sup> Such threats from Central Asia and the Middle East amplifies the CCP's concerns about terrorism, separatism, and extremism in Xinjiang. In this context, Anna Hayes, a professor at James Cook University, argues that Beijing started to focus on "re-educating" the Muslim minorities so China could fortify the population against the external influences when it launched BRI projects.<sup>10</sup>

Second, the BRI projects facilitate the oppression of the Uyghurs by creating permissive conditions in world politics. There is evidence that many countries are inclined to support China at global fora because they benefit from billions of dollars in Chinese investments through BRI programs. Muslim countries are no exception.<sup>11</sup> Given the Muslim countries' outraged response to the Western satire of their religion and culture, as seen in the incident of *Charlie Hebdo*, some observers expected the Muslim-majority countries to form a united voice in the name of Muslim solidarity against the CCP's harsh treatment of Muslim populations. However, these Muslim countries remain oddly silent on the religious and cultural oppressions in Xinjiang.

More than silence, some of them even express overt support for Beijing, praising China's human rights record in Xinjiang. In July 2019, 22 mostly Western countries issued a joint statement at the United Nations' Human Rights Council criticizing Beijing on Xinjiang issues. This marked the first major collective challenge to China's crackdown on Uyghur Muslims.<sup>12</sup> A day later, 37 other countries issued another letter in Beijing's defense. Nearly half of the signatories were Muslim-majority nations, including Pakistan, Syria, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan. These nations collectively blocked a Western motion at the United Nations calling for China to allow "independent international observers" into the Xinjiang region.<sup>13</sup> The "Muslim solidarity" in support of the CCP's crackdown of Muslims in Xinjiang demonstrates

how powerful China's diplomatic and economic might could be in quashing criticism from these countries.<sup>14</sup>

### **COVID-19 and Its Impacts on the Repression in Xinjiang**

If the BRI projects facilitate the oppression of Xinjiang's Uyghurs, the coronavirus has been breaking the causal chain. Due to the pandemic crisis, the BRI projects have been stumbling in 2020; the participating countries could not pay back the Chinese investment, and Beijing could not deliver the funds and labor forces as mutually agreed with the participating countries.<sup>15</sup> Such trends, unexpectedly created by the coronavirus, may have impacts on the repression in Xinjiang in two ways. On the one hand, the hard negotiations between China and the BRI participating countries on adjusting the contract terms may provide more incentives for the participating countries to avoid criticizing Beijing on Xinjiang issues. On the other hand, it is also possible that these countries feel less obligated to support Beijing, as China is also failing to implement the BRI projects in the agreed upon timeline.<sup>16</sup>

Recent developments show a complex pattern at work. This year, at the UN General Assembly, Western countries presented a statement to criticize the human rights situation in Xinjiang and Tibet. The Cuban representative then issued a letter in defense of Chinese policies. Compared to the UN assembly in 2019, there are 18 new countries that endorse China's position. Interestingly, at the same time, 10 countries that had signed the 2019 letter decided not to endorse the 2020 statement. The 10 countries include Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Algeria, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Oman, the Philippines, Qatar, and Somalia. Catherine Putz, the editor of *The Diplomat*, found that many of the countries that did not renew their support for China's Xinjiang policies are either Muslim-majority states or have sizeable Muslim minority populations.<sup>17</sup> It is too early to conclude, but this change may be the signs of Muslim countries' retreat from supporting China's crackdown of the Muslim population in Xinjiang.

While the COVID-19 pandemic crisis contributes to growing criticism of China externally, it leads to more suppression of the Uyghur minority internally. In response to the international accusation, President Xi reaffirmed that China's policies in Xinjiang are "totally correct."<sup>18</sup> Even worse, Beijing seemed to make up for the economic loss caused by the pandemic crisis by utilizing Uyghurs as a supplementing labor force. According to various reports, China has sent thousands of Uyghurs to Hunan, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, and Zhejiang to run the factories after the evacuation of the regular workers since the outbreak.<sup>19</sup> In different parts of Xinjiang, 30,000 workers were forced to resume their duties at the peak of the pandemic in February 2020.<sup>20</sup> The COVID-19 crisis also allowed the CCP to reinforce its



religious repression and social control in the name of pandemic measures. Beijing closed the mosques in February, and the ban extended to the end of May.<sup>21</sup> Despite the outbreak in Xinjiang seemingly being under control, the restrictions are still in place, and many residents accuse the government of acting too harshly.<sup>22</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In sum, the BRI projects have facilitated the oppression of Xinjiang's Uyghurs, but the COVID-19 crisis has been complicating the pattern. The BRI amplifies Beijing's concerns in Xinjiang because the enhanced regional connectivity may further radicalize the local resistance among the Muslim Uyghurs against the authorities in China. The BRI projects also externally create favorable conditions for Beijing to silence the participating countries' criticism of China over Xinjiang issues. However, due to COVID-19, the implementation of BRI projects has slowed down. Many BRI participating countries, especially Muslim states, seem to be recanting their support of China. With Western objections to China's actions in the South China Sea and Hong Kong added to the chorus, the international community's disapproval of China's policies in Xinjiang are only likely to grow over the next few years.

As far as the strategic implication of the BRI projects is concerned, much of the debate in the West has focused on whether Beijing deliberately tries to influence other countries to its advantage through the use of "debt-trap diplomacy," and, if so, how effective such a strategy has been.<sup>23</sup> The case study of Xinjiang in this analysis suggests that more attention needs to be paid to the BRI's effects on the social control and domestic policies of China. ✪

### **Dr. Sungmin Cho**

Dr. Cho is a professor at the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (DKI APCSS), a US Department of Defense institute based in Honolulu, Hawaii.

### **Lt Joshua Turner, USAF**

Lieutenant Turner is a research assistant at the DKI APCSS and a China focused Asian studies master's student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

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# Indo-Pacific Deterrence and the Quad in 2030

LT COL JUSTIN L. DIEHL, USAF

China is clearly demonstrating a desire to grow as a global power and expand its influence as a hegemon in the Indo-Pacific region. Beijing's non-transparent and provocative strategies to achieve that expansion through rapidly growing military capabilities, the militarization of South China Sea island features, gray-zone activities, and increased authoritarian behaviors are but a few trends that have raised tensions and uncertainties in the regional order. As China increases expansionism, it is unlikely that any one nation can solely provide sufficient and credible deterrence to counter an unimpeded rise. The Indo-Pacific region lacks a multilateral entity with the strength, resolve, and congruence of a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), established to deter aggression in Europe. The Quad nations of the United States, Australia, Japan, and India will need to become that collective, viable, and credible deterrence solution.

While debate surrounding the official formation of the Quad will undoubtedly continue and all instruments of power across the diplomatic, informational, military, and economic (DIME) spectrum will be in play, this article will articulate steps that will be required for the Quad to effectively execute deterrence through the lens of military, hard-power solutions. The questions this research seeks to answer are: What will it take, in terms of strategy, investments, and will, for the Quad to credibly deter the rise of an Indo-Pacific hegemon, and how can the Quad collectively provide a military deterrence solution by 2030? Different from previous research, this article will look to provide tangible solutions and demonstrate how the Quad nations can provide that path to deterrence.

## The Idea of the Quad

Maintaining balance in the Indo-Pacific order is of high priority to the United States and nations in the region that share the same interests. Shared values and maintaining democratic norms, along with free and open trade, is imperative to the free-flowing function of the regional powers.<sup>1</sup> Soft-power techniques of diplomacy and trade are providing minimal effect in blunting China's expansion and increasingly far-reaching authoritarianism, demonstrated through expanding military basing, international intellectual property theft, increasing trade barriers with Australia, and programs such as the Belt and Road Initiative. Furthermore,

the steady capability growth of China's military is increasing long-range missile strike options and a growing ability to project power further with new fifth-generation aircraft and maritime assets, bringing almost every nation's homeland in the region within conventional reach.<sup>2</sup> While a US Pacific military presence has been in place since the end of World War II, *there will need to be an increased, collective hard-power effort to establish a credible deterrence against China moving toward 2030.*

The idea of forming a “Quadrilateral alliance, partnership or dialogue” has been in discussion at various diplomatic levels since 2007, generated in the aftermath of the Quad's humanitarian efforts following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.<sup>3</sup> However, there has been resistance. China perceives the alliance formation as an unnecessary means of raising tensions, labeling the Quad as an “Asian NATO,” conveying that such an alliance formation is designed to specifically oppose Beijing.<sup>4</sup> Because of India's proximity to China, coupled with persistent northern border disputes, recently highlighted by the 2017 Doklam incident and Chinese soldiers killing 20 Indian soldiers in 2020,<sup>5</sup> New Delhi steers clear of formally labeling the Quad an alliance.<sup>6</sup> India's hesitation is understandable given its geographic proximity, promoting the Quad in more benign terms such as a “platform”<sup>7</sup> or a “vehicle.”<sup>8</sup> However, recent discussions, especially within Australian and US circles, have leaned toward furthering a “militarized” dimension to the Quad.<sup>9</sup> On 6 October 2020, the Australian and Japanese foreign ministers, Indian external affairs minister, and US Secretary of State convened a ministerial meeting discussing a range of topics, including the South China Sea and joint exercises.<sup>10</sup>

Despite naming reservations, it needs to be recognized that by 2030, countering an expanding China will need the collective hard-power resolve of these four nations. *There needs to be a sense of urgency among the United States, its critical allies, and partners in the region.*<sup>11</sup> The Quad demonstrates shared interests and resolve to maintain balance in this prosperous region.<sup>12</sup> These four anchors are best equipped militarily, and geographically, to assume the leadership roles to enable balance and deterrence.

Each of the four nations have different individual interests in their own defense strategy, all with priorities built foremost around their own homeland defense. Tokyo's defense centers around its Japan Self-Defense Force (JSDF), and New Delhi largely invests in its army to defend India's northern borders.<sup>13</sup> The United States is built to defend through power projection, while Australia looks to find a balance ensuring immediate regional security.<sup>14</sup> US and Australian strategists continue to socialize the strategy of deterrence by denial, a mix of strategies focusing not solely on defending the homeland but also not simply on building an expeditionary force to invade and control a great power.<sup>15</sup> Instead, the focus would

be to stop an impending attack from a forward location, halting an enemy before reaching a nation's shores. As this blunting strategy seems to be the more attractive and viable option, can the Quad invest appropriately and build around a 2030 deterrence-by-denial strategy?

To add further complexity, warfare technology is growing rapidly and at an exponential pace, adding another layer of urgency to the Quad formation. In just 10 years, warfare as it is currently known will have changed drastically, bearing new technologies yet to be fielded and requiring a high level of integration among partner nations that is not currently in place. Warfare will be rapid and networked and take place over a long-range environment with adversaries conducting kinetic and nonkinetic strikes from thousands of miles away. Long-range strike operations will be enabled by hypersonic weapons, hyperglide vehicles, space, fifth-generation aircraft, and submarines—all managed through newly fielded architectures such as Joint All Domain Command and Control (JADC2) and Air Battle Management System (ABMS).

Additionally, if the Quad intends to operate outside of missile threat rings and enhance deterrence-by-denial security options, there will be a requirement for increased joint-use strategic basing options. Currently, China can conventionally reach targets to the Second Island Chain and Guam, bringing almost all current US regional bases under immediate threat should hostilities commence.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, the US Department of Defense (DOD) has declared the Indo-Pacific region as its top priority region<sup>17</sup> in an effort to deter two of America's primary adversaries: China and North Korea.<sup>18</sup> However, the United States and Australia cannot properly prioritize the Indo-Pacific region without decommitting and offsetting forces, weapon systems, and personnel in other regions of the world.<sup>19</sup> High-end, exquisite assets should redeploy to US bases and reset as deterrence options for the US homeland and Indo-Pacific, while committing to further high-end training and integration with partners, allies, and the Quad.

This article will look at tangible recommendations to move forward with credible implementation. Future technology investments will be required by all four nations, coupled with the imperative to demonstrate seamless integration through new battle management systems. Current basing structures limit the Quad's effectiveness to deter a long-range, high-end conflict. The Indo-Pacific region will need the Quad to capitalize on its integrated partnerships to preserve the balance of power in this region amid growing angst.

***What will it take, in terms of strategy, investments, and will, for the Quad to credibly deter the rise of an Indo-Pacific hegemon?***

To achieve credible deterrence and defense against a rising military power, the Quad nations will need to fortify the Indo-Pacific Arc, collectively structuring their forces, furthering capability growth, and establishing new basing options outside of missile threat rings. The Quad would need to provide a foundation as the ‘four anchors’ of the Indo-Pacific, showing deterrent leadership in their subregions while simultaneously integrating each nation’s strengths across the expansive geography of the region.

**Deterrence by Denial**

The employment of a Deterrence by Denial strategy would be defined by two arguments for the Quad. First, the Quad’s intentions should only be to maintain a stable, free, and open region. To do so, the Quad will need to provide effective deterrence around the Indo-Pacific arc, not design a force to invade and occupy within an adversary’s borders. Second, the defense of three of the four Quad nations—Japan, India, and Australia—is designed around homeland or regional defense, not invasion and occupation. Past coalitions, as seen in Middle East operations over the past decades, could combine forces to defeat a lesser adversary. However, the Indo-Pacific expanse is vast, and China is a far larger, more formidable opponent, with a population of 1.4 billion people. The Quad focus should be to deter hostile actions through credible military capabilities and integration, and, if that fails, denial.

The security goals and objectives of the Quad’s strategy should firmly plant deterrence to enable free and open trade of uncontested sea and air lanes, uninhibited prosperity opportunities, and a status quo of peace in the region. With the expansion of globalization and an intense interactive trade environment, the Indo-Pacific takes on the nature of an integrated system.<sup>20</sup> The Quad needs to operationalize as that one, collective system, not four stove-piped militaries, demonstrating effective deterrence by blunting kinetic and nonkinetic adversarial advances in a 2030 environment, while simultaneously creating a plethora of dilemmas to complicate an adversary’s ability to make optimal decisions.<sup>21</sup>

Additionally, a denial strategy must be credible. To be credible, the strategy must be backed by an effective, military architecture capable of enforcing deterrence. The Quad will need to present a denial environment through modern weapon systems around the arc through an active defense posture, giving an adversary little room to make a miscalculated decision.<sup>22</sup> Warfare in 2030 will be employed rapidly through JADC2 networks and effects employed via hypersonic

weapons and space assets. If the Quad denial system is integrated with those effects, it will give great caution to an adversary casting a first shot.

Follow on questions regarding the argument include the following: What strategy is each defense force feasibly capable of employing, and what strategy can the Quad legitimately execute? The strategy may be limited to what the Quad can objectively execute in such a vast region. While the US military is built for global power projection, the rest of the Quad forces are built around defense of their homeland and immediate regions.

The new strategic objectives set out in Australia's 2020 *Defence Strategic Update* are "shape, deter, respond."<sup>23</sup> Australia prioritizes investments over the next decade into systems that will provide defense for the immediate region,<sup>24</sup> likely through a maritime denial strategy countering an adversary at sea from Australia's northern approaches. This strategy provides a balance of not looking to achieve control of the sea or project power to invade another nation but to have the right balance of forces to defeat an advancing enemy, away from Australian borders.

Hugh White, emeritus professor of strategic studies at the Australian National University, acknowledges that while a denial strategy may appear defensive, it would use "offensive" capabilities to defeat an expeditionary adversary.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, Australia recognizes the need for offensive long-range weapon systems, seeking "to hold adversarial forces and infrastructure at risk from a greater distance," through the acquisition of "longer range strike weapons and area denial systems,"<sup>26</sup> investing 3.2–4.8 billion AUD in long-range rockets and missile systems<sup>27</sup> and 7.75 billion AUD in high-speed, long-range strike research.<sup>28</sup> In November 2020, Australia committed to the hypersonic development partnership with the United States, Southern Cross Integrated Flight Research Experiment (SCIFiRE), committing not only resources but also Australian airspace and ranges to test air-launched hypersonic prototypes.<sup>29</sup>

Turning to Japan, the JSDF is designed to defend its homeland from attack. However, Japan does have highly capable weapon systems, including submarines and F-35s, capable of integration with US systems to deter in the northeast region of the Indo-Pacific. In July 2014, Japan slightly amended its constitution to permit the use of force "when an armed attack against a foreign country that is in a close relationship with Japan occurs and as a result threatens Japan's survival."<sup>30</sup>

India's northern border distractions with China create an unbalanced force structure, while trying to offset China's increased presence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). India currently possesses the seventh-largest navy in the world, with one aircraft carrier, 137 ships and submarines, and 291 aircraft.<sup>31</sup> However, India is projected to allocate only 15 percent of its defense budget to naval forces in 2020–2021,<sup>32</sup> only allocating 13–18 percent in its 2012–2018 budgets. The

Indian Army prioritizes 56 percent of funds to invest in its 1.2 million troops and 960,000 reserve force,<sup>33</sup> along with howitzers, Apache helicopters, and other low-end assets to deter Chinese land incursions.<sup>34</sup> The Indian Navy originally planned for 200 ships by 2027 but has now revised down to 175 ships.<sup>35</sup> Thus, while India presents a formidable maritime force, the lack of investment into future capability will be evident by 2030. As China continues to increase its presence in the IOR, India could struggle to counter China alone. Quad solutions will require an increase in US and Australian maritime forces in the region.

Finally, the implementation of this strategy would weave into the new US strategies of dynamic force employment (DFE) and agile combat employment (ACE).<sup>36</sup> DFE gives the joint force credible, flexible, and scalable options to deploy to any theater,<sup>37</sup> while allowing forces to train, exercise, and maintain readiness in their home nations without an unending forward-deployed posture. ACE then provides the ability to disperse DFE forces across numerous smaller airfields throughout the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>38</sup> ACE will allow Quad forces to complicate an adversary's decision calculus across an expanse of air bases, while increasing survivability of Quad forces.<sup>39</sup> To implement such an overarching strategy, the Quad will need to increase joint strategic basing options.

## Integrated Warfare

*... we must make clear-eyed judgments about our strategic future as an Air Force. We must be able to adapt and accelerate change to account for the strategic environment we face today and the far more challenging environment we can expect to face tomorrow. We must train and prepare in order to maintain a decisive advantage across the full spectrum—from competition to conflict.*

—General Charles Q. Brown, Jr., US Air Force Chief of Staff

Understanding what it will take for the Quad to engage in an effective deterrence-by-denial strategy requires a clear understanding of the emerging character of conflict. Warfare in 2030 will be defined by networks and command structures, synchronized to rapidly close kill chains through sensor-to-shooter systems. Whoever integrates faster and closes kill chains autonomously will achieve the speed and effects to compete with a great power. JADC2 will operate on the backbone of systems such as ABMS, enabled by joint space assets, prosecuting long-range hypersonic missiles and fifth-generation platforms, all incorporating artificial intelligence (AI) for autonomous effects. If the Quad system is going to achieve deterrence, or worse, face a great-power adversary in conflict, *all four nations must be networked, linked, and integrated across one, rapid kill-chain system . . . and must be good at doing so.*



China is sharply focused on securing regional dominance through building “a networked, precision-strike capability.”<sup>40</sup> Beijing will continue to seek modernization in integrated command-and-control, network-centric systems emphasizing joint service approaches across the full spectrum of warfare operations.<sup>41</sup> “By 2020, China will be as good as the US at prosecuting AI technologies, by 2025 they will be better, and by 2030 they will dominate.”<sup>42</sup> If Quad systems are not integrated to effectively execute at the speed of 2030 with hypersonic Mach 5 weapons across thousands of miles and with autonomous targeting decisions, then the Quad will not be able to effectively deter. *There is a technological arms race,*<sup>43</sup> and speed of fielding and integration matters over the next decade. The way to win is to achieve integration first.

In response, the United States and Australia have taken significant steps to accelerate toward required 2030 changes. US Indo-Pacific Command (USIN-DOPACOM) Commander, ADM Phil Davidson, is gaining congressional support to establish the Indo-Pacific Deterrence Initiative, committing 20 billion USD over five years.<sup>44</sup> The FY21 National Defense Authorization Act allocated first-year funds of 2.2 billion USD to the initiative,<sup>45</sup> which “bolster[s] military deterrence vis-à-vis China in the Pacific theater.” 2030 weapon systems investments could include space-based persistent radar systems, maritime strike missiles, and defensive radars to detect hypersonic missiles. It aims to enhance five lines of effort, including joint force lethality, strengthening partners and allies, and exercises and experimentation.<sup>46</sup>

Australia took a significant leap in June 2020 by committing to a greater defense leadership role. Its 2020 *Defence Strategic Update* committed 270 billion AUD over the next decade to specific high-end weapons from long-range anti-ship missiles to increased cyber capabilities.<sup>47</sup> During Australia-US Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN), Australian Defence Minister Linda Reynolds expanded further agreement with the United States to deepen defense technology in hypersonic missiles, electronic warfare, and space.<sup>48</sup>

### ***JADC2 and ABMS***

Future warfare will prioritize capability over capacity. Former USAF Chief of Staff, Gen David Goldfein, said “multiple wargames show that only with JADC2 does the joint force win in the ‘most stressing scenarios.’”<sup>49</sup> Near-future warfare will be won through information and the ability to build battle networks across all systems—and for those systems to effectively collaborate with other systems.<sup>50</sup>

JADC2 will be the integration of joint force actions across air, land, maritime, cyberspace, and space, and at scale and speed.<sup>51</sup> JADC2 will integrate planning, tasking, and assessment of operations across all war-fighting domains.<sup>52</sup> ABMS

will serve as the family of systems that enables underlying networks executing data management and digital engineering to employ those effects such as AI and hypersonic missiles.<sup>53</sup>

A battle management system serves as the backbone of JADC2, it is “the means by which militaries close the kill chain.” It is what enables them to understand, decide and act.<sup>54</sup> Preston Dunlap, USAF Chief Architect, often compares a future battle network to the Uber app, a system that autonomously works for you, finding optimal solutions within seconds with no human input.<sup>55</sup> Former USAF Acquisition Chief, Dr. William Roper adds, “there’s going to be so much happening at so many different locations concurrently, [humans] can’t keep up.”<sup>56</sup> For the Quad to become an autonomously integrated system, enabling future hyperspeed of warfare, it will require multiple tests, exercises, and integrating activities to form the trust necessary to implement such systems across all domains.

JADC2 is the top priority of current USAF Chief of Staff, Gen Charles Q. Brown, Jr.<sup>57</sup> It is not lost on the DOD that JADC2 is the future of war fighting, and the need to integrate into the system is causing urgency across the military and industry alike. In September 2019, the USAF announced reallocation of 30 billion USD of future funds to specifically enable joint domain operations and space war fighting,<sup>58</sup> capabilities directly contributing to JADC2.

Successful 2030 deterrence will require the Quad to be networked, integrated, and operate as one cohesive operating system across increasingly dynamic speed. *Not being integrated across these systems is a real threat that the Quad will not be able to operate as a deterrent coalition.* China is developing and implementing similar systems, allowing for rapid and lethal kinetic decision making. “Peer competition” requires reframing integration and synchronization for sustained and dynamic combat operations. This competition requires changes driving “rapid synchronization of effects to create adversary dilemmas.”<sup>59</sup> JADC2 and ABMS will provide that foundational architecture to enable this integrated system and deterrence-by-denial strategy.

## **Space**

Space serves as the ultimate high ground, enabling complex networks to employ means and effects of future warfare. Space battle management is a key priority of the US Space Force, “ensuring ability to identify hostile actions and entities, conduct combat identification, target, and direct action in response to an evolving threat environment.”<sup>60</sup> Space operations, through satellite constellations and assets connected to Quad forces, will serve as the node to enable all future warfare operations.

Space is now a distinct war-fighting domain enabling the United States and its partners to “compete, deter and win in a complex security environment” against great powers.<sup>61</sup> Additionally, it provides the infrastructure and network capabilities to provide combat synergies for JADC2 and ABMS and enable command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; intelligence sharing; and precision navigation and timing (PNT).

Adversaries will undoubtedly challenge Quad forces in space, across electromagnetic capabilities, direct-ascent, and co-orbital counterspace weapons capabilities.<sup>62</sup> China identifies space as a critical competition domain and is resolutely committed to safeguarding its interests.<sup>63</sup> China’s military doctrine considers counterspace effects specifically as a means of disrupting US and allies’ military effectiveness.<sup>64</sup> China’s space presence renders them capable of disrupting and destroying its adversaries’ space capabilities, as evidenced through its 2007 test via an SC-19 ground-launched satellite interceptor.<sup>65</sup>

The 2020 US *Defense Space Strategy*’s four lines of effort prioritize integration of combined operations and deterring aggression. Specifically, the fourth line of effort focuses on partners’ and allies’ integration through information sharing, aligning policy, expanding research and development, and, most importantly, integrating operations, exercises, and intelligence activities.<sup>66</sup> Ensuring that space capabilities are integrated across Quad forces is critical for the Quad to attain military advantage in any high-end conflict. Gen John Raymond, Chief of Space Operations, United States Space Force, states “Our allies help us to retain space superiority and provide a stronger foundation for combat effectiveness.”<sup>67</sup> The Quad forces currently all have varying space capabilities and are well-positioned to synergize effects through 2030, provided they maintain forward momentum coupled with appropriately funded budgets.

Japan has the potential to emerge in a lead role. Tokyo is committed to building a multi-domain force and expanding space capabilities through further satellite procurement, establishing a space operations squadron, and strengthening information gathering.<sup>68</sup> By 2023, Japan will establish the Space Domain Mission Unit within the Japan Air Self-Defense Force, increasing war-fighting capabilities through PNT, satellite communications, and development of a space-based ballistic missile early warning system.<sup>69</sup>

Australia, through the Australian Space Agency and Combined Space Operations (CSPO) Initiative, is seeking to evolve military operations through PNT; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR); satellite communications; and domain awareness.<sup>70</sup> The 2020 *Defence Strategic Update* identified space as critical to national security and committed 7 billion AUD over the next decade toward a network of satellites and enhancing space situational awareness through

sensors and tracking systems.<sup>71</sup> Through robust investment, cooperation with CSpO, and a concerted effort to enhance integration with Quad forces, Australia is committing significant steps to effectively deter via space by 2030.

India's role in space development will provide IOR connectivity and situational awareness. India is focusing upgrades to its space capabilities on maritime security. India recently agreed with France to develop a network of 8–10 satellites specifically aimed at maritime surveillance in the IOR.<sup>72</sup> Additionally, in May 2019, New Delhi announced the creation of the Defense Space Agency, aimed at providing credible deterrence in space and deterring adversaries from harming India's ISR network.<sup>73</sup> Finally, in March 2019, India conducted its first successful test of the ground-launched Prithvi Defence Vehicle Mark-II antisatellite missile.<sup>74</sup>

### ***Hypersonic Weapons: The New Speed of War***

JADC2 networks and space-based assets will enable the new speed of warfare with hypersonic missiles. Long-range, rapid warfare with strike capabilities across hundreds or thousands of miles will define future battlefields. Hypersonic missiles and hypersonic glide vehicles will complicate adversary decision making by presenting long-range air, sea, or land retaliation at Mach 5 speeds (one mile per second).<sup>75</sup> Not only are these weapons fast, but high maneuverability complicates missile defense solutions through confusion of the intended target.<sup>76</sup>

China has already tested hypersonic glide vehicles,<sup>77</sup> traveling in excess of Mach 5 and maneuvering across unpredictable flight paths.<sup>78</sup> First tested in January 2014, China unveiled the development of its DF-17 hypersonic missile during a military parade in 2017.<sup>79</sup>

Quad forces must be able to demonstrate hypersonic solutions to effectively deter the 2030 speed of warfare and impose cost on adversaries through a rapid missile response. The Quad is behind China on hypersonic development timelines and needs to accelerate acquisition and testing. The United States has conducted multiple tests, including from Hawaii in March 2020<sup>80</sup> and a B-52 test flight with the AGM-183A Air-Launched Rapid Response Weapon, estimating initial operating capability by 2022.<sup>81</sup>

Japan plans to field a ground-based hypersonic weapon by 2026 and possibly an air-launched system with antiship capability by 2028. The Ministry of Defense committed 226 million USD toward further hypersonic research in 2020.<sup>82</sup> However, Japan caveats the development of hypersonic technologies for the specific purpose of the “defense of Japan”<sup>83</sup> in accordance with its constitution but understanding its Cabinet's 2014 decision to defend close friends.

New Delhi is moving forward as well; however, India's hypersonic development has Russian collaboration, pursuing a variant of the current supersonic BrahMos missile, adding hypersonic capability to the BrahMos II.<sup>84</sup> On 12 June 2019, the Indian Ministry of Defence conducted the first test of its hypersonic technology demonstrator, furthering India's progression.<sup>85</sup> India could enter a hypersonic cruise missile into service by 2025.<sup>86</sup>

Australian hypersonic development is still at a nascent stage but made a large step in its November 2020 SCIFiRE agreement with the United States, as well as laying out 19.7 billion AUD for developing and testing "Deployed Ballistic & High-Speed Missile Defence" and 7.75 billion AUD in hypersonic research.<sup>87</sup> Additionally, Australia's significant contributions to hypersonic deterrence will come through its space assets and integration in the JADC2 network.

### ***Major Weapon Systems Comparison***

The United States, Australia, and Japan primarily operate the same weapon systems, ranging from Aegis-capable ships to F-35s. While India operates with some similar assets, it also employs Russian weapon systems, such as MIG-29s, Su-30MKI Flankers,<sup>88</sup> and five S-400 surface-to-air-missile systems.<sup>89</sup> Recent analysis estimates that 70-85 percent of India's weapon systems could be from Russia.<sup>90</sup> This variance of systems could present future integration challenges with the other Quad nations.

The chart below is not a complete net assessment of China versus Quad capabilities but articulates the need for the collective Quad system to establish credible deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region. The numbers are estimated, particularly since China has not completely published force numbers.

#### Key points:

- Need for collective Quad maritime capabilities to match China's capabilities;
- United States would need to surge past 50 percent of its bomber fleet to match China's projected numbers of ~120 H-6s and ~30 H-20s by 2030;
- China's fifth-generation fighter fleet is estimated. Without the United States, it would take the other combined Quad fifth-generation assets to match;
- As of 2020, China has 130 major surface combatants with continued growth projected into 2030<sup>91</sup>
- Numbers below are contingent on port and air base access

**Table 1. Major weapon systems comparison, 2030–2040 estimates**

Weapon Systems	United States	Australia	Japan	India	Quad Total	China
5th-generation fighters	1,321	72	147	0	1,468	200
Bombers	88	0	0	0	88	150–172
Major surface combatants	78	12	54	22	166	150
Submarines	25	12	22	24	83	70
Aircraft carriers	5	0	0	3	8	2

Note: All US numbers at 50 percent to account for other global activities and US homeland defense. Multiple sources:<sup>92</sup>

### Exercise Integration

In July 2020, Japanese, Australian, and US naval vessels conducted a small, trilateral exercise in the South China Sea. Five Australian ships, a Japanese destroyer, and the USS *Reagan* Carrier Strike Group conducted maneuvers in the Philippine Sea prior to the Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC) in Hawaii. At AUSMIN, former Secretary of Defense Mark Esper stated, “These exercises not only bolster interoperability, but also send a clear signal to Beijing that we will fly, we will sail, and we will operate wherever international law allows and defend the rights of our allies and partners to do the same.”<sup>93</sup>

As highlighted earlier, a key line of effort in the Indo-Pacific Deterrence Initiative is “Exercises, Experimentation and Innovation,” seeking 2.87 billion USD in funding. Davidson argues “U.S. forces must be capable of fighting in highly contested environments against technologically advanced opponents, while also minimizing detection across domains. The Joint Force lacks the capacity to integrate service recommended weapons and capabilities into a warfighting concept that deters the adversary and puts us in a position to win. This challenge can only be met by conducting a series of high-end, multi-domain exercises with a continuous campaign of joint experimentation.”<sup>94</sup>

The Quad must do more to achieve greater integration to demonstrate true high-end deterrence against a great-power adversary. Current exercise portfolios need to robustly develop into more Quad-integrated exercises that incorporate the coordination and prosecution of high-end warfare and deterrence, testing JADC2 networks, hypersonic weapon employment, and integrating space architectures.

## ***Talisman Saber***

Talisman Saber is a biannual, high-level exercise focused on deterring and defeating a great-power adversary. Primarily a US–Australia bilateral collaboration, the exercise also includes New Zealand and Japan in low numbers. Consisting of a command post exercise (CPX), Australian Defence Force (ADF) and USINDOPACOM senior leaders execute a “Fight Tonight” scenario across all warfare domains, as well as a combined 35,000-person field training exercise (FTX) with 30 ships and more than 200 aircraft off the eastern and northern Australian coasts.<sup>95</sup>

Two recommendations for Talisman Saber that could commence with the 2023 iteration are *the full integration of India and Japan into exercise activities and projecting the maritime FTX operations to the north and northwest of Australia into the Indian Ocean*. This would enable full Quad integration, communicate integrated deterrence to China, and allow the Quad to identify capability gaps within the IOR. Additionally, this would give the Quad the ability to exercise from proposed and improved strategic basing options of RAAF Tindal and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, identifying further basing limitations.

FTX operations in the IOR northwest of Australia bring realistic conditions to the massive exercise and real Quad learning opportunities. Traditionally exercised off Australia’s east coast and the Northern Territory, moving the exercise will give the Quad real feedback in probable scenarios by identifying JADC2 and communications gaps, testing DFE mobilization requirements, exercising new ACE concepts, and connectivity for hypersonic weapons employment—all without restraining joint force learning to fictional scenarios.

## ***Malabar***

In February 2020, Pres. Donald Trump and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi pledged deeper security cooperation in the maritime and space domains, while increasing “advanced training and expanded exercises” across all services with advanced equipment.<sup>96</sup> In addition to Talisman Saber, the Malabar exercise is a good venue to expand training. From 2007 until fall 2020, the exercise was a trilateral partnership among the United States, India, and Japan, with 10,000 personnel, usually including a US Carrier Strike Group, alternating maritime locations near India or Japan. The exercise includes naval ships, submarines, and aircraft conducting high-end maritime conflict operations.<sup>97</sup>

A previous recommendation in the author’s initial research was to *immediately invite Australia to permanently participate with maritime and air assets in the next iteration*. In November 2020, that invitation came to fruition and Australia

participated for the first time since 2007. This is a huge step for India to communicate deterrence in the region on a large scale while integrating high-end assets with the Quad, as India is normally cautious about disrupting relations and increasing tensions with China amid Quad perceptions.<sup>98</sup>

Combined with Talisman Saber, Malabar increases Quad opportunities to test interoperability in critical maritime locations to further JADC2 integration and DFE and ACE concepts. It also exercises basing options and tests logistical networks, critically through the newly established India–Australia Mutual Logistics Support Agreement, allowing reciprocal refueling, P-8 aircraft use of bases, and agreements for naval vessels to visit Indian and Australian ports.<sup>99</sup>

### ***Cope North***

Cope North is an annual air exercise hosted by the United States in Guam with Australia and Japan, enhancing air interoperability. The exercise is predominately focused on air-to-air combat, air-to-ground bombing, air-refueling, and electronic warfare.<sup>100</sup> This exercise lends vast airspace and coordination to further integrate future weapon systems and capabilities at hyperspeed of execution, all while integrating JADC2 and ABMS. A recommendation is *to invite and fully implement India's Air Force to participate in Cope North* to grow integration with emergent technologies, providing the opportunity to integrate air systems with space and maritime assets, ensuring effective integration across the Western Pacific region.

In the 2020 iteration, the three nations launched 1,200 flight sorties, extending north across the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands and down through the vicinity of the islands of Palau and Yap.<sup>101</sup> The synergistic effects and seamless integration that the exercise affords the United States, Japan, and Australia further ensures deterrence and the capability to Fight Tonight. India's future inclusion would enhance Quad integration, ensuring further integration gaps are rectified by 2030.

### ***Pitch Black***

Finally, the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) hosts Exercise Pitch Black on a biennial rotation in the Northern Territory. Numerous nations participate, utilizing the expanse of one of the world's largest training ranges, conducting operations against realistic and challenging threat scenarios with up to 4,000 personnel and 140 aircraft. Traditionally, three of the four Quad nations (the United States, Australia, and India) participate along with Canada, New Zealand, and multiple ASEAN partners such as Singapore and the Philippines. For the first time, Japan accepted the 2020 invitation prior to the exercise cancellation due to COVID.



Pitch Black is another perfect setting to continue Quad integration across JADC2 in and around Australia's northern approaches, as well as testing and enhancing critical capabilities at airfields such as RAAF Tindal and Darwin. While predominantly an air exercise, future iterations also enable increased integration with ground and maritime forces with the presence of the Marine Rotational Force–Darwin.<sup>102</sup>

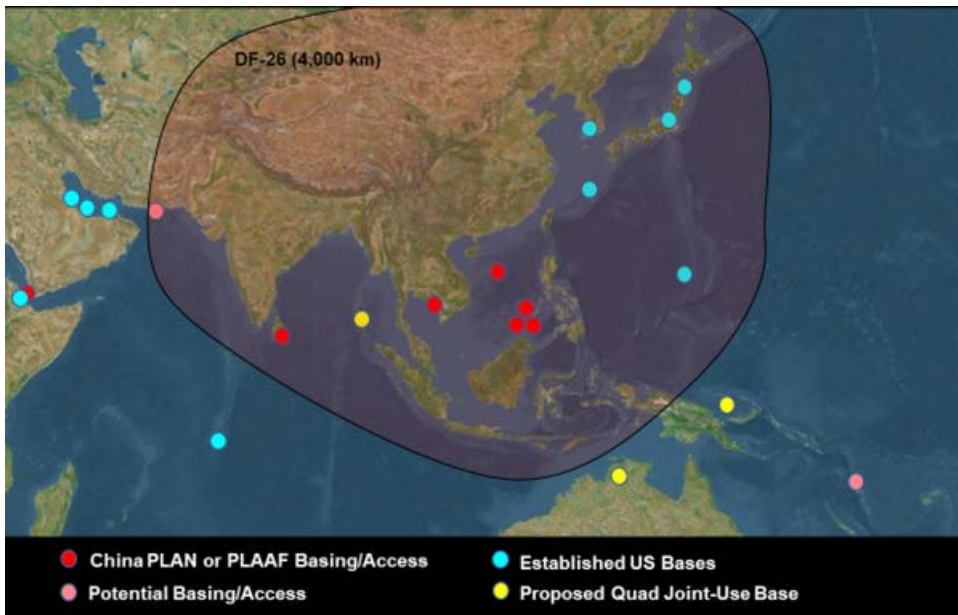
### **New Strategic Basing Options**

As the United States continues to build the ACE concept, the ability to disperse forces across numerous smaller airfields throughout the Indo-Pacific region,<sup>103</sup> there is a further need to ensure adequate basing capability outside of China's missile threat rings and near strategic chokepoints. In addition to the large air and naval bases in Guam, it is *recommended to expand joint-use basing in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and to increase access to northern Australian bases*. These basing options offer deterrence-by-denial solutions to project forward to blunt adversarial aggressions.

Japan and the United States already have strong basing agreements, securing the northeast anchor of the Indo-Pacific Arc. Since the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security in 1960,<sup>104</sup> the United States has maintained basing access as a Japanese defense partner, now with four air bases, 7th Fleet Headquarters, an aircraft carrier, destroyers, and multiple Marine and Army bases.<sup>105</sup> However, with these bases situated within the first island chain and China's missile strike capability, this robust basing arrangement leaves forces extremely vulnerable.

As China continues to expand its basing and increase maritime presence across the Indo-Pacific, *the Quad's current basing structure has gaps at strategic chokepoints and needs to increase long-range basing options outside of China's conventional missile threat rings*. The Quad can expand by anchoring at Western bases in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), across the Indian Ocean, northern Australia, and into PNG.

Thirty-five percent of the Indo-Pacific Deterrence Initiative would be allocated to increasing infrastructure in the region and another 26 percent to prepositioning and logistics.<sup>106</sup> As Admiral Davidson conveys, "It is not strategically prudent, nor operationally viable to physically concentrate on large, close-in bases that are highly vulnerable to a potential adversary's strike capability. Forward-based, rotational joint forces are the most credible way to demonstrate US commitment and resolve to potential adversaries, while simultaneously assuring allies and partners."<sup>107</sup> PNG, Tindal, and India's islands are just three of those options.



**Figure 1. Quad joint-use basing options**

### *Andaman and Nicobar Islands*

India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands, just west of the Malacca Strait, not only increase Quad air and naval presence in the IOR but also serve as a strategic blunting option to deter aggression near the key trade corridor. The Malacca Strait accounts for 25 percent of global trade amounting to 100,000 vessels transiting the waterway each year.<sup>108</sup> India has slowly increased military presence on the islands over the past decades, now home to two naval bases with 15 warships and four air bases, including India's Su-30KI multirole fighter.<sup>109</sup> However, as India's budgets steer toward land forces, India could offer basing rights to other Quad nations. From there, the United States and Australia can project fighter aircraft, P-8 maritime surveillance, and aerial refuelers. The bases can serve as US and Australian naval ports and strategic fuel and logistics reserve centers for the region.

Currently, Car Nicobar Air Force Station has a runway of more than 8,900 feet, and the international airport's runway is 10,795 feet.<sup>110</sup> India plans to extend two other airfields, Indian Naval Station Baaz and Shipbur Airstrip, to more than 10,000 feet,<sup>111</sup> as well as extending INS Kohassa's runway to more than 9,000 feet.<sup>112</sup> These runway extensions, along with increased parking aprons, would allow Quad aircraft basing to blunt adversaries at the Malacca chokepoint. As China has established naval basing in Sri Lanka and intentions point toward

basing in Pakistan, Cambodia, and elsewhere, it is clear China intends to project its Southern Command fleet of 16 attack submarines and 21 frigates further across the Indian Ocean expanse.<sup>113</sup>

### ***Manus Island, Papua New Guinea***

Manus Island, PNG, is uniquely situated to the north of Australia, offering the Quad a powerful strategic basing option more than 4,000 km away from China and outside the DF-26 missile range.<sup>114</sup> Manus offers both naval and air basing through Lombrum Naval Base and Momote Airport.

In November 2018, US Vice Pres. Mike Pence announced the United States and Australia will work with PNG to develop a joint naval base on Manus Island.<sup>115</sup> In March 2019, Australia and PNG signed the Lombrum Joint Initiative Memorandum of Understanding for the construction and redevelopment of the naval base,<sup>116</sup> which commenced in mid-2020, initially aimed at enhancing Guardian-class patrol boat operations of both Australia and PNG.<sup>117</sup> Through increased US and Australia funding and infrastructure development, the naval base could significantly expand to host naval vessels, logistics operations, and fuel reserves, as well as continued support to larger naval vessels anchored offshore.

Additionally, Manus assists Australia in prioritizing security and resilience via its northern approaches, sea lines of communication, and exclusive economic zones, aiming to deter, deny, and defeat threats to Australia's north.<sup>118</sup> The basing options would enhance a secure and free trade environment, relieving pressure of adversarial influence and maintaining the viability of Australia's economic interests.<sup>119</sup>

Securing Manus Island for Quad operations alone is a significant deterrence act. If China were to base military assets on Manus Island first, it would further extend China's expansion into the South Pacific. The base "would give Beijing a prime strategic location for projecting military power north toward US forces in Guam or south toward Australia," as well as projecting further debt-trap diplomacy influence across the vulnerable South Pacific nations.<sup>120</sup>

From an air operations perspective, Momote Airport is capable of hosting various commercial and military aircraft. At its current runway length of 1,870 meters, the airfield can accommodate 737-size aircraft, which would include P-8 surveillance aircraft and airlift operations.<sup>121</sup> The airfield recently increased its runway length by 600 feet and significantly expanded its parking aprons.<sup>122</sup> If further runway and ramp expansion occurs, the airfield would be able to host larger, long-range aircraft as well.

### ***Northern Australia***

Northern Australian air bases provide the infrastructure to base long-range aircraft and fighters, including US bombers and air-refueling aircraft. Primary locations include RAAF Base Tindal, RAAF Base Darwin (co-located with the international airport), and RAAF Base Townsville on the northeast coast of Australia, positioned outside China's current missile threat rings. Additionally, there are 2,500 US Marines that rotate through Darwin as part of the Marine Rotational Force–Darwin.<sup>123</sup> The intent is not to increase personnel at the bases but to have the appropriate infrastructure in place for Quad forces to fall in to support DFE and ACE operations in the event of conflict. These bases would also be well-suited to support enhanced and revamped Quad exercises with air and maritime forces in the northern region, including Talisman Saber and Pitch Black.

Australian leaders have committed further support to the infrastructure of these bases. To enable F-35 operations, support heavier aircraft and refueling operations, and store new high-technology weapon systems, Australia has multiple infrastructure projects funded for an FY25–26 completion.<sup>124</sup> In February 2020, Australia committed 1.6 billion AUD to the expansion of Northern Territory ADF infrastructure and 8 billion AUD over the decade.<sup>125</sup> Additionally, at the 2020 AUSMIN, Defence Minister Reynolds committed “to establish a US-funded, commercially operated strategic fuel reserve in Darwin,”<sup>126</sup> of which a fuel farm will be added to the air base. To support the US Force Posture Initiative and Australia's KC-30 refueling aircraft, RAAF Tindal infrastructure funds will lengthen the runway from 9,000 feet to 11,000 feet, adding a 52,000 m<sup>2</sup> apron to support four large, heavy aircraft,<sup>127</sup> enabling future B-21, B-52, and B-1 operations.

### ***Middle East Basing, US Readiness, & Consolidation of Forces***

Finally, as the western anchor of the Quad's Indian Ocean presence, the United States and other coalition partners need to consolidate to a permanent basing structure in the Persian Gulf region, such as US bases in Japan, South Korea, and Europe. Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, and Al Dhafra Air Base, UAE, are large, dual-runway air bases<sup>128</sup> that can support all variants of long-range, high-end aircraft. The US naval base in Bahrain hosts the US 5th Fleet and US Naval Forces Central Command and is the busiest overseas US DOD port.<sup>129</sup> These three bases can serve as power projection platforms eastward on the western edge of the region. Simultaneously, the United States can shift from sustained combat operations to a Middle East deterrence footing, leaving the primary Middle East security efforts to capable residents such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Israel, and the UAE. In 2019,

Saudi Arabia ranked third worldwide in defense spending (78.4 billion USD), Israel 14th (22.4 billion USD), and Iraq 15th (20.5 billion USD).<sup>130</sup>

Furthermore, 30 years of Middle East operations, coupled with the 2011 Budget Control Act, have plagued US military readiness and future investment. Fifth-generation aircraft and other exquisite assets in the Middle East need to reduce sustained combat operations and refocus efforts, exercising, and training with Quad nations and other allies for potential high-end warfare—the original intent of these platforms.

While there is once again a steady drawdown of forces in the Middle East, the United States is still spread thin across the region, basing thousands of military personnel and assets across Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Jordan, and other locations. US forces must be given an opportunity to reset and train for the future.<sup>131</sup>

### **Recommendations**

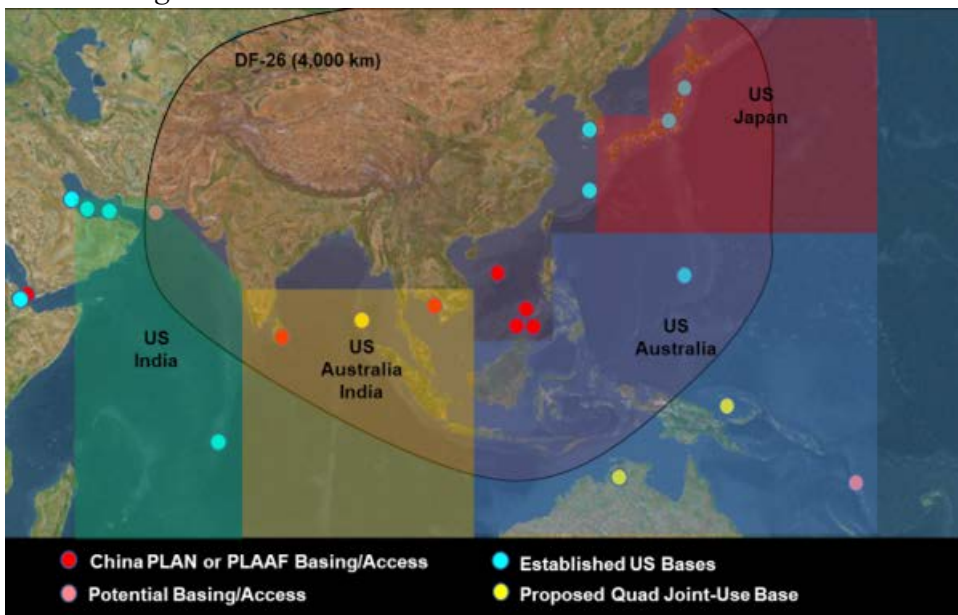
1. Deterrence-by-denial strategy
  - a. Deter adversaries through forward presence and emerging capabilities
2. Invest and integrate across 2030 weapon systems and networks
  - a. JADC2, ABMS, space, hypersonic weapons
3. Quad integration across already established major exercises
  - a. Test and perfect seamless Quad operational integration
4. Increase joint-use strategic basing options
  - a. Operate outside conventional missile threat rings
  - b. Increase DFE and ACE options
5. Middle East basing consolidation
  - a. Consolidate to permanent basing model, reset assets for high-end warfare

### **Conclusion**

On 3 September 2020, the US Air Force conducted a wide-ranging ABMS test across 1,500 personnel, 60 industry partners, and dozens of aircraft. During the test, sensors linked through satellite constellations, airborne and sea-based platforms, and 5G towers detected an inbound cruise missile attacking the US homeland. The cruise missile, simulated by a targeting drone, was sensed, and systems instantly provided commanders with the most viable solutions. The automated

ABMS kill chain destroyed the missile. Impressively, the inbound cruise missile was shot down by an inexpensive high-velocity projectile shot from an Army M109 Paladin, 155m howitzer, not an exquisite and expensive intercept missile.<sup>132</sup> This was done with 2020 technology. The Quad must integrate and operate seamlessly across these networks, systems, and near-future technologies or face the real threat of not achieving deterrence in 2030.

No single nation can deter nor counter China alone. It will take the collective effort of nations with shared interests and integrated militaries to present a formidable deterrence. The Quad nations are the four powers of the Indo-Pacific region best suited for this role and are on the best path to achieve that deterrence by 2030. There needs to be a recognition now, whether the Quad formally declares an alliance or not, that the Quad nations must increase integration and expand basing options to provide the Indo-Pacific the deterrence it needs. Major exercises need to see the four nations testing integration and new capabilities on a consistent regimen.



**Figure 2. The Indo-Pacific in 2030**

Regional deterrence is currently in place with US presence at bases in Japan and South Korea and sustained maritime presence. The priority is to identify gaps across the Quad system and remedy those gaps with the Quad nations that can fill them. If China continues to robustly enhance its military capabilities and outward expansion, then the Indo-Pacific will undoubtedly be living under the umbrella of a hegemon in 2030. Missile ranges are only increasing, hypersonic

weapons will be fielded by the mid-2020s, and basing sanctuaries will be scarce. Without a future hard-power deterrence option, the Indo-Pacific dynamics, relationships, national self-reliance, and free, open conditions will all be under threat. The Quad nations are best positioned to ensure balance and prosperity endure across the Indo-Pacific expanse into 2030. 🌟

**Lt Col Justin L. Diehl, USAF**

Lt Col Diehl graduated from the Defence Strategic Studies Course at the Australian Defence College in November 2020, obtaining a master's in international relations from Deakin University. Currently serving at Pacific Air Forces Headquarters, he has also served at Headquarters Air Force, USINDOPACOM and Air Mobility Command. He is a C-130J pilot with 3,100 flight hours and 880 combat hours and commanded the 386th Expeditionary Operations Support Squadron at Ali Al Salem Air Base, Kuwait, from 2017 to 2018 during Operation Inherent Resolve.

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# Historically Mine

## The (Potentially) Legal Basis for China's Sovereignty Claims to Land in the South China Sea

CAPT AARON S. WOOD, USA

*The time when foreign aggressors tramped China's sovereignty under feet and grabbed away its lands and islands is long gone and will never be allowed to happen again. Keeping its sovereignty and territory intact is not only its solemn right and responsibility as a sovereign state, but also an obligation called for by international justice and righteousness.*

—Ambassador Sun Xianghua

### Introduction

In September 2019, DreamWorks Animations released the animated children's movie "Abominable."<sup>1</sup> The movie, featuring a Chinese girl and a Yeti monster, outperformed all other movies then in theaters,<sup>2</sup> earned an impressive 181 million USD during its theatrical run,<sup>3</sup> and had an 81-percent "fresh" rating on the *Rotten Tomatoes* website at the time this article was written.<sup>4</sup> Within several weeks of the movie's release, however, it was banned from movie theaters in Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines.<sup>5</sup> What could justify such a ban on an animated children's movie? A single scene set in the Chinese girl's home, with a map hanging on the wall in the background depicting the area of the South China Sea (SCS).

The box office performance of a children's movie may seem an unusual starting point for an article intended for legal professionals. However, the seemingly absurd banning of a children's movie in multiple countries over the brief depiction of a map highlights the importance of the area shown on the map. The map was only visible a handful of times during the movie, and for no more than several seconds total, but that was long enough to identify the SCS with China's "Nine-Dash line."<sup>6</sup>

The Nine-Dash line is an area outlined in and encompassing most of the SCS.<sup>7</sup> It is so named because, on most maps, it is literally an outline of nine dashes creating a semicircular area stretching from the Gulf of Tonkin, south past Vietnam to Malaysia, and then northeast past the Philippines to just east of Taiwan.<sup>8</sup> This area represents China's territorial claims in the SCS, based on a similar line on a map issued and used by the Republic of China in 1948 to claim sovereignty and maritime rights in the SCS.<sup>9</sup> China's claims of sovereignty over the Nine-Dash line area conflict with the sovereignty claims of Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Beijing's claims were so offensive to these three neighbors of China that

they banned the movie. These countries all take competing claims of sovereignty in the SCS seriously, even if the claims are found in children's entertainment. China's competing claims in the SCS have resulted in armed conflict<sup>10</sup> and international arbitration,<sup>11</sup> and they threaten the security of a strategically vital region.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, China's claims are relevant to the economic, diplomatic, and military interests of the United States.

Generally, the United States has acted as if China's Nine-Dash line claims of sovereignty are invalid. Senior leaders across the US government have stated that China's actions in the SCS are contrary to international law.<sup>13</sup> However, for many years, the US Department of State did not officially state that China's claims and actions in the SCS violate international law and, instead, described the differences between Washington's and Beijing's positions regarding the SCS as a "disagreement" over territorial claims.<sup>14</sup> The United States officially expressed concerns that China actions in the SCS show a disregard of rights granted under international law and undermine regional peace and security.<sup>15</sup> This changed in July 2020, when Washington officially stated that China's maritime territorial claims in the SCS were mostly invalid.<sup>16</sup> However, the United States limited its statement to maritime claims and did not officially address China's claims regarding landmasses in the SCS.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, US military actions and statements of support for regional allies in the SCS region are inconsistent with China's claims.<sup>18</sup> The actions of the United States and the statements by US officials suggest and directly state that China has no legal claim to most of the SCS and that China is using its economic, diplomatic, and military strength to force the other claimants to cede their legal claims to areas in the SCS. China's claims in the SCS have even shaped the United States' *National Security Strategy*, which states, "[China's] efforts to build and militarize outposts in the SCS endanger the free flow of trade, threaten the sovereignty of nations, and undermine regional stability. . . . China has mounted a rapid military modernization campaign designed to limit U.S. access to the region and provide China a freer hand there."<sup>19</sup>

While it is likely that China's actions and claims in the SCS violate international law, China's actions in the SCS cannot be fully understood or predicted if it is assumed that China's actions were violations of international law. Neither can China's actions be understood if the legality of China's claims is judged solely based on modern international law. Rather, all China's potential justifications regarding the legality of its claims must be considered, in conjunction with modern law. This article will attempt to provide an explanation of the potential basis for some of China's claims of sovereignty in the SCS.

China's claims in the SCS can be divided into claims of sovereignty over the landmasses within the SCS and claims over the waters under applicable maritime

laws. Both subjects are highly complex. In general, sovereign and jurisdictional claims over water are strengthened when a nation has sovereign control over the land adjoining the water.<sup>20</sup> If Beijing is successful in claiming sovereign control over landmasses in the SCS, China may then have a stronger claim to the adjoining waters. This article will focus on China's sovereignty claims to the land in the SCS rather than on the legal basis of other countries' conflicting claims of sovereignty within the SCS or the proper delineation of maritime jurisdiction within the SCS under modern international law.<sup>21</sup> By framing the potential basis for Beijing's claims in the SCS, along with potential issues with these claims, we can develop a requisite baseline understanding to judge the legality of China's claims and actions under modern international laws.

### **Importance of the South China Sea**

Situated between China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, and Vietnam, the SCS is one of the most hotly disputed territories in the world.<sup>22</sup> Each of these countries claims partial or complete sovereignty over the SCS and the islands, reefs, and rocks ("landmasses") located therein.<sup>23</sup> To enhance or strengthen these competing claims, many of these states have built artificial islands or increased their military capabilities in the region.<sup>24</sup> Of the six claimants to the area, only Brunei has not enhanced or constructed reefs and islands in the SCS in an attempt to bolster its claims.<sup>25</sup> China's actions in the region have been particularly aggressive.<sup>26</sup> As mentioned above, Beijing claims sovereignty over landmasses and adjacent waters within its Nine-Dash line, which consists of most of the area within the SCS.<sup>27</sup> While other countries bordering the SCS also claim sovereign areas and jurisdictions within the SCS, none of these claims are as extensive as China's.<sup>28</sup> These claims conflict with China's broad claim over the SCS and its landmasses, resulting in the conflicts and disputes between the countries.<sup>29</sup>

The claimants to the region have multiple reasons for desiring control over the SCS. The SCS has historic significance for multiple claimants,<sup>30</sup> is a highly resource-rich area with abundant fish and maritime life as well as vast reserves of oil, and offers countries a strategic advantage through control of vital trade routes and communications lines.<sup>31</sup> States from outside the region are also gravely concerned with the status of the SCS. Those nations, such as the United States, want to preserve free access to the critical shipping and transportation lanes that traverse the SCS, with no single nation capable of obstructing access or leveraging control of the area to gain an advantage over its neighbors. The disputes over the SCS are one of the main strategic issues in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>32</sup> These competing strategic interests result in the conflicts described above.

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of the SCS. Whether from historical significance of the area; the strategic military, economic, and political advantages offered by the area; the abundant resources; or a combination of these factors, there are many motivations for why states are interested in asserting control over the area. It is because of the importance of the SCS that the governments of the claimant states are willing to take extreme actions to protect their sovereignty claims, from taking military action to preventing children from watching fluffy, white, cartoon monsters.

### **The Legal Basis of China's Claims**

*China is actually the victim with regards to the South China Sea issue. The Chinese people were the first to discover, name and develop the South China Sea Islands. Successive Chinese government have exercised continuous jurisdiction over the islands by means of administrative control, military patrol, production and business operations and maritime disaster relief.*

—Ambassador Zhan Yongxin

### ***Historical Rights and Sovereignty***

While Beijing has not clarified the exact legal theory of China's claims to the SCS and its landmasses, it is clear that China relies on a claim of historical right to the area.<sup>33</sup> Beijing claims that China was the first country to discover the islands in the SCS, that it was the first country to establish an administration over these islands, that the Chinese people were the first people to live on the islands, and that China was the first country to conduct economic activity in the SCS: “[R]oughly at the time of Alexander the Great in the west, China has already carried out frequent fishing, planning and shipping activities in the [SCS].”<sup>34</sup> According to Chinese ambassador Liu Xiaoming, “as early as 200 BC, during China’s Han Dynasty, the Chinese had large-scale and frequent sea-faring and fishing activities in the SCS. . . . It follows that because of frequent shipping [through the SCS], the Chinese became the first to discover the Islands in the SCS.”<sup>35</sup> In another statement, China reiterated this argument: “The activities of the Chinese people in the SCS date back over 2,000 year ago. China is the first to have discovered, named, and explored and exploited [the SCS and its islands] . . . thus establishing territorial sovereignty . . . in the SCS.”<sup>36</sup>

China states that this territorial sovereignty in the SCS has been continuously held by China for thousands of years: “During the 2000 years since China discovered and administrated the [SCS], its sovereignty over the island and reefs has never been challenged except for very recent years.”<sup>37</sup> In another statement, China



said, “Successive Chinese governments have exercised continuous jurisdiction over the islands [in the SCS].”<sup>38</sup> Beijing clearly believes China’s sovereignty over the landmasses in the SCS is a well-established historical fact and that its claims have been maintained and never been relinquished by China since they were first established thousands of years ago.

### ***Customary International Law***

International law recognizes multiple modes for a state to gain sovereignty over territory.<sup>39</sup> Before the enactment of international treaties, customary international law set the conditions by which a state gained sovereignty over land.<sup>40</sup> Before the eighteenth century, a state gained sovereignty by “discovering” the land.<sup>41</sup> Subsequent changes to customary international law permitted a state to gain sovereignty over land when the state occupied land that belonged to no one and the territory was occupied in a manner that was both visible and effective.<sup>42</sup> This change in law required that the occupying state take possession of the land and establish an administration over the land for the state.<sup>43</sup>

From Beijing’s statements, it appears that China thinks it satisfied these legal requirements: “China is . . . the first to have exercised sovereignty and jurisdiction over [the SCS and its landmasses] . . . continuously, peacefully, and effectively.”<sup>44</sup> Beijing thinks China’s claims of sovereignty over the islands and reefs are valid, based on historical evidence of Chinese activity on the landmasses and surrounding areas in the SCS. It thinks that the evidence demonstrates that China exercised control over the landmasses in a continuous, peaceful, and effective manner and that this control was a sufficiently visible and effective manner of occupation to establish sovereignty. Through this evidence, China believes that it has satisfied its legal requirements to gain sovereignty over the landmasses. Consequently, Beijing believes China’s claims of sovereignty are legally valid, and that the actions of other countries in the SCS amount to “invasion and illegal occupation.”<sup>45</sup>

### ***Facts Supporting China’s Claims***

China’s legal claims are underpinned by a significant number of facts. In 111 BCE, the Han dynasty patrolled the islands in the SCS.<sup>46</sup> Chinese records from 220–265 CE, during China’s Three Kingdoms Period, contain descriptions of some of these islands, indicating that the Chinese had traveled there.<sup>47</sup> Ruins of inhabited Chinese living structures and pottery from the Tang and Song dynasties have been found on some of the islands and reefs, indicating actual Chinese habitation.<sup>48</sup> Chinese coins from the Tang and Ming dynasties, dating from 713–1425, were found in reefs in the SCS.<sup>49</sup> During the Ming dynasty in the

1400s, Chinese naval envoys passed through the area, writing about the islands.<sup>50</sup> A map dated from about 1775 and maps from between 1810 to 1817, all made during the Qing dynasty, show the islands as Chinese territories.<sup>51</sup> Germany ceased conducting a survey of the islands in 1883, after the Qing dynasty protested the survey and claimed that the islands belonged to China.<sup>52</sup> A British publication from 1923 stated that Chinese fishermen worked and lived on islands in the SCS.<sup>53</sup> A French publication in 1933 stated that Chinese people lived on the islands.<sup>54</sup> Japan seized control of islands in the SCS in 1939 and, following Japan's surrender in World War II, the Republic of China took control of the islands back and sent ministers to set up their administration.<sup>55</sup> In 1947, the Republic of China published Chinese names for islands in the SCS, and no country protested.<sup>56</sup> When the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established in 1949, Beijing claimed sovereignty over the landmasses within the Nine-Dash line area.<sup>57</sup> In 1955, the International Civil Aviation Organization, an organization including representatives from the United States, adopted a resolution asking the Republic of China to supply daily weather reports for some of the islands in the SCS.<sup>58</sup> In 1992 and in 1996, the PRC reasserted its rights to the islands in its domestic laws.<sup>59</sup>

Viewing only this and similar evidence, China's claims of sovereignty over the islands in the SCS are understandable and appear to be legal. This evidence, at minimum, suggests that the Chinese people were openly living and using land in the SCS at multiple points during the last several thousand years and that the Chinese people were the first to use the area. China views this as sufficient evidence to support its stance that its claims of sovereignty in the SCS are legally valid and, as a result, believes that other countries' sovereignty claims within the SCS encroach on its historically recognized territory.

### **Issues with China's Sovereignty Claims**

While Beijing may be convinced that China's legal claims are valid and buttressed by history, issues regarding the sufficiency of the evidence, whether a culture rather than a nation-state can establish sovereignty, and *which* "China" is the successor to any valid claims of sovereignty, should all cause us to question China's legal claims.<sup>60</sup> Beijing views the evidence of the Chinese peoples' activities in the SCS through Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) own perspective of what it means to be "China" and ends its analysis there. As a result, Beijing believes the evidence is sufficient to establish a modern claim of sovereignty over the landmasses located therein.

In referencing China's historic claims, Beijing refers to the Chinese people and not to any particular government or country: "The *Chinese people* were the first to

[claim the land masses in the SCS]”<sup>61</sup> (emphasis added). And, “The activities of the *Chinese people* in the SCS date back to over 2,000 years ago”<sup>62</sup> (emphasis added). Similarly, “The *Chinese* became the first to discover the islands in the SCS”<sup>63</sup> (emphasis added). And, “Ever since China’s Tang Dynasty, about 1,200 years ago, *successive Chinese governments* have exercised jurisdiction over the SCS”<sup>64</sup> (emphasis added). Additionally, “China enjoys sovereignty over [the islands in the SCS] . . . since ancient times. . . . China has continuously exercised sovereignty in a peaceful, effective and uninterrupted manner.”<sup>65</sup> These statements show that Beijing views “China” as a cultural group of people, rather than as a particular nation-state or government. With this viewpoint, China looks at the evidence of activity of Chinese people in the SCS and the evidence of Chinese claims of sovereignty over the SCS as inextricably intertwined. Despite the fact that this evidence spans multiple governments and thousands of years, Beijing concludes that the efforts of these separate groups of people and separate governments established China’s modern-day legal sovereignty. In Beijing’s view, all these efforts were from the Chinese people and therefore from “China.”

As discussed earlier, Beijing relies on documentary and archeological evidence—indications of Chinese activity in the SCS spanning thousands of years—to support China’s sovereignty claims. At first glance, this proffered evidence may appear to be sufficient proof of China’s claims of sovereignty, especially when China’s sovereignty is assumed, and evidence is sought to support these claims. The archeologists who discovered archeological evidence in the SCS are Chinese and in some cases are sponsored by Beijing,<sup>66</sup> potentially biasing them to conclude that the evidence proves China’s ownership of the islands and to disregard other potential sources of the evidence such as shipwrecks, temporary stops by Chinese ships, or even planting of the evidence by interested individuals or groups. When viewed without the lens of Beijing’s unique perspective on what “China” is and without a foregone conclusion of sovereignty, this evidence is less conclusory, and it is no longer clear that the evidence establishes China’s claims.

If authentic, the coins, pottery, and living quarters establish that Chinese people were likely living on the islands at different points in history. However, such artifacts do not prove that the government in power at those times considered the islands part of China or made any claims of exclusive sovereignty. Neither do such relics show that other groups were not also living and trading in the islands, nor that other countries did not consider the islands as part of their sovereign territory. Naval expeditions may show that Chinese mariners traveled through the area but do not prove that these seafarers made exclusive claims of sovereignty over the islands or that other groups were not there at the time. Maps may show that a particular Chinese government claimed the islands as part of its sovereign

territory, but such documents do not show that the islands were uninhabited by other groups or that other countries did not also claim the islands. These various remnants of history do not show that the Chinese government openly claimed the islands as part of its territory, and perhaps most important, they do not show that China's neighbors agreed that these lands belonged to China.

The evidence would better support China's claims that an early Chinese government established sovereignty if it had occurred closer together in history's timeline. However, with the evidence scattered over thousands of years, it is not clear that any one Chinese government or group satisfied all the elements to establish sovereignty over the islands in the SCS.

Assuming that a single Chinese government was successful in establishing sovereignty over the islands in the SCS at some point in the Chinese people's history, it is unclear whether subsequent Chinese governments were successors to the sovereignty claim or whether the sovereignty claim was abandoned. China has had many dynasties and governments in the history of its peoples and cultures.<sup>67</sup> Even today there is the PRC, the Republic of China, and the semi-autonomous region of Hong Kong—all in what we call the greater area of "China."<sup>68</sup> It is difficult to pinpoint exactly how many dynasties and governments have governed all or portions of the area now considered to be part of China.<sup>69</sup> These dynasties potentially include at least 15 different governments in China since 206 BCE, covering the periods where China claims evidence of sovereignty in the SCS.<sup>70</sup> Some of these dynasties were controlled by non-Chinese invaders, such as the Mongols or Japanese, and could be considered as evidence of sovereign control in the SCS by non-Chinese claimants.<sup>71</sup> At times, several different dynasties controlled portions of modern China simultaneously, and it is not clear whether these different dynasties made conflicting claims of sovereignty in the SCS or whether any prior sovereignty claims were abandoned.<sup>72</sup> While Beijing does not dispute the successive dynasties of China's past, the CCP relies on a concept of a unitary and continuous Chinese culture as its claim to be the successor of all prior governments' establishment of sovereignty in the SCS. History shows the Chinese people's past to be more fractured than Beijing's view. With the many different, and often competing, governments in the Chinese people's history, Beijing's claim to continuous and unitary sovereignty begins to unravel.

Even if China demonstrates sufficient evidence to show that a single Chinese government established unitary and exclusive sovereignty over the islands in the SCS and that these claims were maintained through the successive Chinese governments to the present, it is not clear which "China" would be the successor of those sovereignty claims. This article has referred to the PRC, the current government of mainland China,<sup>73</sup> as "China." Prior to 1949, the area we call "China" was

governed by the Nationalist Government of the Republic of China.<sup>74</sup> The Nationalist Government of the Republic of China was established after the fall of the Qing Empire in 1911.<sup>75</sup> Following a period of external and internal wars, the CCP defeated the Nationalist Government and established the PRC, while the Nationalist Government fled to the island of Taiwan.<sup>76</sup> This Nationalist Government is still in existence, controlling modern Taiwan.<sup>77</sup> The evidence that the PRC uses as part of its claims of sovereignty from 1911–1949 occurred while the current government of Taiwan controlled “China.” Taiwan also claims sovereignty over the landmasses in the SCS, relying on the same and similar evidence and arguments put forth by Beijing.<sup>78</sup> The PRC does not recognize Taiwan as a separate, legitimate country,<sup>79</sup> and it follows that Beijing would not accept Taiwan’s claims as valid. However, with a previous government of “China” still in existence and making the same claims as the PRC, it is not clear why Beijing’s claims of historic Chinese sovereignty rights over islands in the SCS are more valid than those made by the Taiwanese government.

Beijing may believe the PRC’s claims of sovereignty, but this is likely a result of the CCP’s unique view of what “China” is: a culture and not a nation-state. It is a view where sovereignty can be created and retained by the Chinese people and culture, rather than a view where sovereignty is created and retained by nations and governments. It is a view where sovereignty is unimpeded by the multitude of Chinese governments or Chinese countries. It is a view squarely at odds with the Western concept of nation-states.<sup>80</sup>

## **Conclusion**

From children’s movies to national defense strategies, the impact of Beijing’s sovereignty claims in the SCS is broad, and these claims are not likely to change in the near future. The PRC will not easily relinquish claims to land it considers part of its sovereign territory—especially when those lands extend China’s military and economic reach hundreds and thousands of miles into the lucrative region. China’s claims of sovereignty appear valid when viewed from the CCP’s unique viewpoint but fail when those views and assumptions are not shared. The conflict between Beijing’s refusal to relinquish the PRC’s claims, and the likelihood that those claims will be rejected by the international community, will result in continued legal, diplomatic, economic, and military competition and conflict in the region. However, countries are best prepared to navigate this competition and conflict when they understand the basis of Beijing’s claims, rather than simply dismissing the claims as violations of current international law. ❁

### **Capt Aaron S. Wood, USA**

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### **Notes**

1. Jill Culton and Todd Wilderman, dirs., *Abominable* (Glendale, CA: DreamWorks, 7 September 2019).
2. Gabe Cohn, 'Abominable' Dominates the Box Office," *New York Times*, 29 September 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/>.
3. Culton and Wilderman, dirs., *Abominable*.
4. Culton and Wilderman, dirs., *Abominable*.
5. Neil Charm, "PHL, Malaysia Ban Abominable," *BusinessWorld*, 22 October 2019, <https://www.bworldonline.com/>.
6. As is customary with most US and foreign authors, and unless otherwise noted, the term "China" is used in this article to refer to the People's Republic of China, with its government in Beijing, and not the Republic of China, with its government in Taipei.
7. Marina Tsirbas, "What Does the Nine-Dash Line Actually Mean?" *The Diplomat*, 2 June 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/>.
8. Tsirbas, "What Does the Nine-Dash Line Actually Mean?"
9. Tsirbas, "What Does the Nine-Dash Line Actually Mean?"
10. Vietnam and China engaged in battles over islands in the South China Sea in 1974 and again in 1988. See: Ngo Minh Tri and Koh Swee Lean Collin, "Lessons from the Battle of the Paracel Islands," *The Diplomat*, 23 January 2014, <https://thediplomat.com/>.
11. See: Ted L. McDorman, "The South China Sea Arbitration," *American Society of International Law*, 18 November 2016, <https://www.asil.org/>; and Nargiza Salidjanova, "South China Sea Arbitration Ruling: What Happened and What's Next?," U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 12 July 2016, <https://www.uscc.gov/>. In this arbitration case, the tribunal ruled that many of China's claims and actions in the South China Sea were unlawful. China protested the jurisdiction of the tribunal and does not recognize the ruling as legally valid.
12. *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2017), 46.
13. Senior US leaders do not accept China's claims of sovereignty in the South China Sea and view China's actions there as a violation of international law. See: ADM Phil Davidson, "China Power: Up for Debate," US Indo-Pacific Command, 2018, <https://www.pacom.mil/>; ADM Phil Davidson, House Armed Services Committee (HASC) *Opening Remarks U.S. Indo-Pacific Command* (2019), <https://www.pacom.mil/>; Christopher Bodeen, "Recent developments surrounding the South China Sea," *AP News*, 11 March 2019, <https://apnews.com/>; and Jim Mattis and John Chipman, "Remarks by Secretary Mattis at Shangri-La Dialogue," Department of Defense, 3 June 2017, <https://www.defense.gov/>.
14. See: "U.S. Relations with China," Department of State, 2018, <https://www.state.gov/>.

15. Morgan Ortagus, “China Escalates Coercion against Vietnam’s Longstanding Oil and Gas Activity in the South China Sea,” US Embassy and Consulates in China, 2019, <https://china.usembassy-china.org.cn/>.

16. Michal R. Pompeo, “U.S. Position on Maritime Claims in the South China Sea” (press statement, Department of Defense, 13 July 2020), <https://www.state.gov/>.

17. Pompeo, “U.S. Position on Maritime Claims.” It is interesting to note that Australia issued a declaration at the UN soon after the United States took an official position regarding the SCS, seemingly bolstered by US actions. Australia did not limit its objections to solely maritime claims but objected to China’s “historic rights” as well as “maritime rights and interests.” See: Australian Mission to the United Nations, Statement N° 20/026, 23 July 2020, <https://www.un.org/>.

18. The United States has conducted freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea, which would not be legally permissible if China’s broad claims were valid. Additionally, China’s actions in the South China Sea may trigger America’s mutual defense obligation to protect the Philippines, which would not be the case if China’s claims were valid and the Philippines were the aggressor in the South China Sea. See: Adrien Chorn and Monica Michiko Sato, “Maritime Gray Zone Tactics: The Argument for Reviewing the 1951 U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 2019, <https://www.csis.org/>; and Christopher Bodeen, “Recent developments surrounding the South China Sea,” *AP News*, 11 March 2019, <https://apnews.com/>.

19. *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 46.

20. “The sovereignty of a coastal state extends, beyond its land territory and internal waters . . . to an adjacent belt of sea.” United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Article 2, 10 December 1982.

21. For discussions on China’s claims over the waters of the South China Sea, see: Dustin E. Wallace, “An Analysis of Chinese Maritime Claims in the South China Sea,” *Naval Law Review* 63 (2014), 128; and Robert T. Kline, “The Pen and the Sword: The People’s Republic of China’s Effort to Redefine the Exclusive Economic Zone Through Maritime Lawfare and Military Enforcement,” *Naval Law Review* 122 (2013), 216.

22. See: John Power, “Has the US already lost the battle for the South China Sea?,” *South China Morning Post*, 18 January 2020, <https://www.scmp.com/>.

23. “Territorial Disputes in the South China Sea,” *Global Conflict Tracker*, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/>.

24. Power, “Has the US already lost the battle.”

25. See: “Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative,” *Island Tracker Archive*, 2020, <https://amti.csis.org/>.

26. See: “Territorial Disputes in the South China Sea,” *Global Conflict Tracker*.”

27. Liu Zhen, “What’s China’s ‘nine-dash line’ and why has it created so much tension in the South China Sea?,” *South China Morning Post*, 12 July 2016, <https://www.scmp.com/>.

28. Zhen, “What’s China’s ‘nine-dash line.’” Note that Taiwan makes claims that mirror those made by mainland China, as discussed in Section V. However, as both governments consider itself to be the legitimate government of “China,” and because both governments take the position that they are successors to the same sovereignty rights as the other government, these conflicting claims have not been separated out in this section for comparison with the extent of the claims of other governments.

29. McDorman, “The South China Sea Arbitration”; Salidjanova, “South China Sea Arbitration Ruling”; and *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*.

30. Brian John Halliden, “Chinas historic rights in the South China Sea: a time for reconsideration and pacific settlement” (thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2014).

31. “Territorial Disputes in the South China Sea,” *Global Conflict Tracker*.”

32. ADM Phil Davidson, Commander, USINDOPACOM, has stated that “Beijing maintains maritime claims in the South China Sea that are contrary to international law and pose a substantial long-term threat to the rules-based international order.” “U.S. Relations with China,” Department of State, 2018, <https://www.state.gov/>.

33. While failing to clarify exactly how the scope of its “historic rights” claim and how its claim fits into relevant legal theories granting sovereignty, China discussed its claims of historic right extensively in response to the arbitration referenced in note 12. See Chinese Society of International Law, “The South China Sea Arbitration Awards: A Critical Study,” *Chinese Journal of International Law* 17, no. 2 (2018), 420–72.

34. Sun Xianghua, “South China Sea: Respect Law and Facts rather than Tricks and Plots,” *Public Eye* (Lesotho), 5 June 2016, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/>.

35. Liu Xiaoming, “China is a Staunch Force for Peace and Stability in the South China Sea” (speech, International Institute for Strategic Studies: China is a Staunch Force for Peace and Stability in the South China Sea, 2016), <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/>.

36. Foreign Ministry, People’s Republic of China, “Statement of the Government of the People’s Republic of China on China’s Territorial Sovereignty and Maritime Rights and Interests in the South China Sea,” 2016, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/>.

37. Xianghua, “South China Sea.”

38. Liu Xinfu, “The South China Sea Issue: Justice naturally inhabits man’s heart,” *The Standard*, 2016, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/>.

39. Seokwoo Lee, “Continuing Relevance of Traditional Modes of Territorial Acquisition in International Law and a Modest Proposal,” *Connecticut Journal of International Law* 16 (2000): 1–22.

40. Teh-Kuang Chang, “China’s claim of sovereignty over the Spratly and Parcel Islands: A Historical and Legal Perspective,” *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law* 23 (1991), 399, 408–10.

41. Lee, “Continuing Relevance of Traditional Modes.” See also: Chang, “China’s claim of sovereignty”; and Lauren Benton and Benjamin Straumann, “Acquiring Empire by Law: From Roman Doctrine to Early Modern European Practice,” *Law and History Review* 28, no. 1, (February 2010): 1–38, arguing that it was not until the latter half of the eighteenth century that legal scholars developed the theory of occupation that was amenable to the expansion of empires and that the legal theory of discovery proposed by previous legal scholars made the occupation of territories by expanding empires unlawful.

42. Lee, “Continuing Relevance of Traditional Modes”; Chang, “China’s claim of sovereignty”; and Benton and Straumann, “Acquiring Empire by Law.”

43. Lee, “Continuing Relevance of Traditional Modes”; Chang, “China’s claim of sovereignty”; and Benton and Straumann, “Acquiring Empire by Law.”

44. Foreign Ministry, People’s Republic of China, “Statement of the Government of the People’s Republic of China.”



45. Foreign Ministry, People's Republic of China, "Statement of the Government of the People's Republic of China."

46. Chang, "China's claim of sovereignty," 403; Junwu Pan, "Regional Focus and Controversy: Maritime and Territorial Dispute in the South China Sea; Territorial Dispute between China and Vietnam in the South China Sea; A Chinese Lawyer's Perspective," *Journal of East Asia and International Law* 5 (2012), 213, 214.

47. Chang, "China's claim of sovereignty," 403; and Pan, "Regional Focus and Controversy," 214.

48. Chang, "China's claim of sovereignty," 404. To put these dynasties in relation to the other evidence, the Tang dynasty controlled areas in China between 618–906 CE and the Song dynasty between 960–1279 CE. See: "1000–1450 CE: China's Golden Age; The Song, the Mongols, and the Ming Voyages," *Asia for Educators*, 2021, <http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/>.

49. Chang, "China's claim of sovereignty," 407.

50. Chang, "China's claim of sovereignty," 404.

51. Chang, "China's claim of sovereignty," 405.

52. Chang, "China's claim of sovereignty," 405.

53. Chang, "China's claim of sovereignty," 406.

54. Chang, "China's claim of sovereignty," 406.

55. Chang, "China's claim of sovereignty," 406; Pan, "Regional Focus and Controversy," 216.

56. Chang, "China's claim of sovereignty," 407. While Beijing appears to rely on this fact as demonstrating that China openly claimed sovereignty and all other countries accepted this claim, this line of argument ultimately fails. Simply attaching a name in a particular language to an area does not establish sovereignty. Indeed, many countries publish world maps with names in the country's native language, even when other states claim sovereignty to the named areas and use a different naming convention. As a result, publishing a name for an area and not receiving an objection cannot be the sole basis to establish sovereignty. If the state claiming sovereignty asserts control over an area and openly publishes its claim along with its naming of the area, then the naming would support the claim of sovereignty. When Beijing argues that the ruling Chinese Communist Party published names for islands in the SCS and no country objected, China fails to explain why the circumstances in publishing the names would cause a country to assume China was asserting sovereignty and object, or even to explain why the nations of the world would have noticed China's publication.

57. Chang, "China's claim of sovereignty," 408; and Pan, "Regional Focus and Controversy," 216.

58. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Taiwan, "Peace in the South China Sea, National Territory, Secure Forever" (position paper on ROC South China Sea Policy, 1989), <https://www.mofa.gov.tw/>. The United States was a founding member of the International Civil Aviation Organization; see: "Convention on International Civil Aviation done at Chicago on the 7th Day of September 1944," <https://www.icao.int/>. See also: Chang, "China's claim of sovereignty," 402.

59. See: Law of the People's Republic of China on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone (promulgated by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, 25 February 1992), <http://www.asianlii.org/>; and "Decision of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on Approval of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea" (promulgated by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, 15 May 1996), <http://www.asianlii.org/>.

60. For more discussion on China's claims, see: Florian Dupuy and Pierre-Marie Dupuy, "Agora: The South China Sea; A Legal Analysis of China's Historic Rights Claim in the South China Sea," *American Journal of International Law* 107 (2013), 124.

61. Zhang Weidong, “Some Questions and Answers on the South China Sea Issue Article by Ambassador of China to Iceland Zhang Weidong on South China Sea Issues Published on Icelandic Newspaper” (statement, Foreign Ministry, PRC, 2016), <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/>; and Wen Zhenshun, “The Territorial Sovereignty and Maritime Rights of China in South China Sea Are Not Allowed to be Violated ‘Dnevnik’ publishes article on the South China Sea issue written by Ambassador Wen Zhenshun” (statement, Foreign Ministry, PRC, 2016), <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/>.

62. Foreign Ministry, People’s Republic of China, “Statement of the Government of the People’s Republic of China.”

63. Xiaoming, “China is a Staunch Force for Peace.”

64. Xiaoming, “China is a Staunch Force for Peace” and Xinfu, “The South China Sea Issue.”

65. Yang Yanyi, “Some Prevailing Arguments and Perceptions over the South China Sea Issue Are Simply Wrong” (statement, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PRC, 2016), <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/>.

66. See: “Archaeological Survey of Xisha Qundao,” *National Marine Data and Information Service*, 17 March 2017, <http://en.thesouthchinasea.org.cn/>; “Chinese Archaeologists Discover Ancient Ceramics off Xisha Islands,” *Xinhua News Agency*, 10 May 2007, <http://www.china.org.cn/>; and “Archaeologists Wrap up Underwater Excavation in Xisha,” *China Daily*, 26 May 2015, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/>.

67. “Timeline of Chinese History and Dynasties,” *Asia for Educators*, 2020, <http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/>.

68. See: Eleanor Albert, “China-Taiwan Relations” (backgrounder, Council on Foreign Relations, 22 January 2020), <https://www.cfr.org/>; Eleanor Albert and Lindsay Maizland, “Democracy in Hong Kong” (backgrounder, Council on Foreign Relations, 30 June 2020), <https://www.cfr.org/>.

69. For an interesting video illustrating the possible areas controlled by successive dynasties in China, see: EarthDirect, “China - 3,000 Years of History in a Minute,” *YouTube*, 11 January 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/>.

70. “Timeline of Chinese History and Dynasties,” *Asia for Educators*.

71. “Timeline of Chinese History and Dynasties,” *Asia for Educators*.

72. “Timeline of Chinese History and Dynasties,” *Asia for Educators*.

73. “Timeline of Chinese History and Dynasties,” *Asia for Educators*.

74. US Department of State, “The Chinese Revolution of 1949,” <https://history.state.gov/>.

75. Government Portal of Republic of China, Taiwan, “History,” <https://www.taiwan.gov.tw/>.

76. US Department of State, “The Chinese Revolution of 1949.”

77. Government Portal of Republic of China, Taiwan, “History.”

78. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Taiwan, “Peace in the South China Sea.”

79. “Taiwan condemns China’s ‘dictatorship’ on 70th anniversary of communist rule,” *Reuters*, 30 September 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/>.

80. The Treaty of Westphalia established the modern understanding of the nation-state, where the state holds sovereign authority. See: Winston P. Nagan and Aitza M. Haddad, “Sovereignty in Theory and Practice,” *San Diego International Law Journal* 13 (2012), 429.

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# Kashmir Imbrolio Resolved

## Strategic Options for Pakistan

DR. DALBIR AHLAWAT  
AIR CMDE KEDAR THAAKAR

**K**ashmir is one of the most beautiful places on this earth. Sufi mystic poet Aamir Khusrau Dehlavi described Kashmir as a “paradise on earth.”<sup>1</sup> Originally inhabited by Hindus and Buddhists, Islam arrived in the thirteenth century,<sup>2</sup> and over the following centuries all three religious communities prospered in peace and harmony. Kashmiri society formed a distinct syncretic secular and religiously inclusive ethnonationalist cultural identity called *Kashmiriyat*.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, for centuries, Muslims in Kashmir adhered to the far more tolerant and syncretic Sufi form of Islam, in contrast to those forms more prevalent in modern Pakistan, which are much more fundamentalist, called Deobandi, Wahhabi, or Salafi.<sup>4</sup>

Although the rulers changed, Kashmir’s syncretic sociocultural fabric continued. It was only when the British partitioned India in 1947 that the issue of Kashmir’s destiny with either India or Pakistan arose. Soon Pakistan initiated an attack to acquire Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) by force, despite having signed a Standstill Agreement with J&K’s ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh. To deter the Pakistani attack, Hari Singh signed an Instrument of Accession with India,<sup>5</sup> after which, Indian forces repelled the Pakistani forces, but one-third of Kashmir remained under Pakistan’s control.

However, facts are being interpreted differently by scholars like Usman W. Chohan and Omer Aamir in their article “Kashmir: Beyond Imbrolios,”<sup>6</sup> written in riposte to the article “Kashmir Imbrolio: Geostrategic and Religious Imperatives” by Dalbir Ahlawat and Satish Malik.<sup>7</sup> While Chohan and Aamir have made a bold claim to present a more nuanced, sober, and grounded perspective to shed light on the Kashmir imbrolio,<sup>8</sup> somehow, they have actually overlooked some significant occurrences. In their narrative, they forgot about Pakistan orchestrating an attack by irregular forces on J&K in October 1947, followed by the Pakistan Army launching a full-on war. While repeatedly making fervent demands for plebiscite, Chohan and Aamir have completely forgotten the precondition laid down by the United Nations for Pakistan to first withdraw from the entire J&K. They also forgot about Pakistan ceding the Shaksgam Valley to China in 1963 from its forcibly occupied region, subsequently launching Operation Gibraltar in 1965 to foment an insurgency that failed miserably because of lack of

support from the local Kashmiris, and later the capturing of the Kargil heights in 1999, which only led to Pakistan suffering yet another loss of face.<sup>9</sup> More importantly, the authors entirely forgot about Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence engineering a proxy war through cross-border terrorism since the late 1980s, comprising several diabolical terror attacks that have placed Pakistan on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Grey List. So much of forgetfulness does not serve the purpose of truth.

Our aim is not to present rebuttals. However, to prove the point, we pick up just one of the myopic views: that people of Gilgit Agency had revolted against the governor,<sup>10</sup> only to unveil the truth of a British conspiracy in which Pakistan was used as a willing pawn. Similarly, while these scholars have questioned the manner and legality of accession of J&K with India, we recall the way in which Pakistan forcibly accessed the sovereign state of Balochistan and has treated it unfairly ever since, aptly illustrating what could have been the plight of Kashmiris had J&K too acceded to Pakistan. Decades have passed since these events. Pakistan has tried to get accession of J&K but has not succeeded. Meanwhile, the State of J&K has been fully integrated into India with the revocation of Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian Constitution. It is time for Pakistan to take a realistic stock of the ground realities of post-imbroglio Kashmir.

### **British Conspiracy**

The narrative that the people of Gilgit rebelled against their governor, Brigadier Ghansara Singh, and as a result, British Army Major William Brown mutinied on 1 November 1947, which led its people to declare Gilgit as a part of Pakistan, sounds most improbable if not naïve. The moot point is why Major Brown, serving the State of J&K, did not report the rebellion up in the hierarchy, much less suppress it? Recent research brings out that it was actually a British plan.<sup>11</sup> Apparently, behind Lord Mountbatten's back his Chief of Staff, Lord Hastings Ismay; the Governor of North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), Sir George Cunningham; and important functionaries of Pakistan had hatched the conspiracy that Gilgit Agency should continue as a vital British listening post in Central Asia. In case J&K ruler joined India, it should be accessed to Pakistan as an Agency of the NWFP, directly under the British Governor.<sup>12</sup>

In a well-orchestrated plan, Lord Ismay positioned trusted officials in key appointments. Sir Cunningham was recalled from the United Kingdom as the third-time Governor of NWFP. In turn, he had one of his confidantes, Lt Col Roger Bacon appointed as the political agent at Gilgit, whose task was to prepare the local vassal rulers for the changes to follow and their continued loyalty to British rule.<sup>13</sup> Colonel Bacon brought Major Brown to Gilgit from Waziristan to

take over as the Commandant of the Gilgit Scouts, as Brown too held similar views about control over Gilgit Agency. These cabalists considered it as their duty to have Gilgit Agency placed directly under the Governor of the NWFP, despite the partition, to ensure continuity of British administration.<sup>14</sup> Brown was ideally suited to his role, as he had previously served in Gilgit as the assistant political agent from 1943 to 1946 and had developed close ties with the ruler of Chitral, the Mir of Hunza, the Raja of Yasin, and the Raja of Puniyal.<sup>15</sup> Capt Jock Mathieson was posted as Major Brown's deputy in Gilgit. Shockingly, both these young officers were asked to resign their coveted King's Commission of the British Army—a clear indication that they were to undertake some questionable tasks in their personal capacity as private mercenaries. Obviously, if it ever came out that serving British officers had conspired to execute the Gilgit rebellion, it would cause a monumental scandal.

As Lord Mountbatten suddenly decided to return the entire Gilgit Agency to the Maharaja on 31 July 1947, Colonel Bacon had to move out. But in the days preceding it, Bacon and Brown held a series of closed-door meetings with the local rajas and mirs to apprise them of the events that were to unfold if Maharaja Singh were to accede J&K to India. Even a day after Brigadier Singh assumed the governorship of Gilgit, Commander-in-Chief of J&K state forces, Maj Gen Henry Scott, Colonel Bacon, and Major Brown reportedly fine-tuned the various options of their Gilgit rebellion.<sup>16</sup> Subsequently, even Lord Ismay remained in radio contact with Bacon, who in turn maintained radio contact and exchanged cipher messages with Brown to crystallize plans to stage a coup d'état, code-named Operation Datta Khel, to get the whole Gilgit Agency acceded to Pakistan.<sup>17</sup> This was bizarre, because Lord Ismay was serving India; Colonel Bacon, a British Army officer, was now the political agent at Peshawar in Pakistan; whereas, Major Brown was no longer a British Army officer and was instead in the service and pay of the State of J&K at Gilgit. In fact, just days before the coup, Brown had vowed, "If the Maharaja acceded to India, then I would forego all allegiance to him and I would not rest content until I had done the utmost in my power to ensure that not only the Gilgit Province joined Pakistan, but the whole of Kashmir also."<sup>18</sup> Even Capt Charles Hamilton, the assistant political agent, had openly declared at Chilas that within six months, it would be part of Pakistan.<sup>19</sup>

Major Brown initiated Operation Datta Khel on the night of 31 October 1947 by laying siege to the governor's residence, followed by a fierce gun battle, forcing a surrender.<sup>20</sup> Brown and his military junta carried out this entire rebellion—neither the people of Gilgit nor any of the mirs or the rajas had any role to play. No wonder then that Brown sent a frantic message to Peshawar authorities that Pakistan authority has been established at Gilgit and they must take it over.<sup>21</sup>

However, a few days later, he discovered that the interim administration was planning to establish a sovereign state of Gilgit-Astore. An independent state was never part of the script—only a strong Pakistan under British influence was part of the plan—and so, Brown again sent a secret telegram to the Pakistani authorities to come and take over.<sup>22</sup>

Major Brown had deserted and mutinied against the maharaja. Since the State of J&K had acceded to and been accepted by India, which was then a dominion of the British empire, Brown's actions amounted to high treason and waging war against the Crown. Not only Major Brown, but Captain Mathieson, Colonel Bacon, General Scott, Sir Cunningham, Lord Ismay, and many others had committed high treason against the throne while conducting Operation Datta Khel. In the words of Brown himself, "I had contracted to serve the Maharaja faithfully. I had drawn his generous pay for three months. Now I had deserted. I had mutinied. My actions appeared to possess all the ingredients of high treason."<sup>23</sup>

After briefing the new political agent from Pakistan, Major Brown was flown to Peshawar on 25 November 1947 in a Harvard aircraft of the Royal Pakistan Air Force. Here he met Colonel Bacon, after which both of them briefed the NWFP governor, Sir Cunningham, and subsequently, Pakistan's Defence Secretary, Lt Col Iskander Mirza. Brown later met Charles Duke, the British deputy high commissioner in Peshawar and handed over a copy of his detailed report with maps of ground positions, which in turn was forwarded to Whitehall, the military headquarters in London.<sup>24</sup> Finally, on 3 December 1947, Brown briefed the Pakistan prime minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, at Rawalpindi, who personally congratulated and thanked him for all that he had done at Gilgit.<sup>25</sup> However, the story does not end here. Within six months, in July 1948, Brown was awarded the Member of British Empire (MBE) by the King Emperor! The act of honoring Major Brown with the MBE, even though he had resigned his King's Commission in the Army and had waged war against the British Crown, completely confirms that Operation Datta Khel was essentially the brainchild of the British deep state in league with the Pakistani leadership.<sup>26</sup> Such was the treachery in the execution of Gilgit rebellion. To rectify this wrong, the British Parliament passed a motion on 25 March 2017 stating, "*Gilgit-Baltistan is a legal and constitutional part of the state of Jammu & Kashmir, India, which is illegally occupied by Pakistan since 1947, and where people are denied their fundamental rights including the right of freedom of expression.*"<sup>27</sup>

### **Drawing Balochistan and J&K Parallels**

After failing to annex the entire State of Jammu & Kashmir, Pakistan shifted its focus onto the similar State of Kalat, which formed the bulk of Balochistan.

While J&K was one of the 564-odd princely states of undivided India, Kalat was actually an independent sovereign state, duly recognized by the British government as per the Treaty of 1876. Accordingly, unlike the princely states, Kalat was placed on par with Nepal, Bhutan, and Sikkim. Kalat and J&K possessed great similarities. To begin with, both aspired to remain as independent states. Similarly, with their important strategic locations and deposits of vast natural resources, Pakistan desperately wanted both these states in its possession.

In a striking resemblance to J&K, the majority population of Balochistan is Muslim and has a similar secular outlook of cohabitation with other religions, just as the famed *Kashmiriyat*. Historically, the Balochs embraced a more secular and pluralistic view on religion and have been averse to mixing religion with politics. Here the Shias, Zikris, and Hindus have all lived in harmony and without prejudice, fear, or hatred until recently.<sup>28</sup> In fact, during the communal carnage of the partition in 1947, it was only in Balochistan that the Hindu community was untouched and continued to live in peace.<sup>29</sup>

Additional similarities are found in that both states had signed a Standstill Agreement with Pakistan, were attacked by the Pakistan Army, and forcibly annexed—Balochistan fully and J&K partially. Ironically, it was none other than Muhammad Ali Jinnah, then Kalat's lawyer, who had argued with the Cabinet Mission in May 1946 that Kalat was not an Indian state and as such, it should become a fully sovereign and independent state. It was once again Jinnah who, as late as 4 August 1947, assured Kalat of its independent status, which it had legally possessed since at least 1838.

Accordingly, Kalat was declared an independent nation, and both houses of its parliament categorically rejected accession to Pakistan and voted for a sovereign State of Kalat.<sup>30</sup> However, that was unacceptable to Pakistan and the British as well, who had plans to have a base in Balochistan to guard against the rising influence of the Soviet Union.<sup>31</sup> As such, Jinnah demanded that the Khan of Kalat accede immediately to Pakistan. The Khan relented to hand over the matters of defense, foreign affairs, and communication—but not the independent status of Kalat. Disregarding such a compromise, Pakistan began with accession of Kharan and Lasbela. These princely states were actually feudatories of the Khan of Kalat, and so, as per the Standstill Agreement, he was responsible for their foreign policy. Even more surprising was accession of Makran, which was a district of Kalat and, thus, had no separate status.<sup>32</sup> Finally, on 27 March 1948, the Pakistan Army invaded Kalat and forced the Khan of Kalat to sign the Instrument of Accession.<sup>33</sup>

This exposes the hypocrisy of those who question the circumstances and legality of the Maharaja of Kashmir signing a similar Instrument of Accession. Pakistan first promised sovereign status to Kalat and then invaded it; India neither

promised an independent status to Kashmir nor invaded it. Pakistan signed a Standstill Agreement with Kalat as well as Kashmir to give a false hope of independence—only to violate these agreements later; India neither gave such false hopes nor breached them. Kalat wanted to remain independent, but Pakistan did not allow it; J&K also aspired to remain independent, and India allowed it as long as it could. Kalat was forced to sign an Instrument of Accession with Pakistan; J&K signed it with India on its own accord. The Pakistan Army invaded Kalat to defeat the khan; the Indian Army entered Kashmir to help the maharaja save his State.

The biggest harm done by that forced accession was not the loss of an independent Kalat State but the loss of Baloch identity. It is this blow to which the Balochs have not reconciled till date. Pakistan was founded on the identity of Islam, and so, its rulers insisted on the entire nation having a common Islamic national identity. What they failed to understand was that, just like the Kashmiris, the Balochs had separate history, culture, and languages. As such, while Islam was a common thread among all the provinces, it was not the Balochs' only identity. For the Balochs, their tribal traditions, secular outlook, centuries-old culture, and attachment with their territories and languages are more important indicators of their identity than their religion.<sup>34</sup> This loss of identity is precisely what the Kashmiris would have suffered had they acceded to Pakistan, because they too proudly consider their belief in *Kashmiriyat*, Kashmiri culture, traditions, and languages to have primacy over their religion.

This thrusting of a Pakistani Islamic identity upon the unwilling was followed by systematic discrimination and economic exploitation, especially by the dominant Punjabi community.<sup>35</sup> Even in mega projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Gwadar Port, the Balochs have been excluded from any tangible benefit.<sup>36</sup> Actually, Balochistan presents a very dismal picture. Its share of the national gross domestic product has continuously dropped. It has the highest poverty rate, lowest literacy rate, and highest infant and maternal mortality rates in Pakistan. Being warriors and pushed to the wall, the Balochs have picked up weapons to challenge the Pakistani state five times since 1947. In retaliation, thousands of Baloch political activists have gone missing, while hundreds of them have been killed and dumped across Balochistan. The Supreme Court of Pakistan is on record that intelligence agencies and security forces have been involved in these extrajudicial arrests and killings.<sup>37</sup> The Balochs had to suffer all this because they dared to preserve their identity, traditions, and customs. The Kashmiris also would have been in the same circumstances, for they too proudly wear their unique identity on their sleeves.



## **Revocation of Articles 370 and 35A**

In the seven decades since accession, the status of J&K remained complicated, as the United Nations Security Council failed to implement its resolutions. India had unilaterally provided a special status to J&K by including Article 370, a “temporary” provision in the Indian Constitution.<sup>38</sup> As this Article had led to rampant corruption, lack of development, rising unemployment, increasing cross-border terrorism, and inefficacy of the successive state leadership, on 5 August 2019, India revoked Article 370, essentially to enhance development in J&K on par with other states. Similarly, for mobility, development, and investment in the state, Article 35A of the Indian Constitution—which defined “permanent residents” of the state for employment, scholarships, ownership of land and property purposes—was also diluted, as it denied such rights to residents from other states. Additionally, the J&K state was split into two separate Union Territories—namely, Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)—and in fact, its earlier avatar, the Jan Sangh—since its formation in 1951, had consistently mentioned in its election manifestos the intention to revoke these articles. This demand became sharper after Hindus were targeted, killed, and forced to flee the Kashmir Valley and become refugees in their own country. Article 370 not only posed a challenge to “Indian nationhood”<sup>39</sup> but also to J&K’s integration with the rest of the country. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was convinced that Pakistan used J&K’s special status as a weapon against India to inflame the passions of some people.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, he stressed that Article 370 has “not given anything other than terrorism, separatism, nepotism and big corruption” to the people of J&K.<sup>41</sup>

Notwithstanding the above, Pakistan appeared to caught off guard with the revocation and in a dilemma as to how to deal with the changed status of J&K. On the doctrinaire basis, Pakistan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs reinforced its traditional stance that J&K “is an internationally recognized disputed territory” between India and Pakistan.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, a unilateral decision by India was illegal from the ministry’s perspective. Operationally, the leadership appeared ambiguous. To begin with, Prime Minister Imran Khan exclaimed: “What do you want me to do? . . . Should I go to war with India?”<sup>43</sup> He condemned India’s action as “unilateral and illegal” and aimed at ethnic cleansing in India’s only Muslim-majority state at the hands of the Modi-led “Hindu supremacist” BJP government. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi feared “genocide and ethnic cleansing” by India in Kashmir.<sup>44</sup> Later, both Khan and Qureshi called upon New Delhi to reverse its decision immediately. After finding that these initial overtures to pressure New Delhi had no impact, Islamabad initiated several hasty measures.

First, Pakistan downgraded its trade and diplomatic relations with India. It expelled the Indian High Commissioner in Islamabad and barred its own newly appointed High Commissioner from proceeding to New Delhi. This measure appeared more a symbolic gesture, as the diplomatic presence continued, although at a reduced level. Similarly, Pakistan formally suspended all bilateral trade. However, considering the huge trade deficit, Pakistan suffered more than India. The former was unable to survive even for three weeks without importing lifesaving medicines and raw material from India, thus, forcing Islamabad to lift the ban unilaterally.<sup>45</sup>

Second, to pressure India, Pakistan approached the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) for an immediate meeting to discuss the Kashmir issue. However, Saudi Arabia reportedly turned down the request. Notwithstanding being a founding member, Pakistan received limited support from the organization. With Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) having 121.34 billion USD<sup>46</sup> trade with India as compared to 19 billion USD with Pakistan, the calculus was in India's favor. The UAE and Bahrain even conferred their highest civilian awards on Modi within three weeks of the revocation of Article 370.<sup>47</sup> In fact, except for Malaysia and Turkey, no other country supported Pakistan.<sup>48</sup> Even during the recent OIC Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in Niamey, Niger, in November 2020, Pakistan was unable to garner support even to place the issue of Kashmir on the agenda.<sup>49</sup> This indicates that OIC countries have moved beyond the Kashmir issue, finding succor in the emerging Indian economy.

Third, Pakistan sought mediation from its long-time ally, the United States. Initially Pres. Donald Trump offered to do so; however, after considering Indian sensitivities and seeking to strengthen bilateral relations with India, Trump placed a rider that both parties should invite him for mediation, knowing full well India's stance on resolving the Kashmir issue bilaterally since 1972. Pakistan played a pivotal role in signing the US–Taliban peace deal in February 2020 on the presumption that the United States would mediate on Kashmir. However, during his visit to India in February 2020, Trump did not even make reference to the revocation of Article 370—instead pressuring Pakistan to ensure that “no territory under its control is used to launch terrorist attacks.”<sup>50</sup>

Fourth, after failing to procure the desired support from its allies, Pakistan turned to its “all-weather friend,” China. On China's insistence, revocation of Article 370 was discussed at the informal UNSC closed-door meeting; however, under international pressure, no formal statement could be issued. Even Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi had to adopt a conciliatory approach, asserting the Kashmir issue should be handled in line with the relevant resolutions of the UNSC and bilateral agreements between Pakistan and India.<sup>51</sup> What is clear

from this is that considering the regional geostrategic circumstances, China could not neglect India, and Beijing's support for Pakistan would be conditional and subjected to deterring India from rising as a great power.<sup>52</sup>

Fifth, Pakistan has been waging a proxy war since 1989, but Kashmiris have shown aversion to the outsiders as well as the jihadis. In this regard, Ashley Tellis states, "The Pakistanis have discredited themselves with their use of jihadi terrorism as a means to change the status quo" in Kashmir.<sup>53</sup> In response, since 2014, India has conducted cross-border strikes in Pakistan that have placed Islamabad in a tight corner. In desperation, Prime Minister Khan even threatened the world with the specter of a nuclear war if the global community did not pay attention to Islamabad's dispute with New Delhi over Kashmir.<sup>54</sup>

These actions by Islamabad neither yielded international support nor any substantial gains, rather Pakistan remains on the FATF Grey List. In other words, India's growing economy, markets, and military clout overshadow Pakistan's Kashmir policy. Prime Minister Khan lamented this fact: "Will these big countries keep looking at their markets only?"<sup>55</sup>

### **A Way Forward for Pakistan**

Today, Pakistan's major grievance in Kashmir is the revocation of Articles 370 and 35A by the Government of India. Prime Minister Khan has put up a brave front, declaring, "Whether the world joins us or not, Pakistan will go to any lengths and its people will support [Kashmiris] till their last breath,"<sup>56</sup> and nominating himself as the ambassador of the Kashmiris to raise their voice at the international level. While he made it clear that Pakistan will not initiate military conflict with India, he warned the world of the risk of a nuclear war if tensions rise. Later, his Ministry of Foreign Affairs contradicted him that "there was no change to Pakistan's nuclear defensive posture."<sup>57</sup> Overall, there is lack of a clear policy, and Pakistan appears to be opportunistic in its policy postures toward Kashmiris. Given the predicament in which Pakistan is currently placed, Islamabad should shift its focus from Kashmir and concentrate on domestic challenges facing the nation.

First, since September 2014, al-Qaeda has established a foothold in the region with the inauguration of al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent, which considers Pakistan part of its area of responsibility. In addition, Pakistan's support of the United States—especially in providing land routes and air facilities that caused heavy casualties to al-Qaeda and in capturing and handing over terrorist leaders to American forces—has enhanced al-Qaeda's acrimonious sentiments toward the state of Pakistan. Similarly, although Pakistan has been supporting the Taliban since its inception, when Islamabad insisted on US mediation on Kashmir

during Taliban peace talks, Taliban leaders rebuffed Pakistan, stating, “The issue of Afghanistan is not related, nor should Afghanistan be turned into the theater of competition between other countries.”<sup>58</sup> Thus, both al-Qaeda and the Taliban have their own agendas to transform Pakistan into a sharia state and a cadre base—a threat that Pakistan cannot deal with on its own.

Second, in 2014, the Islamic State (IS), in the 13th issue of its online magazine, *Dabiq*, warned that “it will not be long before Kashmir is run by the organization.”<sup>59</sup> However, the Indian Security Forces neutralized several pro-IS modules in India. Since, the IS has failed to establish a foothold in Kashmir, it plans to establish a *wilayah*, or governate, in Pakistan. It is likely that following a US withdrawal from Afghanistan, the IS will face pressure from al-Qaeda and the Taliban there, and as a result, IS cadres will have a spillover effect and will probably establish a base in Pakistan for both logistical support and cadre recruitment. Thus, Pakistan faces imminent threats to its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and radicalization of its society.

Third, as a geostrategic ploy, some Pakistani experts support handing over of Pakistan-administered Kashmir (PAK) to China on a 99-year lease. Such an arrangement may make China an active stakeholder in the Kashmir conflict, and Pakistan may receive a large sum it could use to repay its mounting loans and offset the chilling relations with the United States and Middle Eastern countries. From Beijing’s perspective, it would be lucrative for China to have a stronghold in the PAK region to implement the CPEC projects more vociferously and upgrade Skardu Airport to balance the Indian Air Force’s strategic advantage. However, this arrangement would be a major gamble for the democratically elected government of Imran Khan to compromise on Pakistan’s sovereignty. More so, considering the fate of the Uighur Muslims in China, the residents of PAK may revolt against the leasing, fearing Chinese rule and perhaps opting instead for integration with J&K from whom they were separated in the 1940s.

Where does Islamabad stand now? It faces the possible specter of al-Qaeda, Taliban, and IS establishing their outfits in Pakistan, turning the country into a sharia state and recruiting the unemployed youth. Externally, Pakistan continues to be listed on the FATF Grey List, faces a severe debt crisis, and grows increasingly marginalized in regional and international fora.<sup>60</sup> Internally, it faces unemployment, radicalization of its youth, and a weak institutional framework. However, despite such dire fiscal concerns, its military budget increased by 70 percent between 2010 and 2019.<sup>61</sup> As a Pakistani analyst aptly commented, “The path to . . . progress lies through peaceful economic development, not though a perpetual wartime economy.”<sup>62</sup> Pakistan cannot sustain such exorbitant military spending over the long term. For decades, Pakistan has heavily

drained its blood and treasure but has been unable to liberate Kashmir from India. Rather the support it previously garnered from the United States, OIC, China, and others is waning with the rising of India. In sum, Islamabad faces serious challenges both internally and externally.

It is apparent that the best interest of Pakistan lies in becoming a normal country. A more practical and viable solution would be to take some time to settle the emotions of its people, accept the revocation of Article 370 as a reality, and conciliate with India. Imran Khan contested election for a “New Pakistan.”<sup>63</sup> This Pakistan should be democratic, progressive, and peaceful. For this, Islamabad must concentrate on acquiring economic strength, making the polity truly democratic, confining religion to the private lives of the faithful, and guaranteeing justice for all.<sup>64</sup> The government should focus on its demographic dividend of more than 50 percent of the population under the age of 25, inculcate a scientific temper among its youth, and protect them from radicalization. To build a new Pakistan, there must be normalized relations with India, with which the country shares almost all spheres of life. Also, there should be a renegotiation for the most-favored nation status that India granted to Pakistan but withdrew in the wake of the Pulwama terrorist attack. Pakistan must come out of the Cold War mentality, instead of continuing to consider New Delhi as an existential threat, Islamabad should take stock of India’s strong institutional framework, emerging market, modernizing military, geostrategic positioning, and rising global status. Therefore, Islamabad, taking cognizance of the ground realities, should chart out its own path, commensurate to its capabilities and resources, regional and global dynamics, to achieve development, peace and harmony.

## **Conclusion**

Let us look at the Kashmir imbroglia in its entirety. The State of J&K acceded to India through an Instrument of Accession that was absolutely legal, as per the Government of India Act 1935, Indian Independence Act 1947, and international law. Lord Mountbatten, as the Governor General of India, accepted the Accession as unconditional and complete.<sup>65</sup>

No one at that stage demanded a plebiscite—it was entirely India’s magnanimity—a unilateral decision taken immediately after the accession, and well before the UNSC issued Resolution 47 on plebiscite. However, Pakistan declined to meet the precondition to withdraw its forces from the occupied areas of J&K before any plebiscite. Since then, although Pakistan has repeatedly asked for a plebiscite, in reality, Islamabad has not been serious in honoring its legal commitments or resolutions.<sup>66</sup> Now with the passage of seven decades and Pakistan making substantial alteration in the demography of PAK, the possibility of a realistic

plebiscite is lost forever. Also, with the Simla Agreement of 1972 and Lahore Declaration of 1999 mandating that all issues including J&K must be resolved through a bilateral dialogue, the UNSC resolutions have now become irrelevant.<sup>67</sup>

To initially provide a special status to J&K, India had included Article 370, on its own accord, as a temporary provision in the Indian Constitution. No multilateral body or agreement had mandated Article 370. It was entirely an internal decision concerning the Constitution of India, and therefore, its modification or repeal is the sovereign right of India. At the time of the Article's adoption, as well as when it was subsequently modified, Pakistan had no say in the matter. Therefore, Pakistan's current stance is inexplicable.<sup>68</sup>

Despite this position, Pakistan has done all that it could during the past 73 years to acquire J&K and, yet, has not succeeded. Islamabad's decades-long policy of meddling in Kashmir has only complicated the problem. Pakistan's official rhetoric of extending moral and diplomatic support for Kashmir has actually been its support for Islamist militant groups in the region.<sup>69</sup>

What is required now is a drastic change in Pakistan's outlook—especially, a shift of focus away from J&K. Pakistan must adopt a pragmatic view and realize that the revocation of Article 370 is the beginning of India claiming its rightful, legal, and sole accession of J&K. Islamabad's aggression toward India has drained Pakistan financially and socially and isolated it internationally. Pakistan military's patronage of terror groups has only landed the country on the FATF Grey List and created an environment rife for the radicalization of Pakistani youth, which could well lead toward a sharia state. This was neither the dream of Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah nor the vision of Imran Khan. And so, Pakistan should consider move away from Kashmir rhetoric to build economic muscle, strengthen democratic values, spread secular culture, ensure justice for all, and invest in its youth. This one major comprehensive push is all that is required to place Pakistan on a path to prosperity and overcome the post-imbroglio Kashmir mania forever. ☪

#### **Dr. Dalbir Ahlawat**

Dr. Ahlawat is a senior lecturer in the Department of Security Studies and Criminology, Macquarie University, Australia. His areas of specialization include Indo-Pacific security and strategic affairs, India's security challenges, India-China strategic competition, and US security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region. He has published five books, the most recent titles include *Terrorism, Security and Development in South Asia: National, Regional and Global Implications* (2021, Routledge, forthcoming); *Australia-India Relations: Evolving Polycentric World Order* (2017); and *Indo-Pacific: Emerging Powers, Evolving Regions and Challenges to Global Governance* (2016). In addition, he has published 34 research papers in journals and edited books. He has also contributed research papers to several think tanks, including Shepherd Media (London), Lowy Institute (Sydney), The National Interest (New York), Foreign Policy Research Centre (New Delhi), and Future Directions International (Perth). Dr. Ahlawat has been invited by several institutions to deliver specialized lectures, including George Washington University (USA), Gujarat Forensic Sciences University (India), Police Academy of the Netherlands (Netherlands), and Wilfrid Laurier University (Canada).

### **Air Cmde Kedar Thaakar, Indian Air Force, Retired**

Air Commodore Thaakar is a veteran Indian Air Force Officer with 35 years of distinguished service. He participated in several major operations of the IAF, including Operation Vijay (1999) and Operation Parakram (2001–02). In addition to being the commanding officer of two premier IAF Provost and Security Units, he was appointed as the provost marshal of the IAF, heading Air Force police, security, and vigilance departments. On the aviation front, he is an experienced Category 'A' ATC officer and senior instructor at the Indian Air Force Academy. He has also been a member of a UN peace-keeping mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo. He holds master's degrees in defence and strategic studies and is an alumnus of India's prestigious Defence Services Staff College and College of Air Warfare. Currently, he is the dean, School of Police and Security Sciences at the National Forensic Sciences University, Gandhinagar (India). His areas of interest include strategic affairs, defense studies, homeland security, and airpower.

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# A Region in Flux

## Situating India in Sino-Japanese Ties

MAHIMA N. DUGGAL

JAGANNATH P. PANDA

### Abstract

Since the onset of 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak has exploded into a full-blown pandemic with far-reaching implications for Asia's security dynamics and exacerbated flashpoints of tension among rivals, throwing the continent into unrest. Sino-Japanese ties, one of the flashpoints of the region, have significantly worsened amid intensifying geopolitical friction in the East China Sea, with China's maritime adventurism putting Japan's security apparatus on high alert. In this context, this article explores the future of Sino-Japanese relations while situating them in India's perspective and evolving strategic outlook. It evaluates the tensions and turfs in Sino-Japanese ties based on the ups and downs in their relationship in the historical and contemporary times with a distinct focus on the East China Sea as a region of immense strategic importance for their political affirmations. It further examines a revisionist China's grand strategy and advancing military and naval capabilities and the development of a nonpacifist Japanese power, to argue that Sino-Japanese ties will only become more turbulent in the near future. The article sets this discussion within the context of a more assertive, post-Galwan India that has pursued deeper security partnerships with Indo-Pacific countries, especially Japan, to map New Delhi's Indo-Pacific calculus as Sino-Japanese ties undergo change.

### Introduction

Simply put, Asia is a region in flux. Within a matter of a few months, the COVID-19 outbreak that originated in Wuhan, China,<sup>1</sup> exploded into a full-blown pandemic with far-reaching consequences in Asia and the world at large. However, instead of prompting competing states to work in concert to resolve issues raised by the pandemic, the situation has only exacerbated the flashpoints of tension among countries in the region. The Beijing–Washington rivalry is at its worst yet; with the United States and China engaging in a war of words in relation to the origin and spread of the coronavirus<sup>2</sup> and an increasingly assertive China looking to project its military and economic might in the region, the se-

curity environment in the Indo-Pacific is in a precarious state. China's aggressive posturing—its border standoff with India, security threats toward Taiwan, imposition of a draconian national security law in Hong Kong, increasingly forceful behavior in the South China Sea (SCS), and a quickly souring relationship with the United States—has put the entirety of the Indo-Pacific region on edge.

Most recently, Japan has borne the brunt of Chinese belligerence. In July 2020 alone, two Chinese vessels intruded into Japanese maritime territory near the disputed Japanese-administered Senkaku Islands (known as Diaoyu in China) in the East China Sea (ECS), twice within four days. These ships reportedly stayed within Japan's maritime boundary for a record time of 39 hours and 23 minutes and attempted to approach Japanese civilian fishing boats before Japan's naval vessels stopped them.<sup>3</sup> Soon after these incidents, a Chinese vessel was spotted near Okinotorishima Island, situated within a maritime corridor that Japan considers to be its exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The Chinese ship appeared to be engaged in a maritime survey of resources in the region without Tokyo's approval. Despite Japan registering protests to China via diplomatic channels, the vessels continued to conduct its maritime survey in the region for 10 consecutive days.<sup>4</sup> In fact, in a sign of China's disregard for Japan's sovereignty and international norms, Beijing refused to recognize Japan's "unilateral claim" to the EEZ, arguing that the claim had "no legal basis."<sup>5</sup> In a show of Beijing's rising hostile behavior, Chinese ships operated in and near the territorial waters surrounding the disputed islands for 100 consecutive days—the longest continuous period since 2012—notwithstanding Japan's diplomatic protests.<sup>6</sup> In August 2020, China lifted its ban on fishing in the ECS in a bid to strengthen its claims of an extended continental shelf boundary.<sup>7</sup> Tensions heightened in December 2020 once again as two Chinese vessels illegally entered Japanese waters near the Senkaku Islands.<sup>8</sup> China has also reportedly sent military planes on frequent sorties—1,157 in 2020 compared to an average of 720 per year from 2013 to 2018—putting Japan on alert and draining its military personnel.<sup>9</sup>

Japan and China's dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu cluster of islands and the ECS is not a new one. Neither are China's persisting forays in the region. Claimed by Japan in 1895, the islands have largely been under Japan's effective jurisdiction for the past 125 years. However, in the 1970s, China started asserting a historic claim over the strategically placed islands, leading to a heightening of tensions in the region. Since 2012, when Tokyo formally brought the Senkaku Islands under state control,<sup>10</sup> Japan has faced repeated intrusions into its maritime territory by Chinese government vessels. The Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands are of great strategic interest to China and Japan from economic and security perspectives. Geographically placed to the northeast of Taiwan, the islands are situated near critical ship-

ping routes; believed to have immense potential for oil and natural gas reserves; and surrounded by rich fishing areas. Both states also have overlapping claims to an EEZ in the maritime region. Consequently, the ECS region holds great strategic significance, not only for China–Japan ties but also in a larger context of changing regional dynamics in Asia.

In fact, China and Japan's tumultuous relationship can be traced back a millennium.<sup>11</sup> In contemporary times, since the end of World War II in particular, Sino-Japanese ties have undergone a series of ups and downs. From sharing barely any diplomatic relationship after the war, the two regional powers developed close ties in the 1980s. As China began to pursue liberalization and open its economy during the Cold War, Japan emerged as the state's critical developmental, knowledge, and technological partner. Japan provided China some of the largest aid packages and developmental support. Arguably, China could not have grown so expansively and rapidly without Japanese assistance. The Tiananmen Square incident quickly put brakes on the previously robust Sino-Japanese ties.<sup>12</sup> Instead of the close partnership Japan had hoped to foster with its neighbor, Tokyo was faced with the emergence of a far-from-moderate Beijing that has little regard for international liberal norms.

China and Japan have distinctly competing and, therefore, incompatible visions for the region. With both being formidable economic and military powers, their complex relationship is a source of concern for the Asian region—and one which could potentially lead to the world's next great conflict. With the onset of the pandemic and China's mounting aggression, it would seem that China and Japan are set on a collision course. As the United States is Japan's staunch and historic security ally, a conflict between Japan and China would mandate that the United States enter the conflict to defend Japan—possibly leading to a war between two of the world's largest powers. Even as frictions between the neighboring states escalate, can they break a thousand-year-old pattern of irritable troughs and friendly peaks to build sustainable relations? Or will they fall back into their long history of clashes—as their flaring tensions in the ECS currently suggest—with disastrous results for the Indo-Pacific region?

Naturally, the future of Sino-Japanese ties is of great concern to the entire region. The evolving Sino-Japanese ties have deep-seated implications that will shape many countries' foreign and security policy, including that of New Delhi's, in times to come. Situated directly in China's neighborhood, India shared a precariously stable relationship with China, complicated by boundary disputes, China's support of India's long-time adversary Pakistan, and the shadow of the 1962 Sino-Indian War. At the same time, India depends on Chinese imports, with China being one of its leading trade partners. On the other hand, under

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, India has sought to deepen its diplomatic, cultural, economic and security ties with Japan and sees the world's third-largest economy as one of India's crucial partners in the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>13</sup> Yet, although bilateral ties among China, Japan, and India have been subject to wide scrutiny in media as well as academia, there have been hardly any studies examining the dynamics of these three key Asian powers, which will likely be central to shaping the coming era.

In this context, this article explores the future of Sino-Japanese relations in both historical and contemporary times. It focuses on the ECS as a region of great strategic importance for China's and Japan's political affirmations. In particular, the article examines China's and Japan's outlook on their interests in the ECS and predicts if the rising tensions could potentially escalate to a full-out confrontation in the immediate future. The article will situate these frictions within a larger discussion of the Sino-Japanese rivalry. For this, it will analyze China's and Japan's foreign and defense policies vis-à-vis each other to better understand how they may shift in light of the recent highly charged international political environment. As a part of this discussion, the article will also explore the scope and potential for an enhanced regional security infrastructure in Asia in the times to come. This includes strengthened bilateral, trilateral, and minilateral platforms, including the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad).

Notably, this article will situate the above discussion, examining the Sino-Japanese maritime rivalry, emerging economic and geopolitical issues and Indo-Pacific undercurrents, in the Indian context. In other words, this article will inquire into the volume and extent of the power rivalry between China and Japan while drawing implications for India in a highly contested regional theater.

### **Warm Peaks and Rough Valleys: An Overview of Sino-Japanese Ties**

China and Japan have historically shared a rather turbulent relationship. In modern times, their ties can be best studied by dividing them into three eras: 1949–1972, 1972–late 1980s, and 1990s–present.

#### ***The Pre-Normalization Period***

During the 1949–1972 period—recognized as one of “pre-normalization”—there existed no official diplomatic relations between China and Japan apart from a few backchannels of communication.<sup>14</sup> While adapting to a new postwar reality, the emergence of a new bipolar world order, and an intensifying Cold War, both states were structurally constrained in their foreign policy vis-à-vis each other.

Furthermore, the Chinese people held a deep and tenacious resentment for Japan due to its actions during the Sino-Japanese war of 1937-45, the occupation of Manchuria, and the infamous massacre at Nanjing—and what they saw as Japan's subsequent unwillingness to explicitly address these transgressions.

### ***The Post-Normalization Period***

However, the subsequent period (1972–late 1980s), regarded as one of “post-normalization,” saw a boost in Sino-Japanese ties brought on by China's economic reforms, trade liberalization, and opening up policies along with Japan's overt attempts to engage with its neighbor.<sup>15</sup> After the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the two states in 1978, Japanese aid to China rose dramatically, as Japan emerged as a key developmental, technological, and economic partner for China. Over the next 40 years, until official development aid stopped completely in 2018, Japan provided approximately ¥3.65 trillion in assistance to China.<sup>16</sup> In the 1980s, this amounted to a staggering 70 percent of Japan's total foreign aid.<sup>17</sup> This aid was used in a variety of infrastructure projects spanning across railroads, ports, and energy sectors and was the key reason for China's rapid and expansive growth. In addition, Tokyo also initiated a cultural exchange program between the states at the public and private levels.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Contemporary Sino-Japanese Ties***

Nevertheless, since the 1990s, there has been a burgeoning of tensions in Sino-Japanese ties with a reemergence of persisting emotional controversies related to Japan's aggression during the World War II. As China continued to demand greater penance,<sup>19</sup> there was a growing consensus in Japan that its engagement strategy was wholly miscalculated. Despite overtures at engagement with China to achieve its modernization vision, Japan saw the emergence of an increasingly assertive China with ambitions for the region distinctly different from its own. In fact, the rising “strong, Communist-led one-party state, angry and harboring revengeful sentiments toward Tokyo” was arguably Japan's worst fear.<sup>20</sup>

Reconciliation has been further hindered by frictions between the two states over maritime territorial disputes, energy security, Japan's deepening security alliance with the United States, Taiwan's status as a sovereign entity, and a hustle for regional leadership. As a result, strategic competition and economic cooperation have marked Sino-Japanese ties since the beginning of the century, leading to a downturn in bilateral ties with brief sunny peaks in between.<sup>21</sup>

### ***India's Stake in the Sino-Japanese Rivalry***

In modern history, India has shared somewhat incompatible relationships with China and Japan. Post-independence, India saw China as a fellow Asian country that had emerged from the clutches of imperialism and was looking toward crafting a bright future. However, while India staunchly adhered to a principle of nonalignment, China adopted a communist ideology during the Cold War. India's acceptance of the Dalai Lama and Tibetans fleeing Chinese oppression stressed Sino-Indian relations considerably. Furthermore, famously, India's political leadership saw China as a key partner with multiple avenues for cooperation, until the Sino-Indian border dispute quickly escalated into an all-out war in 1962.<sup>22</sup> Following the war, China-India ties only resumed after nearly three decades, with Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China in 1988 to normalize the relations. Nevertheless, the border dispute has been a source of constant tension between the two neighbors over the decades.<sup>23</sup> China's support of Pakistan, especially under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which was earlier known as "one belt and one road" (OBOR), and at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) with respect to the Kashmir issue, has been a sore point for New Delhi.

Under Prime Minister Modi's strategy of engagement with equilibrium, India sought to bring power parity to its ties with China and emerge as a peer partner.<sup>24</sup> The two neighbors are also engaged in cooperation through a number of multilateral platforms such as the BRICS bloc (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), the Russia-India-China trilateral, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the New Development Bank of the BRICS. Moreover, both share robust economic ties: one of its major economic partners, China has emerged as one of India's largest trade partner in 2020,<sup>25</sup> supplying approximately 14 percent of India's imports and a market for 5 percent of India's exports for 2019-20. In a mark of India's dependency, import figures are further skewed when it comes to auto parts, electronic components, consumer durables, application programming interfaces, and leather goods.<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, under Modi, India has attempted to stabilize ties, while at the same time projecting the image of a major regional power committed to a rules-based international order. India's stand against Chinese aggression at Doklam in a (successful) attempt to maintain the status quo at the border is testament to this.<sup>27</sup>

However, since the Galwan Valley incident—the most violent clash along the disputed India-China border since 1975—there has been a marked strategic

shift in India's China policy.<sup>28</sup> Amid rising anti-China sentiments, India has taken several steps toward a strategic decoupling from China. For instance, India is looking at diversifying its supply chain nexus by limiting Chinese imports, calling for a boycott on all Chinese products,<sup>29</sup> reviewing procedures for foreign direct investment from neighboring countries,<sup>30</sup> and partially decoupling its trade ties with Beijing. In the digital sector, this has translated to India's decision to ban an unprecedented number of Chinese apps believed to be a risk to its national security.<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, India and Japan have shared "cordial" ties since first establishing diplomatic relations in 1952—one of Japan's first treaties after World War II. Since the beginning of the century, under the three consecutive Prime Ministers Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Manmohan Singh, and Narendra Modi, this relationship has continued to develop and upgrade into a "Special Strategic and Global Partnership" as of 2014. Modi and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abe declared their resolve to further India–Japan ties into a "deep, broad-based and action-oriented partnership, which reflects a broad convergence of their long-term political, economic and strategic goals."<sup>32</sup> In the economic sector too, both states share close ties, with the Japanese private sector becoming increasingly active in India.<sup>33</sup> Over the coming years, Japan further expects India to improve the ease of doing business in the country to boost deeper trade relations. Through bilateral summits, Japan's rising investment in India's infrastructure development (¥3.5 trillion over the next five years) and maritime security cooperation (like the Malabar Exercises), India and Japan are looking to enter a new era with ties based on their shared commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific region.<sup>34</sup>

A key source of synergy in India–Japan ties stems from their shared interest in shaping the regional order and their joint partnership via numerous trilateral, minilateral, and multilateral platforms, including the Quad, the Australia–Japan–India trilateral, and the Japan–America–India trilateral.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, India's Act East Policy and its Africa outlook are largely in convergence with Japan's Expanded Partnership for Quality Infrastructure, leading to joint initiatives aiming for an intercontinental cooperation factoring Asia and Africa.<sup>36</sup>

Nevertheless, there is considerable scope for India and Japan to expand defense ties, especially in the maritime sector, through military sales, agreements, and exercises. Until now, their security cooperation has been limited by their differing perspectives on China. India, for instance, has been extremely cautious in refraining from appearing "anti-China" and has restricted, therefore, any activities that China may constitute as being openly hostile. However, in the post-pandemic and



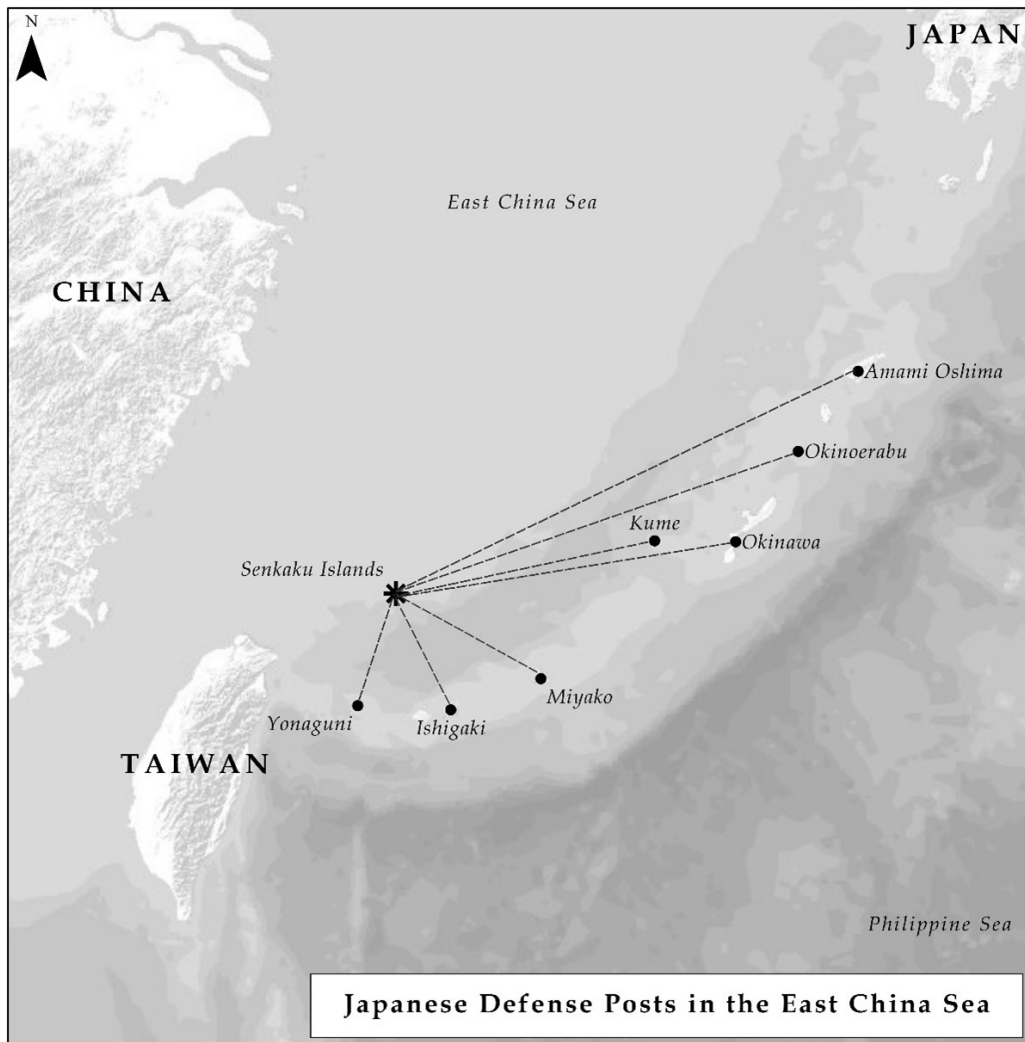
post-Galwan order, with regional power dynamics shifting quickly, India is taking increasingly bold decisions regarding China. It is quickly rethinking its priorities and reevaluating its risks in the region. This makes it an influential player moving forward, with the China–Japan rivalry posing critical implications for India’s national security and its ambitions of major power status.

### ***A Fractious Trough: The East China Sea***

A central aspect of Sino-Japanese relations since 2012 is the two countries’ territorial dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. As discussed previously, China and Japan (along with Taiwan)<sup>37</sup> have claims on territory in the maritime region due to its strategic placement and rich natural reserves. Tensions between the two states have been high ever since, only exacerbated by China’s growing military capabilities and Japan’s deepening security alliance with the United States.

Over the years, China and Japan have been investing heavily in their military (air and naval) capabilities along the region. For instance, Japan has upgraded its radar technology, signals intelligence, and patrol capabilities. Tokyo has also strategically invested in improving Japan’s defense architecture along its nearby islands (Yonaguni, Ishigaki, Miyako, Kume, Okinawa, Okinoerabu, and Amami Ōshima) in response to China’s regular patrols testing Japanese control over the disputed waters.<sup>38</sup> This involves posting of Japan Coast Guard and Japan Ground Self-Defense Forces troops along with an upgrading of the bases and construction of new facilities. In the past couple years, Tokyo has accelerated its efforts to introduce multiple new defense initiatives, including deployment of antiship and surface-to-air missiles.<sup>39</sup> As of 2020, plans are also underway to test and introduce Type-12 surface-to-ship missiles and hypersonic antiship missiles.<sup>40</sup> Since Miyako and Ishigaki are located within 100 nautical miles of the Senkaku Islands (and 200 nautical miles from the nearest Chinese point), this makes the region within Japan’s missile range.

Nevertheless, Tokyo is aware that it has a long way to go if it is to match China’s exponentially increasing military capabilities.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, with China’s expanding military prowess, Beijing has become increasingly aggressive in the region. Although Chinese ships have been deployed for patrolling in the disputed region almost continuously since 2012, in recent months Japan has faced a marked shift in the duration and assertiveness of China Coast Guard (CCG) vessels. This rising aggression, in context of a devastating pandemic, has complicated the security dynamics in the region and consequently holds acute implications for India.



© MP-IDSA, GIS Section. Map not to scale.

**Figure 1. Japanese defense posts in the East China Sea.** A map of major defense/coast guard facilities surrounding the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea.

## Rise of a Revisionist China

### *China's Grand Strategy*

To understand the emerging rivalry in the Indo-Pacific, it is first and foremost vital to examine the emergence of China as a preeminent regional power. Since the onset of the twenty-first century, China has been set on expanding its

“comprehensive national power.”<sup>42</sup> Under Xi Jinping’s ideology, this has meant a return to its glory during the Middle Ages, leading to the rise of a revisionist China. Beijing’s strategy is apparent and well-elocuted: securing its status as a global great power through the creation of a prosperous China with a “world-class” military.<sup>43</sup> Although there is little clarity on what such a military entails, for the immediate future, it can be interpreted as creating a military comparable to that of the United States.<sup>44</sup>

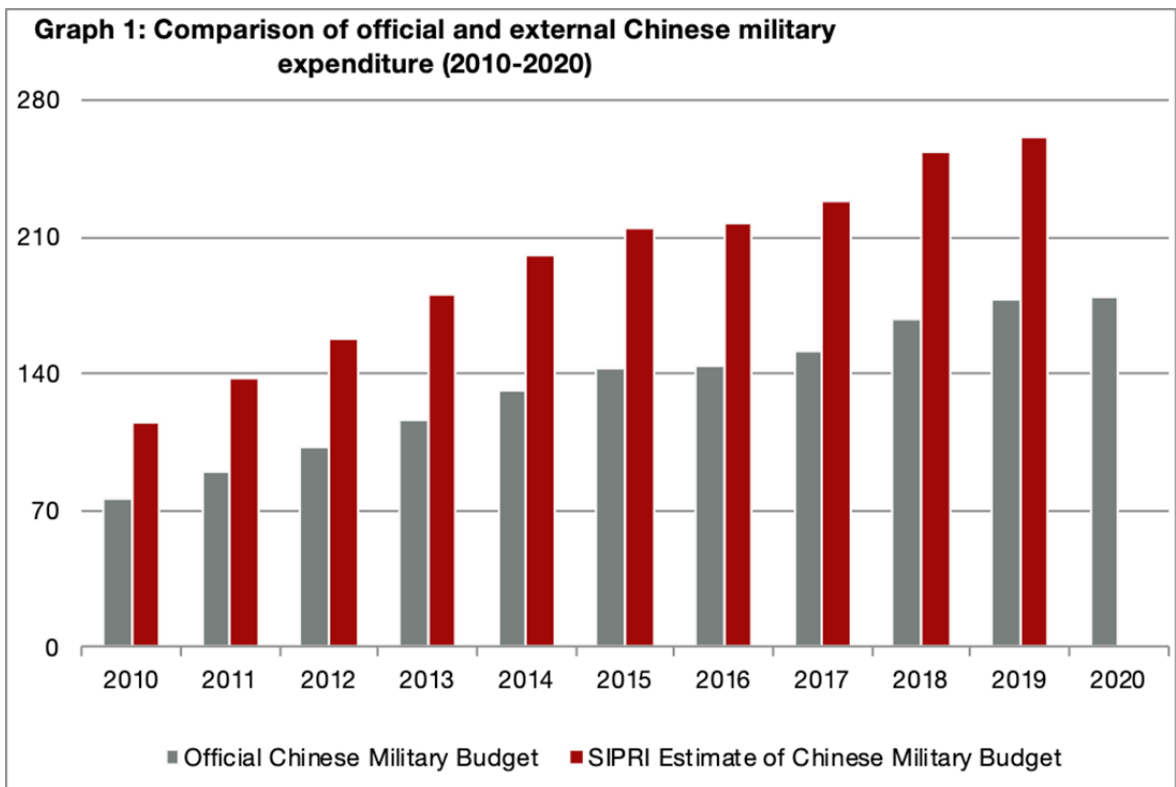
The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has pursued the nation’s strategic objectives in a carefully calibrated manner so that Beijing’s actions fall just below the threshold of provoking an outright armed conflict with the United States.<sup>45</sup> China’s actions in the ECS (as well as its pursuit of maritime claims in the SCS and its territorial claims with India and Bhutan) are examples of this. In all its regional disputes, China has shown that it is willing to use military and nonmilitary coercive measures “to advance its interests and mitigate opposition from other countries.”<sup>46</sup> At the same time, CCP leadership under Xi is committed to bolstering China’s military and naval power commensurate with that of a great Chinese power, by building a more capable People’s Liberation Army (PLA) and a People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN).

In recent years, China has mobilized a plethora of economic, foreign policy, and security tools to realize its larger vision of reverting to its Middle Ages status. With a specific focus on boosting its domestic technological industry, China continues to thrust its manufacturing industry under the “Made in China 2025.”<sup>47</sup> The push for increased innovation and progress in technology is closely aligned with China’s military modernization objectives. The Civil-Military Integration initiative—a key pillar in the Chinese grand strategy for defense modernization—further encourages the private sector to enter the defense market in an array of areas such as hardware, personnel, training, infrastructure, and logistics.<sup>48</sup> China has focused extensively on developing sectors such as cyber, space, and artificial intelligence alongside traditional fields of air, sea, and land, thereby preparing itself for new forms of warfare that are sure to be central to future conflicts.

### ***Advancing Military and Naval Capabilities***

One key indicator of China’s growing focus on developing defense capabilities is the growth in defense spending. In a show of transparency, China joined the UN Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures in 2007 and publicly reports its defense expenditure for every fiscal year.<sup>49</sup> For the past 20 years, official figures and external estimates show that China’s defense budget has steadily increased in nominal terms. It currently stands second only to the United States and exceeds Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Vietnam combined.

In May 2020, China announced that its yearly defense spending for 2020 would rise to 1.268 trillion yuan (approximately 178.6 billion USD)<sup>50</sup>—up 6.6 percent from 1.19 trillion yuan (approximately 177.5 billion USD)<sup>51</sup> in 2019. Although this growth percentage is lower than previous years in absolute terms, it is significant when taken in context with the recently slowing Chinese economy in light of the pandemic. In 2019, China’s military expenditure grew by 7.5 percent; whereas, its gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 6.1 percent. Although it is already recovering from the slowdown caused by the pandemic, China’s growth remains low by its own standards. Despite such low projections, China’s substantial expenditure on military is an indication of the leadership’s commitment to military modernization and transforming the PLA into “world-class forces” by 2035.<sup>52</sup>



Source: SIPRI and Government of China Declarations

**Figure 2. Comparison of official and external Chinese military expenditure (2010–2019)**

However, how much China actually spends on its military remains a matter of wide speculation, with estimates from the US Department of Defense and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) being considerably higher. For instance, SIPRI’s estimate for China’s 2019 defense expenditure was

1.5 times the official declaration.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, since Beijing does not declare accurate cost data for military goods and services, it is difficult to interpret the budget in terms of purchasing power parity rates relative to that of competitor states.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, it is generally believed that after factoring for differences in labor and operational costs, in real terms, China's annual military spending is precariously closer—about 75 percent—to that of the United States.<sup>55</sup> This approach provides a much more comprehensive understanding of China's military might and its rising global power.

When looking at the Sino-Japanese ties, Beijing's naval prowess is of particular interest. The PLAN is Asia's largest force in terms of amphibious combatants and vessels (with more than 350 submarines and ships and 130 surface combatants). It boasts of multirole platforms with advanced antiship, antiair, and antisubmarine radars and weapons. As of 2019, the PLAN has launched its first domestically constructed aircraft and a Yushen-class assault ship, and it is expected to acquire long-range precision-strike capabilities from vessels to land-based targets soon.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, the PLAN may be supported by the CCG and the People's Armed Forces Maritime Militia on a mission-critical basis.

### ***China's Rising Power Projections***

China's advancing military prowess has translated in its neighborhood policy, with Beijing increasingly projecting its might in Indo-Pacific, particularly along its territorial and maritime disputes. This includes China's adventurism in the SCS, its policies with regards to the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), its assertiveness in Taiwan, its draconian imposition of a new national security law in Hong Kong against the long-standing one country–two systems principle, its standoff with the Indian Army along their shared disputed border at Galwan Valley, and its unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the ECS.

In fact, in tandem with China's rising military and economic power, the CCP has made every effort to create conditions that nurture China's global vision and facilitate its national rejuvenation.<sup>57</sup> The above-stated activities in China's immediate neighborhood seek to secure and advance Beijing's expanding strategic interests in its peripheral region. Such military activities, coupled with a rather coercive form of diplomacy (often termed as the “wolf warrior” approach), have only served to put the region on alert and cause concern among China's neighbors—particularly India and Japan, two countries that share territorial disputes with the rising dragon.

## ***India's Mounting Frustrations with China***

Over the years, India has become increasingly vexed with China. Even as both states cooperated on several matters, including economically, there exists an overwhelming negative opinion for China among the Indian population, which has been reaffirmed amid the COVID-19 pandemic,<sup>58</sup> the Galwan Valley border dispute in June 2020,<sup>59</sup> and the skirmishes<sup>60</sup> that followed. A poll conducted by *India Today* found rampant and unprecedented anti-China sentiments among Indians: 59 percent of respondents believed India should go to war with China, 84 percent saw China's actions as Xi betraying Modi, and 91 percent supported banning of Chinese apps and companies.<sup>61</sup> A second survey, the IANS-CVoter Snap Poll, conducted on social media, found that 68.3 percent of respondents saw China as a bigger threat than the historical rival, Pakistan.<sup>62</sup> Such overwhelming opinion is only further incited by a loud, independent media, making the current border issue a remarkably emotional one. Therefore, the dispute has taken central stage in Sino-Indian relations, overshadowing their existing areas of cooperation and likely hampering ties in the coming era. The conventional idea that China's rise could be peaceful and inspire mutual growth has clearly receded.

Yet the border dispute is far from the only problem between the two neighbors. India views China's close ties with Pakistan as an imminent and critical problem. China has repeatedly raised the Kashmir issue at the UNSC since last year, much to India's frustration. Most recently, in August 2020, India's Permanent Representative to the UN, T.S. Tirumurti, revealed that, with the backing of China, Pakistan made an unsuccessful attempt to bring up Kashmir under the UNSC's "Any Other Business" section, which was shot down as a bilateral issue by "almost all countries," with the United States and France taking lead.<sup>63</sup> An official response by India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) "firmly [rejected] China's interference in [their] internal affairs," urging Beijing to "draw proper conclusions" from their consistent but pointless attempts.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, New Delhi issued a rather strong statement in response to fairly benign remarks by the Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin in which he expressed the hope that the issue could be resolved peacefully through dialogue and that both sides could "jointly safeguard peace, stability and development" in the region.<sup>65</sup> India's MEA issued an immediate statement saying that China had "no locus standi whatsoever" and was "advised not to comment on the internal affairs of other nations."<sup>66</sup> New Delhi is clearly losing patience, with increasingly harsher and angrier responses emerging from the government.

In addition, India has vigorously objected to the 46 billion USD CPEC, a part of Beijing's ambitious BRI, arguing that the project violated India's sovereignty

and territorial integrity on account of its planned construction through Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir. More importantly, New Delhi has also challenged the transparency, openness, and financial responsibility of the connectivity initiative and asked China and Pakistan to cease their activities.<sup>67</sup>

### ***The Way Forward***

Against such rampaging negative sentiments and worsening conditions between India and China, a clinical and dispassionate analysis of the situation is essential to better understand where Sino-Indian ties stand and, ultimately, how they may be improved. Looking through the structural lens, the key factors affecting ties involve economy, technology, geopolitics, and culture.

In 1980, India and China were roughly the same size in terms of their GDP; however, their growth in the following three decades was on completely different trajectories, with China growing consistently at a rate of almost 10 percent.<sup>68</sup> By 2019, India's GDP (2.875 trillion USD) is almost five times smaller than that of China (14.343 trillion USD).<sup>69</sup> India is also significantly dependent on China in terms of trade: Beijing is a leading trade partner and one with which India has a persistent trade deficit. Although this negative trade balance is steadily yet slowly decreasing, it remains glaring.<sup>70</sup> Subsequently, economic growth and reducing trade dependency on China, insofar as possible, has emerged as a policy goal of the Indian administration, and this invariably impacts India's China policy on the whole. Modi's impetus on manufacturing in India, his push for the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) with Japan and Australia, and the bold banning of Chinese apps and products are examples of this, but such measures have only served to create more hostility between the two states.<sup>71</sup> As India pursues its economic goals further, relations are unlikely to improve in the coming decade.

On a similar note, technology has impacted India–China ties. In the modern age, India and China's largely tranquil coexistence has been characterized with antagonism and a “frenemy” relationship—as described by some analysts—wherein technology has equipped both sides to overcome their geographical barriers and confront each other directly, especially as they pursue contradictory strategic and economic interests.<sup>72</sup> For instance, China's connectivity projects in Nepal, which involve the construction of a highway perilously close to the Indian border, are perceived to be a national security threat by India.<sup>73</sup> The cultural gap between the two states only undermines their prospects for deeper cooperation. This gap is exemplified by their lack of structural and institutional cultural exchanges, which Modi and Xi had planned to address by enhancing people-to-people exchanges in 2020 through 70 events but were put on hold amid the current uncertain climate.<sup>74</sup> Both states have drastically distinct cultural contexts, with few and ineffective

mechanisms to bridge their gap, causing a misconception of the other's actions. Resolving tensions therefore requires a rebuilding of lasting trust through institution of closer and more effective diplomatic channels and using technology advantageously.<sup>75</sup>

The most influential factor in India and China's continued frictions, however, is the current geopolitical environment, which institutes their bilateral conflict in the overarching great-power competition between China and the United States.<sup>76</sup> India has long shared cordial ties with Washington and Beijing simultaneously; however, in the past two years, as Washington launched a major international campaign to contain China, this has become exceedingly difficult. And while India has the sovereign right to pursue security partnerships, its decision to join the Quad 2.0 was undoubtedly perceived by Beijing as New Delhi's unfettered support of Washington's "anti-China" cause.<sup>77</sup> This stands true for not only India's ties with the United States but also for its enhancing security alliances with Japan and Australia.<sup>78</sup> On the other hand, India is distrustful of China's outreach in its backyard—South Asia and the IOR. While the BRI and Beijing's presence in the IOR may be China's effort to build better ties and enhance connectivity in the region, New Delhi views such measures as a way of undermining India's security dominance in its traditional sphere of influence.<sup>79</sup> Such misapprehensions and conflicting interests on both sides, combined with the overarching geopolitical contest, are only likely to add to the antagonism.

## Rise of a Nonpacifist Japanese Power

### *Japan's Transformation under Abe*

Much like India, Japan's complex and multifold China outlook has undergone momentous change in recent years. Abe's second term in office, starting in 2012, coincided with the revival of tensions in the ECS, significantly shifting dynamics between the historical Asian competitors. Amid this, Abe shaped a dynamic China policy that is nationalistic yet pragmatic. As a form of *seikei bunri*, or separation of economics from politics, Tokyo has sought to build trade ties with China despite political differences.<sup>80</sup> Although ties remained exceedingly cold until 2014—with Abe's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine enforcing an environment that had little room for bilateral dialogue and more importantly, harmed critical economic relations—his administration made a concerted effort to moderate its tone toward the rising China.<sup>81</sup>

In November 2014, Abe finally met Xi in Beijing, on the sidelines of an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit, where he waited to greet his Chinese



counterpart in a marked departure from protocol, and both leaders affirmed a commitment to build a “mutually beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests.”<sup>82</sup> The landmark meeting was a turning point in Sino-Japanese bilateral ties, initiating numerous high-level meets between the two states, including several between Abe and Xi. Abe largely avoided debates on Japan’s wartime history with China and made a conscientious and successful effort to keep ties on track even against the backdrop of the 70th anniversary of World War II in 2015, which many feared would inflame hostilities.<sup>83</sup> Since 2017, bilateral relations improved further as Abe emphasized potential for deeper cooperation in the BRI—provided that it was open, transparent, and fair.<sup>84</sup> Xi and Abe’s “historic” telephone conversation in 2018, the first of its kind, elevated diplomatic ties further, as both leaders affirmed their commitment to bilateral ties and peace on the Korean Peninsula, while marking the 40th year of China-Japan Treaty of Peace and Friendship.<sup>85</sup> Later in 2018, Abe visited Beijing for a bilateral summit, the first in seven years held independent of any multilateral meeting.<sup>86</sup> Finally, 2020 was to mark Xi’s first visit to Tokyo, which was postponed due to the pandemic amid popular and political calls to cancel it altogether owing to heightening tensions.<sup>87</sup>

However, despite this thaw in hostilities, Abe simultaneously and pragmatically pushed for Japan’s increased security independence, primarily through advancing military capabilities and modernization, overturning of the pacifist Japanese constitution, a robust Indo-Pacific agenda, enhanced security partnerships with “like-minded” states, and most recently, for reduced reliance on the Chinese economy. These changes can be attributed to a shifting calculus in Japan over China’s intentions for the region and in the ECS. Despite a “normalization” of Sino-Japanese ties under Abe, the Japanese public opinion of China has remained negative. According to a Genron NPO annual poll, 90.1 percent of the Japanese people held unfavorable views of China in 2013—the worst since the poll was first conducted in 2005.<sup>88</sup> This number rose to 93 percent in 2014.<sup>89</sup> Not much has improved since then: the 2019 poll recorded 84.7 percent of respondents as having negative opinions on China; a Pew Research Center survey echoed these findings.<sup>90</sup> There is an evident lack of affinity among the public and a “fatigue over what are seen as cynical Chinese demands for Japan to submit on history and territory.”<sup>91</sup> Such overwhelming negative opinion has mobilized conditions for a deterioration in Japan’s hedging behavior and invariably seen a shift to a soft (and moving toward a concretely hard) balancing of China through a diplomatic “encirclement” and reinforcing of the US-Japan alliance.<sup>92</sup>

In light of this, Abe vigorously advocated for an amendment of the war-renouncing Article 9 of Japan’s pacifist constitution, in line with the legacy of his grandfather and former Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi.<sup>93</sup> In a 2017 keynote

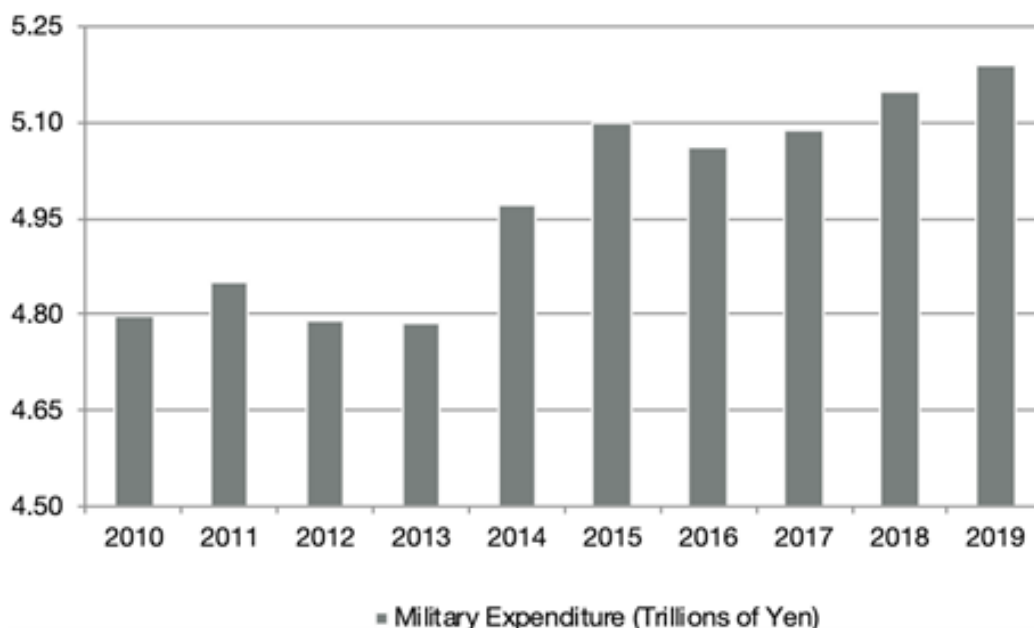
speech to parliament, Abe highlighted his “firm conviction” that the discourse on constitutional reform would develop further against the background of a “severe” security environment facing Japan.<sup>94</sup> Although Abe’s health forced him to step down in September 2020, his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) continues to support a revision of Article 9 to explicitly include the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) so as to institute them constitutionally as well as enable provision of a first-strike capability.<sup>95</sup> Although the issue still faces strong opposition,<sup>96</sup> the debate is ongoing, especially under US pressure to bolster Japanese capabilities so that Tokyo can act as a full-fledged US ally. However, any formal acquisition of presumptive strike capabilities would likely raise Beijing’s ire, with China’s state-sponsored media already hinting at consequences of doing so. For instance, there was an outlash in the Chinese media in response to Japan’s agreement to host a US Aegis Ashore land-based antimissile system.<sup>97</sup>

**Table 1. Revision of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution.** A timeline of key moments under Abe.

Year	Description
1972–2014	During this period, the administration adhered to the official interpretation of Article 9: one allowing for collective self-defense in theory. However, deploying forces beyond Japanese territory remained illegal.
2007	Under Abe’s first term, Japan’s Defense Agency was elevated to the status of a ministry, the Ministry of Defense (MOD).
2012	The Abe-led LDP released a draft of an amended Article 9 of the constitution that legitimized Japan’s right to self-defense and the role of its armed forces.
2014	Abe’s cabinet approved the “reinterpretation” of Article 9 based on a report of the government’s Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security. The new interpretation expanded the scope under which Japan could exercise its right to self-defense to include any situation that could threaten Japan’s survival instead of being limited to a response toward an armed attack. Abe’s administration pushed through a controversial security bill - the Seamless Security Legislation to Ensure Japan’s Survival and Protect its People - in response to an increasingly complex security environment. Based on a new interpretation of Article 9, the law allows for Japan’s right to and participation in collective self-defense.
2015	The change was ratified through the approval of 10 new statutes based on Abe’s reinterpretation, collectively recognized as the Legislation for Peace and Security, with broad objectives of securing peace and stability for Japan, the region, and beyond. The MOD established an Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Agency under its purview, in a sign of Japan’s goal to develop enhanced military capabilities.
2017	Japan announced plans to deploy two Aegis Ashore land-based ballistic missile defense radar systems, primarily to counter North Korea.
2020	Defense Minister Taro Kono announced a cancellation of the deployment of the Aegis Ashore system, citing high costs and technical difficulties. The announcement came amid strong opposition within Japan and economic slowdown. Tokyo is reportedly considering deployment of specially constructed missile defense warships in place of Aegis Ashore, with the sole purpose of countering ballistic missiles.

Source: Prepared by the authors based on various official and news articles<sup>98</sup>

Additionally, under Abe, Japan consistently increased its defense spending by a total of almost 10 percent. According to MOD reports, Japan's defense budget for fiscal year (FY) 2020 was an unprecedented 5.07 trillion yen (47 billion USD); in December 2020, Japan approved a record defense budget of 5.34 trillion yen (51.2 billion USD) for 2021; by comparison, in FY2012, this figure stood at 4.65 trillion yen.<sup>99</sup> Data from international sources, such as SIPRI and World Bank, paint a similar picture (see fig. 3).<sup>100</sup> This increasing budget is propelled by the LDP's ambitious plans to enhance the JSDF's capabilities to conduct "cross-domain operations" by boosting competence in critical fields like space, cyberspace, and technology in addition to those in conventional air, maritime, and land domains.<sup>101</sup> In essence, Tokyo aims to build a formidable defensive power that possesses the ability to respond to the current changing security circumstances, in striking similarity to China's much more expansive goals discussed earlier. The LDP's push for collective self-defense, combined with rising military expenditure and a broadened defense agenda, is indicative of Tokyo's goals to maintain its position as an influential Asian power.



Source: SIPRI, World Bank Data, Japan Defense White Papers (2010–2019)

**Figure 3. Japan's military expenditure (2010–2020) based on SIPRI estimates and Government of Japan's declarations**

Japan's budget not only defies the 1 percent threshold in keeping with the Abe Doctrine but also employs a number of other creative ways to meet the country's

security needs amid a shifting geopolitical dynamic.<sup>102</sup> One such tool Abe employed is building engagements and security partnerships with countries in the Indo-Pacific and the world at large. With his landmark “Confluence of the Two Seas” speech at the Indian parliament in 2007, Abe led the charge in revitalizing the Quad 2.0, which has swiftly gained momentum in the past few years.<sup>103</sup> He has also brought the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy to the center of Japanese foreign policy, firmly establishing Japan as a regional power.<sup>104</sup> As a part of this new outlook, Japan has pursued deeper bilateral ties and multilateral engagement with countries like India, Australia, and the United States, even as Tokyo sought to solidify its relationship with China. Trilaterals like India–Japan–Australia and Japan–India–America, along with platforms like the Blue Dot Network, have been introduced to form avenues for deeper cooperation among states with shared values.<sup>105</sup> However, with the US-China rivalry intensifying in recent years, these engagements have an underlying agenda of containing what the West perceives to be Chinese aggression.

### **Japan’s Post-Abe China Policy and Asia’s Geo-Politics**

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, who succeeded Abe in September 2020, has so far largely followed the central principles of Abe’s China policy. Although he took charge during a time of deep geopolitical uncertainties, Suga’s brief tenure has seen a whirl of diplomatic maneuvering. Following in the footsteps of Abe, Suga visited Vietnam and Indonesia as part of his first official overseas trip in office. The strategically astute move was symbolic of Japan’s continued commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific and its interest in building durable regional security partnerships to safeguard a rules-based order.<sup>106</sup> Suga also hosted the foreign ministers of India, Australia, and the United States for a critical Quad 2.0 meeting, adding further credence to Japan’s Indo-Pacific outlook of forging a shared regional strategy between like-minded states that constrains Chinese belligerence.<sup>107</sup> These high-profile meetings were followed by a state visit with the Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, described as a “pivotal moment” in bilateral ties, where they further bolstered defense ties to counter China’s rise.<sup>108</sup>

Nevertheless, with Japanese general elections due to take place in late 2021, Tokyo’s China policy remains highly uncertain. However, any pragmatic assessment suggests that should Chinese aggression along the ECS continue, it will result in prolonged period of tension.<sup>109</sup> With no impending signs of de-escalation in Sino-American ties, Japan will likely be forced to put its hedging strategy on the back foot and align with the United States for security matters more openly. As this occurs, Sino-Japanese ties are likely to enter a phase of frosty relations. Abe’s decisions to induce companies to move manufacturing away from China

and urgently pursue alternate supply chains with India and Australia through the SCRI in the aftermath of the pandemic have already marked a downward turn in Tokyo's outlook toward Beijing.<sup>110</sup>

The future of Sino-Japanese ties has deep-seated implications for the entirety of the Indo-Pacific region; for India, the developments in their relations will shape the nation's foreign and security policies in the times to come. Deteriorating China-Japan relations will undoubtedly impact India's own relations with the two Asian powers. During his term, Abe built on his own personal connection with India to elevate their ties to a Special Strategic Partnership, with deep bilateral cooperation and alignment on multilateral platforms. Through Japan's investment in India's infrastructure development and finding common ground in their outreaches to Southeast Asia and Africa, both states found new momentum and synergy in their ties.

At the same time, India's border standoff with China at the Galwan Valley has resulted in a shift in New Delhi's foreign policy outlook, particularly in the context of China. The incident and its aftermath have witnessed a much more assertive New Delhi, which is seemingly more open to deeper entanglements in the Indo-Pacific, such as with its Quad partners Japan, Australia, and the United States. Now, with India's mounting frustrations with China coming to a head, both have found synergy in pursuing greater cooperation as a means of balancing China's rising power. Japan, for instance, has lent India support by condemning China's attempts to unilaterally change the status quo at the Line of Actual Control.<sup>111</sup> While India and Japan's alliance need not be exclusively an anti-China effort, the fact that both states are faced with an assertive China means that they can, and must, find synergy in their China outlooks. In fact, greater coordination in this aspect can help the two states—both of which have large and advancing militaries—better respond to China's assertiveness and leverage their security partnership for better outcomes in negotiations.

However, any such effort would be contingent on India and Japan's continued synergy. For this, both states must adjust their foreign policies vis-à-vis one another. For instance, in the near future, as the situation escalates further, India may have to reevaluate and recalculate its own position on the ECS dispute. New Delhi has studiously avoided any statement on the Senkaku Islands maritime dispute; but as it seeks to gain greater agency in the region, a situation where the Indian government may need to take a position cannot be ruled out in its entirety. Adding to such a context, India and Japan's already deep partnership must be institutionalized, and new or lacking areas of cooperation must be explored further. New Delhi's ambitions to become a more proactive regional power in the Indo-Pacific can find common ground with Japan's desire to pursue security independence, as both states

synchronize their long-term vision to emerge as nodal powers in a multipolar world order.

Here, it is vital to note that China–Japan–India dynamics hold significant implications for the entire region or Indo-Pacific at large, especially the United States. Amid rising tensions with China, a strong security bond with Japan, and a slowly evolving security partnership with India, Asia as a whole has swiftly become a priority in the US foreign policy outlook. China’s future actions and Japan and India’s responses to them will undoubtedly shape Washington’s Indo-Pacific calculus in the coming times. With slim hopes of reviving friendly ties with a revisionist China, Washington’s priority will be to form critical alliances in the region with like-minded partners. It has already pushed this agenda for the past few years under initiatives like the Quad. Now, as dynamics shift in the post-pandemic world, Washington will want to maximize the situation to further bolster its own sphere of influence in the Indo-Pacific region in preparation for what could evolve into a new, high-stakes cold war. ❀

### **Mahima N. Duggal**

Ms. Duggal is an associated fellow at the Stockholm Centre for South Asian and Indo-Pacific Affairs (SCSA-IPA) of the Institute for Security & Development Policy, Stockholm, Sweden. She is also an editorial assistant to the Series Editor for *Routledge Studies on Think Asia*. Her research focuses on Indo-Pacific, having a special importance attached to South Asian affairs. Ms. Duggal holds a master’s in international security from the Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick (UK).

### **Dr. Jagannath P. Panda**

Dr. Panda is a Research Fellow and Centre Coordinator for East Asia at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA), New Delhi, India. He is the Series Editor for *Routledge Studies on Think Asia*. Dr. Panda is the author of the book *India-China Relations: Politics of Resources, Identity and Authority in a Multipolar World Order* (Routledge: 2017). He is also the author of the book *China’s Path to Power: Party, Military and the Politics of State Transition* (Pentagon Press: 2010). Dr. Panda has also edited a number of books to his credit. Most recently, he has published an edited volume *Scaling India-Japan Cooperation in Indo-Pacific and Beyond 2025: Connectivity, Corridors and Contours* (KW Publishing Ltd. 2019), and *The Korean Peninsula and Indo-Pacific Power Politics: Status Security at Stake* (Routledge, 2020). Most recently, Dr. Panda has co-edited the volume, *Chinese Politics and Foreign Policy under Xi Jinping: The Future Political Trajectory* (Routledge, 2021).

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# North Korea

## Nuclear Threat or Security Problem?

DR. STEPHEN J. BLANK

### Abstract

The negotiation process on North Korean nuclearization is stalemated and no change seems likely anytime soon. This stalemate demonstrates the failure of the US policy, a very dangerous situation particularly in view of the absence of any viable American strategic approach to the issue, the ensuing divisions among allies, and lack of a coherent approach to North Korea. Continuing the policy of strategic patience, which would be Washington's default position if no further progress occurs, is doomed to fail. Therefore, the United States must simultaneously enhance alliance cohesion while pursuing a credible negotiating proposal. This article lays out the reasons why that stance is needed now and is becoming more urgent. Such strategic approach can lead to better negotiated outcomes that would not only bring about denuclearization and North Korean security but also promote a new, more stable, equilibrium in Northeast Asia.

### Introduction

As American officials have observed, the denuclearization talks with North Korea are dead.<sup>1</sup> North Korea's evolving military-political posture confirms this. In March 2020, Pyongyang tested four missiles and is now rebuilding land- and sea-based nuclear weapons and facilities for storing them.<sup>2</sup> In October, more advanced missiles, potentially fitted with multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRV) or with penetration aids to attack the US homeland, were displayed.<sup>3</sup> These linked processes, political failure, and military buildup threaten three of the most fundamental US interests since 1945, as revealed in the historical record of US nuclear policies.<sup>4</sup>

These three interests are America's commitment to military superiority and potential use of force over all opponents up to the point of potential nuclear use; global commitment to nonproliferation, even among allies; and the cohesion of US European and Asian alliances.<sup>5</sup> Since an unprovoked military strike against North Korea is infeasible, if Washington really understands the issues at stake here it has no real option other than negotiations with Pyongyang. However, North Korea has set preconditions for renewed negotiations, including an easing of sanctions and acceptance of Pyongyang's terms for reinforcing its missile and



nuclear capabilities.<sup>6</sup> By July 2020 Kim Jong-un no longer felt bound by a moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile tests and had renounced negotiations.<sup>7</sup> North Korea apparently believes negotiations only benefit the United States; therefore, Pyongyang continues building its “deterrent” to guarantee its security.<sup>8</sup> North Korea further signaled its belief that it has been betrayed and gained nothing from the summits with South Korean president Moon Jae-In and US president Donald Trump, underscoring his displeasure by destroying the inter-Korean liaison office at Kaesong and “suspending” military action plans against the South.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, as Frank Aum of the United States Institute of Peace observes, “We are basically back to square one—only in some cases it’s worse.” North Korea is “quietly amassing more fissile material every year—enough to build seven to 12 nuclear bombs annually, experts estimate—and are steadily improving their intercontinental ballistic missile capabilities, leaving us nothing to show for 3 1/2 years in terms of denuclearization.”<sup>10</sup> This stalemate represents the failure of a decades-long bipartisan nonproliferation policy toward North Korea intended as well to minimize risks to Asian security. However, it also highlights an abiding dilemma of arms control negotiations. One side demands disarmament first followed by discussions of security and guarantees (Washington), while the other side insists on security guarantees before disarmament (Pyongyang).<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, since Kim will not relinquish nuclear weapons, arguments that the 2018–19 freeze on deployments and testing (especially absent negotiations or coercion) will engender denuclearization are unconvincing. Indeed, that freeze may convince observers “as signifying US acceptance of North Korea as “at least a limited nuclear weapons state for the indefinite future.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, this stalemate jeopardizes global nonproliferation and allied cohesion in Northeast Asia. Therefore, to obtain a positive outcome in Korea, Washington must negotiate to achieve peace, denuclearization, and a legitimate order there.

The Trump administration’s “maximum pressure” policy, including new sanctions, is likewise infeasible. That program will meet with Sino-Russian support for North Korea. Beijing and Moscow will cushion the impact of any new sanctions or economic pressure on Pyongyang because they are increasingly allied with North Korea in its approach to Washington and because of their own individual interests.<sup>13</sup> Even while voting for sanctions, Russia and China openly violate them.<sup>14</sup> Beijing and Moscow have ample incentives to encourage North Korean resistance, if not some form of controlled escalation, toward the United States, given their intensely adversarial relations with Washington.<sup>15</sup> Nor, obviously, is it feasible to rely on a renewed form of “strategic patience,” where we just wait for Pyongyang to change its mind while we merely add ever newer and more sophisticated weapons

and sanctions to deter Pyongyang and Beijing's growing threats. Waiting for North Korea to disarm equates to waiting for Godot.

Yet ongoing realities obligate Washington to frame a strategy and then conduct policies to advance it. Since, only a negotiated settlement reliably guarantees peace and security for all concerned in Northeast Asia, alliance management, deterrence, and a plan for negotiations must be conjoined parts of our strategy. Thus, the next administration has no choice but to negotiate with North Korea. However, since negotiations are not occurring, North Korea is strengthening its missile, conventional, and nuclear programs, thereby enhancing regional tensions in Northeast Asia and facilitating further North Korean proliferation to Iran if not elsewhere.<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, negotiations strengthen our alliances. Even while renovating our military and supporting our allies' modernization programs to meet North Korean, Chinese, and other threats, we must simultaneously reassure them that we are not seeking to precipitate war in Asia. Virtually every researcher has found that our Asian allies crave security (or deterrence) and peace. Therefore, reassurance is as important as deterrence. A credible negotiating platform accessible to North Korea (DPRK) represents a critical part of that reassurance. Otherwise, the current arms race in Northeast Asia will certainly accelerate.

With a progressive president occupying the Blue House though, and a majority in the National Assembly from the same party as the president, the risk of an intra-alliance wedge arises—not from negotiating with North Korea but rather from failing to do so. In this context, nothing could be more reassuring than the United States negotiating in good faith to reduce tensions on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>17</sup>

A negotiated settlement in Korea that also formally ends the state of war is the only way North Korea, China, and Russia can mitigate their abiding fears of an arms race and/or conventional conflict in Northeast Asia that then escalates to the nuclear level. This negotiation, because it revolves around denuclearization, must also consider North Korean demands for security and the entire complex of issues involved in any denuclearization process. It must necessarily be a protracted process and lead to a formal end to the Korean War.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, this article argues why this negotiation is necessary sooner rather than later and does so with regard to the aforementioned historical US vital interests.<sup>19</sup> First, it outlines the proliferation threats. Then it demonstrates the absence of a viable military solution that therefore makes negotiations necessary. Third, it analyzes why this “dual-track” of alliance management and negotiation is necessary. Next, it presents the strategic logic of why this approach benefits not only the United States and its allies but also the DPRK, China, and Russia. The article argues that the next administration must approach Korean denuclearization and security from the

standpoint of enhancing American and allied security objectives throughout Northeast Asia. Those imperatives are even more urgent given increased Sino–American antagonism and the concurrent evolution of a Sino–Russian alliance, most notably regarding Northeast Asian security and Korea.<sup>20</sup>

### **Why Negotiations Are Essential**

Many current trends make negotiations urgent and the only way forward. First, it is increasingly urgent, as North Korea improves and Iran relaunches their respective nuclear programs, to reduce their likely bilateral proliferation. North Korea has given Iran’s missile and space programs significant assistance.<sup>21</sup> Iran has recently announced that it will push this program forward despite American pressure.<sup>22</sup> Iran has already nearly tripled its stockpile of enriched uranium, bringing it considerably closer to actual production of a nuclear weapon.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, the next administration will probably confront two simultaneous, linked, but different proliferation crises that share several common denominators, e.g., the perception of diminishing American reliability and power.<sup>24</sup> For Tehran and Pyongyang, Washington’s rejection of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran demonstrates Washington’s unreliability and fundamentally threatening nature as another common denominator of these overlapping crises. Just as Pyongyang frequently invoked Libya’s example as reasons for distrusting the United States, it will likewise invoke the JCPOA’s experience in the future even if Washington understands Libya’s case differently than does North Korea, which sees it as a betrayal leading to forcible regime change.<sup>25</sup> Absent genuine negotiations, we cannot convince Pyongyang that North Korea’s understanding of the Libyan case is incorrect.

Another common denominator is the further erosion of allied cohesion on dealing with Iran or North Korea.<sup>26</sup> A fourth common denominator is that Washington’s Iran policy apparently is another abortive effort to impose “maximum pressure” in the belief that this will inevitably generate regime change.<sup>27</sup> Pyongyang grasps both this perception and the fact of widespread European disagreement with Washington.<sup>28</sup> That perception stimulates North Korea’s, China’s, and Russia’s incessant probes to open and exploit wedges between and among the United States and its allies. These aforementioned factors will enhance North Korean and other states’ distrust of American intentions and undermine the mutual confidence that can only come from a prolonged negotiation.

The second factor making negotiation more urgent is North Korea’s growing capabilities. North Korea’s arms programs are reaching a point of no return. Beyond developing his nuclear capabilities, Kim continues to test new missiles of improved systems that can potentially augment his nuclear threats.<sup>29</sup> UN reports

certify that despite the “freeze” on actual nuclear testing the DPRK continues developing infrastructure and capacity for its missile program. Missile tests in December 2019 may have been “aimed at qualifying new intercontinental ballistic missile engines (liquid propellant) or checking existing engine batches (possibly solid propellant).” Either way “they point to a new phase in the ballistic missile program.”<sup>30</sup> Already in 2017, North Korean missiles could reach the continental United States. Evidence also suggests that North Korea has sufficient conventional and nuclear missiles to target entry points in South Korea for US troops, while intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) threaten US cities to deter an American nuclear strike. The most recent tests in October 2020 apparently add to that latter capability.<sup>31</sup> Logically this entails having a credible DPRK second-strike capability to deter an American first strike. Jan Ludvik observes:

Publicly available estimates put the size of North Korea’s arsenal between 10 and 60 nuclear devices, although it is uncertain whether some of these weapons are operational and deployed with the Korean People’s Army. In the last few years, however, North Korea has demonstrated remarkable progress and surprised the international community with advances in nuclear weapons and ballistic missile technologies. It is not unwarranted to expect that in the foreseeable future, North Korea may acquire a reasonably robust, moderate-sized nuclear arsenal with 50-100 nuclear devices.<sup>32</sup>

These developments strike directly at the US ability to use military power freely and defend its allies’ security and long-standing vital interests. Kim appears to be reverting to a more aggressive posture, including nuclear tests, since he also has warned about a new strategic weapon.<sup>33</sup> Since his posture enjoys Moscow’s and Beijing’s support, they will likely not block his return to that more aggressive policy line.<sup>34</sup> Then, no external actor will possess leverage over Pyongyang to dissuade North Korea from more overt testing for missiles and nuclear components. Therefore, the DPRK sacrificed nothing by negotiating with President Trump while it refined and improved its suite of missiles.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, recent tests already show considerably more sophisticated forces than before. As Vipin Narang wrote, “These [missiles] are mobile launched, they move fast, they fly very low and they are maneuverable. That’s a nightmare for missile defense.”<sup>36</sup>

By mid-summer 2020, another UN report claimed that North Korea has “probably” learned how to fit nuclear devices onto ballistic missiles, creating a usable warhead. North Korea has also, according to this report, learned how to miniaturize its nuclear weapons.<sup>37</sup> These reports corroborate previous Japanese claims that North Korea can miniaturize its nuclear missiles, add multiple warheads to its missiles, and substantially increase its nuclear threat to South Korea and Japan.<sup>38</sup> Narang also believes that North Korea has achieved success here, stating “North

Korean missile development over the past year clearly prioritized complicating, saturating, and defeating regional missile defenses, among other things like, you know, mass production. Looks like they've succeeded.”<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, Japan has also charged North Korea with developing warheads with which to penetrate US missile defenses based in Japan.<sup>40</sup>

Adding to this dilemma is the fact that North Korea's rhetorical threats grow along with its capabilities. Before October 2020 reveal of the likely MIRVed Hwasong-15, the most prominent known enhancement of the DPRK's nuclear capability was a new nuclear-capable submarine that could either serve as a second-strike capability or strike directly at US territory.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, on 2 October 2019 after announcing new working group talks with the United States, North Korea tested an intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM), something it had not done in earlier tests, from that nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN). Those tests signaled Washington that nothing can stop the DPRK from further nuclearization and growing capability.<sup>42</sup> The aforementioned “suspension” of North Korean military plans against South Korea suggests but does not confirm a serious debate in North Korean elite circles about some kind of military strike against South Korea (ROK). Any such strike would likely escalate very rapidly. Yochi Dreazen reported in 2018 that the consensus view is that if war breaks out Kim Jong-un would likely try to overcome US superiority by massive chemical warfare and missile and nuclear strikes during the war's initial phase.<sup>43</sup> Signifying its more truculent rhetoric, in June 2020, Pyongyang stated that given Washington's “hostile policy” the only option given the failure of negotiations is to “counter nuclear with nuclear. . . . A strong war deterrent for national defense came to stand out as an indispensable strategic option.”<sup>44</sup> Finally, Washington has accused Pyongyang of launching cyberattacks on the government and financial institutions to launder money, extort companies, and use digital currencies to finance its nuclear program. These attacks also signal a failure to deter the DPRK's offensive behavior.<sup>45</sup>

The third reason why a credible negotiation offer is necessary is that the only alternative to that means replaying the discredited “strategic patience” approach. Arguments citing a technological breakthrough that works uniformly for the United States against the DPRK and allows Washington to threaten, if not actually conduct, a sweeping preemptive strike to denuclearize the DPRK in the future lack any political-strategic perspective.<sup>46</sup> Neither North Korea nor China, nor probably Russia, will passively allow this outcome to materialize. Numerous reports show the seriousness of China's technological challenge to the US military, a trend that possesses serious repercussions throughout Asia, including Korea.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, “Given the debates that are occurring today, it does little practical

good to assume that internal and international circumstances will change so positively that states will agree to implement nuclear disarmament with little concern over their counterparts' capacities and intentions to renege on disarmament and nonproliferation commitments."<sup>48</sup> Under existing and foreseeable strategic realities, would China (let alone the DPRK) stand by idly and let Washington even threaten, let alone conduct, that operation? And would not North Korea be motivated to preempt any such American strike? If Ludvik's assessment of North Korea's real capabilities is correct, then we must recognize that by having a viable second-strike capability and a portfolio of usable short-range capabilities that can devastate South Korea and/or Japan, North Korea is close to achieving genuine strategic stability for its purposes, as Kim Jong-un stated above.<sup>49</sup>

### **Military Solutions and Strategic Patience Are Therefore Inconceivable**

Therefore, waiting for North Korea to negotiate on American terms is impossible given these and other Asian strategic realities. This conclusion should impel Washington to find a credible negotiating posture. Indeed, the latest breakdown of the negotiations process suggests that the Trump administration failed to capitalize on the earlier summits or verify that North Korea will never negotiate on its nuclear program and therefore Washington should strengthen its Asian alliances. Under current strategic realities in Asia, strategic patience translates into what increasingly looks like multilateral arms racing, a condition that only aggravates existing tensions.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, this arms racing occurs in an atmosphere where Washington's browbeating of its allies facilitates this process because of mounting fears of US unreliability amid rising North Korean and Chinese threats to regional security. The Biden administration must reconsider these past policies and recalibrate US strategy to rebuild its alliances, create incentives for Korean denuclearization, and facilitate a transition to a transformed regional order in Northeast Asia that enhances US, not Chinese, interests. Any future negotiations and resolution of Korean issues must reckon with the increasingly global Sino-American confrontation and its relationship to the Korean Peninsula.

Thus, we must emphasize that whatever opinion readers possess about the Obama, Trump, and other administrations, the failure to devise a negotiating approach that would elicit positive responses from Pyongyang is bipartisan. Obama's strategic patience policy actually resembled what we have now.

The Obama administration's policy strategic patience policy aimed to put pressure on the DPRK while insisting that it rejoin the Six-Party Talks. The policy's main elements included pressuring Pyongyang to commit to steps

toward denuclearization as previously promised in the Six-Party Talks; closely coordinating with treaty allies Japan and South Korea; attempting to convince China to take a tougher line on North Korea; and applying pressure on Pyongyang through arms interdictions and sanctions. US officials stated that, under the right conditions, they would seek a comprehensive package deal for North Korea's complete denuclearization in return for normalization of relations and significant aid but insisted on a freeze of the DPRK's nuclear activities and a moratorium on testing before returning. This policy was accompanied by large-scale military exercises to demonstrate the strength of the US–ROK alliance. In addition to multilateral sanctions required by the UN, the Obama administration issued several executive orders to implement the UN sanctions or to declare additional unilateral sanctions.<sup>51</sup>

This policy replicated previous administrations' demand that the DPRK commit to or disarm first before Washington would discuss security. Predictably, as in earlier disarmament negotiations, this approach encountered North Korean and Sino–Russian objections that security must be on the table. Hence, stalemate and charges of betrayal, as in earlier such negotiations, prevailed. Congressional resolutions advocated a similar negotiating stance.<sup>52</sup> Hitherto, the United States has insisted upon credible, verifiable, and irrevocable denuclearization (CVID) for North Korea as a precondition for an end to sanctions, unspecified economic benefits, and negotiations on security issues, e.g., a formal peace treaty ending the Korean War. This was the administration's position at the Singapore and Hanoi summits. Yet, these demands are known nonstarters and are seen in Pyongyang (if not elsewhere) as a demand for unilateral surrender.<sup>53</sup> Evidently US policy makers and negotiators in both parties have not assimilated the history of disarmament negotiations before those with North Korea. A fundamental point in all previous negotiations on this issue dating back to the Versailles Treaty have had to come to grips with this point of prioritizing either disarmament or security guarantees.<sup>54</sup>

This struggle between those who demand disarmament first as a precondition of security versus those who demand credible security guarantees first as a prelude to disarmament continues today. It has occurred in the negotiations of the 5+1 with Iran that led to the signing of the JCPOA in 2015. The primary recurring point of contestation in these negotiations dating back to the 1930s is the conflict between the stronger party's repeated insistence on disarmament as a precondition for agreements regarding the security of the weaker side that has been trying to arm itself with nuclear or other controversial weapons, often covertly due to its fears of the stronger side's intentions. The weaker side insists that before agreeing to any disarmament it needs ironclad guarantees of security against any belligerent activities of the stronger side. Generally, the stronger side

is loath to provide such guarantees until it sees tangible disarmament. And those so-called belligerent activities feared by the weaker party need not necessarily be military ones. They could be sanctions, for example, as in the Iranian and North Korean cases and as occurred in the early 1920s against Germany.<sup>55</sup>

Clearly that is the pattern here; so, unless one or the other side yields, stalemate will inevitably ensue. Van Jackson also argues that the historical record strongly suggests that in US–DPRK negotiations the stronger side (the United States) must offer concessions to initiate the process of winning North Korea's trust.<sup>56</sup> Because the scope of the issues to be negotiated with North Korea is so large, a successful negotiation means mutual compromises, not least by the United States. CVID, like it or not, is a fantasy of amounting to Washington dictating terms to a vanquished opponent. Neither North Korea nor its allies will tolerate that approach. Therefore, another policy and course of action are needed.

### **Strategic Disarray**

Neither is this the only reason why in Korea we have seen 30 years of bipartisan failure. Two other considerations must be considered. One pertains to the administration's specific failures regarding Korea and Asia more generally, while the other pertains to the broader Asian strategic context in which any effort to resolve Korean issues must occur. In other words, it is impossible to begin thinking about progress, let alone resolution of these issues, without constant reference to the broader strategic environment that is dominated by an intensifying Sino–American confrontation.

The bipartisan failures to date suggest a US governmental pattern of cognitive inability to grasp fully the problems involved in securing denuclearization and peace on the Korean Peninsula. Of course, we could simply brush it away by saying Kim will not negotiate and return to a pattern of strategic patience, i.e., passivity and arms buildup until such time as the situation changes. However, doing so undermines our alliances and detaches Korean policy from our overall Asian policy at a time when the Sino–American confrontation is perhaps the single most decisive fact of contemporary world politics. Worse yet, that passive approach further enroots the existing trends toward strategic bipolarity in Asia that observers have warned about for years. Thus, South Korean columnist, Kim Yo'ng Hu'i, wrote in 2005,

China and Russia are reviving their past strategic partnership to face their strongest rival, the United States. A structure of strategic competition and confrontation between the United States and India on the one side, and Russia and China on the other is unfolding in the eastern half of the Eurasian continent including



the Korean peninsula. Such a situation will definitely bring a huge wave of shock to the Korean peninsula, directly dealing with the strategic flexibility of U.S. forces in Korea. If China and Russia train their military forces together in the sea off the coast of China's Liaodong Peninsula, it will also have an effect on the 21st century strategic plan of Korea. We will now need to think of Northeast Asia on a much broader scale. The eastern half of Eurasia, including Central Asia, has to be included in our strategic plan for the future.<sup>57</sup>

Subsequently, Lyle Goldstein and Vitaly Kozyrev warned, "From the standpoint of global politics, the formation of a Sino-Russian energy nexus would represent a strong consolidation of an emergent bipolar structure in East Asia, with one pole led by China (and including Russia) and one led by the United States (and including Japan)."<sup>58</sup> Moreover, whether Moscow and Beijing have an alliance or an entente, their bilateral military cooperation is growing and is likely to grow further. Merely putting more missile defenses and IRBMs into the theater will only generate further militarization against the United States on the part of Russia, China, and North Korea.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, Russia and China not only have at least an entente if not an alliance but also fully support North Korea's negotiating posture and have not criticized North Korea's new weapons, missile tests, or belligerent rhetoric.<sup>60</sup>

Therefore any US policy for the Korean Peninsula must harmonize with Washington's overall policy toward China. Here the prospects for a course correction that will offer a credible negotiating strategy and enhanced alliance management become much more difficult. If Washington truly demands denuclearization, it must be prepared to offer not just a peace process (albeit not a mere replica of North Korea's understanding of what that means) but also a compelling strategic vision for the region. That means seeing the Korean Peninsula and its security dilemmas in the context of a regional security problem, not only a nuclear proliferation issue. This means achieving a solution that deprives China of reasons to undermine the process. China must gain from this solution as does the United States, Japan, the ROK, the DPRK, and Russia. The solution must be truly a "win-win" solution for all.<sup>61</sup> That means a negotiated outcome must aim for dynamic stability in Northeast Asia, where all the interested parties benefit from denuclearization, peace, and their attributes.

Consequently, Korean policy is ultimately inextricable from our China policy, and any outcome regarding Korea must, from Beijing's perspective, harmonize with China's policy toward the United States. China's individual reasons for sustaining and supporting the DPRK have remained constant despite multiple and even severe North Korean provocations in 2011–18. As a recent analysis of China's policy concludes,

China's policies toward the Korean Peninsula are often an outcome of its strategies toward another great power, the United States. What this means is that Beijing's frustration with Pyongyang's provocative behavior, which has destabilized the region and resulted in international criticism directed at China, have not translated into policy changes that increase pressure on North Korea and are not likely to do so, at least not to the extent that will risk destabilizing North Korea.<sup>62</sup>

Yet this basic, and determining strategic factor, seems to be lost on the Trump administration. At least some administration officials openly seek to make it harder to deescalate tensions with China and thus intensify strategic confrontation with China.<sup>63</sup> Unfortunately this posture not only ensures that China will not cooperate with any US approach to North Korea or on the Korean Peninsula but also apparently has no goal in mind regarding shaping China's future behavior. As policy makers told Matthew Kroenig of Georgetown University, the confrontation with China is for its own sake, and open-ended. There is no objective in sight for future relations with China and therefore no understanding of how Korean issues relate to US China policy.<sup>64</sup> This dysfunction clearly drives what also has been a dysfunctional policy process on Korean issues: e.g., although during the 2020 electoral campaign President Trump stated, quite wrongly, that, if he wins the election the United States, North Korea will make a deal very quickly, because the only thing holding it up is the election. However, numerous aides and staffers have sought to undermine his policy.<sup>65</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that on too many issues, including Asia policy, US policy is failing.<sup>66</sup>

While some scholars have argued on behalf of the administration's coherent Asian policy, the balance of evidence presented here strongly suggests an opposite interpretation.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, sources have reported continuous struggles within the Trump administration on how to approach Pyongyang before the 2019 Hanoi summit. Neither has anyone subsequently publicly addressed this question in any truly coherent manner.<sup>68</sup> While that may explain one motive for North Korean attacks on officials Pyongyang regarded as too hardline, like Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and former National Security Council Director John Bolton, it also reveals the administration's fundamental internal disarray that precludes effective policy making, negotiation, and most of all, strategy for Korea and Northeast Asia.<sup>69</sup> Certainly such disarray and endless internal division is visible in foreign economic policy, which is of the utmost importance for whatever Asian policy the United States might pursue.<sup>70</sup> Admittedly, Bolton was a hardliner and has criticized Trump as being insufficiently hardline toward North Korea. However, such statements and Pompeo's apparent continuation of Bolton's line strongly suggest that Washington is continuing along a well-trodden but unproductive path that denuclearization must precede any negotiations.<sup>71</sup>

Indeed, some analysts contend that we cannot discern any coherent strategy or strategic thinking in Trump's Asia policies. Michal Kolmas and Sarka Kolmasov write, "Much of Trump's policy toward Asia is guided by immediate pragmatic interests and personal beliefs. While this disregard for norms in favor of pragmatic gain has given Trump the chance to thaw some frozen relations, it can hardly be seen as a coherent policy toward Asia."<sup>72</sup> Similarly, Mark Beeson writes,

Assessing the Trump administration's approach is made more difficult by the fact that its strategic policy has been characterized by a remarkable degree of inconsistency, highlighted most dramatically by Trump's approach to North Korea. Within the space of a few months, Trump went from threatening North Korea with nuclear annihilation to welcoming Kim Jong Un to a bilateral summit in Singapore, at which Trump was widely judged to have been out-manuevered by the wily Kim. Not only is there no evidence that North Korea has given up on developing its nuclear capabilities, but Kim has continued to flout the principles of the supposed agreement by directly overseeing new missile tests.<sup>73</sup>

Beeson further observes that,

Trump's attitude to alliance relationships in the Asia-Pacific changes on a day-to-day basis. Whereas Trump previously made much of the need to compel supposedly freeloading alliance partners to make a greater contribution to national and regional security, his administration appeared to be actively trying to reassure allies made nervous about the new order. And yet his failure to consult South Korea or Japan about his decision to abandon "provocative" joint military exercises in South Korea wrong-footed supposedly close allies. America's traditional role as a mediating force between Japan and South Korea has also allowed a key regional relationship to deteriorate.<sup>74</sup>

### **Diminished Alliance Cohesion**

This dysfunctional policy has diminished alliance cohesion and management with South Korea and Japan. The well-publicized battles over payments for US troops, trade wars against these allies, and the erratic handling of North Korean denuclearization have undermined confidence in the reliability of US policy and deterrent. Much of this erosion of interallied confidence in North Korea's and Iran's cases stems from US policy. Failure to bring about a negotiating process would probably compound this erosion and increase its pace and effects. In the Korean case, there is already significant and dangerously growing allied friction with Washington over the Trump administration's demands for more South Korean support for US forces as embodied in the Special Measures Agreement (SMA) now being negotiated.<sup>75</sup> As one recent commentary observes, "Never

has an occupant of the White House enacted such an erratic North Korea policy, especially while decrying one of the United States' most trusted allies—South Korea—as a defense free rider.”<sup>76</sup> And, there also is the unresolved and long-lasting tension with Japan that almost triggered a rupture between Seoul and Tokyo in 2019.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, it was only US pressure and mediation that engendered a process of bilateral negotiation between the ROK and Japan in 2019.<sup>78</sup> Therefore, it is arguably the case that a weakening US commitment to either party here would likely spill over into the South Korea–Japan negotiations and negatively affect their outcome.

South Korea clearly has reservations about the US negotiating position. Moon Ching-In, a special security advisor to ROK president Moon Jae-in, stated that Washington should show more flexibility and realism to break the current impasse lest it force Seoul to follow a more independent course to assuage domestic pressures for an accord with Pyongyang. As he said, “You really cannot pursue the strategy of ‘you denuclearize first, and we’ll reward you.’ That won’t work.”<sup>79</sup> Concurrently Trump’s efforts to coerce either Japan or South Korea into economic agreements with Washington to pay more for protection has undermined mutual confidence among allies.<sup>80</sup>

Equally troubling is the fact that as of yet there is no sign of what Victor Cha calls a “proactive policy agenda” between Seoul and Washington that might stimulate serious and fresh thinking about getting to an agreement with North Korea and then dealing with the consequences of that accord.<sup>81</sup> As he wrote in 2019,

One is hard-pressed to delineate what the issues are that constitute the mainstay of the proactive alliance development outside of North Korea. Alliance maintenance does not equate with the status quo, but with continuing to find new areas of cooperation to make the alliance better. This is absent today. By comparison, the last time there was a politically progressive government in Korea, a multitude of “alliance advancement” projects were being worked on in addition to North Korea. This included Yongsan base relocation, NATO+3 status for South Korean arms purchases, Visa Waiver program, KORUS, troop deployments in Iraq, climate change, and provincial reconstruction teams in Afghanistan. All of these contributed to a positive and forward-looking agenda for the alliance that reflected both countries’ interests. Today, the alliance is entirely dominated by tension over North Korea, tension over trade, and tension over the cost-sharing negotiations (Special Measures Agreement) in which Trump wants South Korea to pay entirely for the US troop presence on the Peninsula.<sup>82</sup>

Many other commentators have argued that the failure to work with allies on trade, investment, support for US forces, and overall economic coordination only

makes it more likely that illiberal and mercantilist policies like China's will gain stronger support across Asia and weaken our alliances' political cohesion.<sup>83</sup>

Though neither the ROK nor Japan admits openly to dissension with Washington, their defense policies reveal their mounting unease at the growth of both Chinese and DPRK capabilities and concurrent sense of the unpredictability and unreliability of US policy. Their rearmament, pointing toward new and advanced or even preemptive strike capabilities reflect Washington's failures in alliance management and the rising power of China and the DPRK.<sup>84</sup> Embedding China policy in a larger strategic vision of Asia that encompassed relations with other Asian governments, including strengthened alliances, means approaching North Korea within the framework of that vision of overall Northeast Asian security.<sup>85</sup> Doing so also comports with current US strategy that sees China as the America's main strategic adversary.<sup>86</sup> If China is the main threat, Washington must find mutually satisfactory ways of reducing if not ending North Korea's threat and embedding it within a stable regional equilibrium that prevents China from dominating it or South Korea. A nuclear DPRK in China's "sphere of influence" would lead to South Korean and Japanese nuclearization, if not worse.<sup>87</sup>

### **The China Factor**

Finally, alliance management and credible negotiation proposals should march in tandem, because the only parties that benefit from stalemate are North Korea's nuclear hawks and China. Strategic patience allows North Korea leisure to build up its forces with no countervailing force to stop it, especially as both China and Russia are supportive and remain silent about the recent buildup. Then whenever talks begin, Washington will have to negotiate from North Korea's agenda. This alone should render strategic patience as an unacceptable option. However, beyond that, it also enhances Chinese influence throughout Northeast Asia, which is utterly inimical to US and allies' interests.

Beijing saw the Singapore summit and the process thereby as a threat of China's marginalization, as Pyongyang and Washington might reach agreement without it. For China this is an unacceptable outcome, particularly given the tense North Korean ties to China from 2011–17. Since Singapore, however, Kim and Xi have restored their ties, holding numerous summits and Xi (along with Russian president Vladimir Putin) supported North Korea's negotiating posture.<sup>88</sup> China's aims to subordinate North Korea using economic pressure and political support as its main instruments of leverage, drive a wedge into the ROK–US alliance, force South Korea to see China as the main guarantor of regional peace and security, and thus diminish America's presence in Northeast Asia—leaving China as the regional hegemon.<sup>89</sup> From Beijing's geostrategic

viewpoint Pyongyang's, economic dependence on China today can be used as future political leverage, when Beijing seeks to influence Pyongyang's behavior in China's favor. Beijing will endeavor to maintain good political relations with North Korea to insure itself against any future developments concerning the Korean Peninsula, especially in its dealings with Washington.<sup>90</sup>

China and Russia have supported a so-called "double freeze" of nuclear tests and US-ROK exercises that occurred from 2018 till now but which allowed North Korea to undertake the aforementioned refinement and improvement of its military capabilities. Moscow and Beijing also support Kim's negotiating posture and envision a long-term process enabling North Korea to retain nuclear weapons for a very long and unspecified time.<sup>91</sup> Continuing the present stalemate, the US-driven rifts in the alliance, and unwillingness to engage North Korea in a genuine negotiation process merely abets China's hegemonic potential over North Korea's faltering economy and places pressure on the ROK not to challenge Beijing by placing missile defenses in South Korea against Chinese missiles.

China's objectives are generally inimical to the United States, American allies, and arguably North Korean interests. North Korea's distrust of Chinese and Russian efforts to subordinate North Korea to their interests is long-standing and may be one reason for the DPRK's nuclearization, since that enables Pyongyang to repair its economy more independently of all the great powers.<sup>92</sup> Arguably, if Washington made a credible sign of its willingness to accept and guarantee peace on the peninsula and facilitate economic ties between North Korea and its neighbors, that might facilitate Pyongyang's movement away from Beijing and give Russia a greater stake in a less China-centric Asian policy. These gains are only attainable through negotiations that create a stabler more peaceful order in Northeast Asia, and they come not at Washington's but at Beijing's expense. However, China would probably willingly pay a high price for denuclearization that would eliminate the ROK-US-Japanese drive to build more IRBMs and missile defense that Beijing regards as a very serious threat.

## **Conclusion**

Any military option other than deterrence is infeasible and may be excluded (absent terrible miscalculation, wild cards, or black swans). Rational policies and negotiations that bring the United States credible strategic gains become the only potential route toward defusing the crisis. Since the current stalemate benefits North Korea, the logic of the situation should compel Washington to negotiate. Indeed, if maximum pressure is already compromised and force is ruled out as an option, sustained and protracted negotiations are the only way to bring about denuclearization, peace, and security. The United States should therefore craft a

regional equation that gives both Korean states credible security guarantees and brings an end to the Korean War and all acts of belligerency. This means a formal peace treaty six-power mutual guarantees of both Korean states, and an end to all belligerent acts in return for verifiable and complete denuclearization.<sup>93</sup> This would open economic alternatives for the DPRK, giving Pyongyang alternatives to Chinese tutelage and offering Russia a stake in upholding the new regional order while preserving US alliances with Seoul and Tokyo. That outcome strengthens peace and security for all interested parties, creating a newly legitimate regional order that also stimulates regional economic growth. Therefore, the next president should simultaneously empanel a negotiating team empowered to end the Korean War, obtain denuclearization, and warn Pyongyang that failure to negotiate will trigger restored bilateral US–ROK exercises, deployments, and sanctions. Pyongyang must understand that the DPRK can have nuclear weapons *or* security—but not both—and that the benefits of negotiated accords outweigh those offered by weapons.

On that basis, Washington can and must dramatically improve interallied coordination. This means articulating for itself and its allies a vision of regional security in Northeast Asia encompassing all the six players with vital interests there. In short, the United States must begin thinking strategically—however uncongenial this may be. Otherwise the United States and North Korea will continue plowing the same disputed acre endlessly to no avail and with ever higher risks accruing from each failure. Thinking strategically entails not only articulating a logical vision based on a realistic assessment of possibilities and goals, it also mandates assembling the means to achieve a desirable end in harmony with those goals.

In addition, new opportunities might present themselves. The COVID-19 pandemic may lead North Korea to open up and accept foreign help as it has privately requested. A credible negotiating stance also tests the genuineness of Kim's statements concerning opening the economy.<sup>94</sup> Alternatively if the pandemic worsens, it could raise the specter of regime collapse in North Korea, an event that would then force the other five players to act quickly, decisively, and one hopes, concertedly to stabilize the new status quo and keep it peaceful and non-nuclear. Indeed, this prospect might lead both sides to reconsider their positions and resume serious negotiations.<sup>95</sup> That situation would require the utmost coordination and strategic focus from all the players and only drives home the need for Washington to improve policy making before it is too late. Indeed, this latter possibility illustrates just how fragile the status quo in Northeast Asia is and why a negotiation process based on a well-conceived strategy is necessary. For if Washington continues sailing without a US strategic approach to Korean issues the

United States and its allies will be adrift on uncharted seas. And then some other ambitious captain will try to steer that rudderless ship for his own inimical purposes. That cannot be the outcome US policy makers want to see. ♀

### **Dr. Stephen J. Blank**

Dr. Blank is senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute's Eurasia Program. He has published more than 1,300 articles and monographs on Soviet/Russian, US, Asian, and European military and foreign policies; testified frequently before Congress on Russia, China, and Central Asia; consulted for the Central Intelligence Agency, major think tanks, and foundations; chaired major international conferences in the United States and in Italy, Czechia, and the United Kingdom; and has been a commentator on foreign affairs in the media in the United States and abroad. He has also advised major corporations on investing in Russia and is a consultant for the Gerson Lehrmann Group. He has published or edited 15 books, most recently *Light from the East: Russia's Quest for Great Power Status in Asia* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2016). He has also published *Russo-Chinese Energy Relations: Politics in Command* (London: Global Markets Briefing, 2006) and *Natural Allies?: Regional Security in Asia and Prospects for Indo-American Strategic Cooperation* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2005).

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# Rewriting the Rules

## Analyzing the People's Republic of China's Efforts to Establish New International Norms

MAJ DANIEL W. McLAUGHLIN, USAF

Over the past several decades, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has experienced what many commentators have referred to as an “economic miracle”—an unparalleled economic expansion that has propelled the nation from an economic backwater to ranking first or second in many major economic indicators.<sup>1</sup> However, Beijing has not accomplished this feat in a vacuum; the modern rules-based international order has provided a stable and welcoming environment for the PRC's economic reforms and development. Despite this assistance—both through direct interaction and by way of existing in the relatively calm and open geopolitical structure of the past four decades—there are growing indications the PRC is unhappy with the makeup of the current world order and the international norms it has produced. This article will explore the PRC's reasons for wanting to challenge existing norms and demonstrate the PRC's efforts to subvert existing multilateral institutions, establish new norms that favor Beijing's more authoritarian tendencies, and displace the postwar international order with a new model, which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) believes will give it more influence and power.

The PRC's current president, Xi Jinping, has repeatedly referenced the CCP interest in “reforming” the current international system. Xi presented the *19th Party Congress Report*<sup>2</sup> in late 2017 and significantly focused on the PRC's role in global governance and China's desire to reshape it. An early reference to this desire in Xi's speech is paired with one of his major talking points in which the PRC aims to lead the “development of a community of common destiny for mankind,” a clear demonstration of the PRC's ambitions.<sup>3</sup> Xi also made certain his audience understood the CCP did not intend to be a passive observer in the development of this new order, stating, “China will continue to . . . take an active part in reforming and developing the global governance system.”<sup>4</sup>

Chinese academic Jiang Shigong recognizes this shift in global governance from the current economically open, liberal-oriented, democracy-supporting order to an order that aligns more with the PRC's state-centric, authoritarian model is the goal of the CCP. Jiang is a CCP advisor and legal expert who believes the PRC's best chance to make a “contribution to all of mankind depends

... on whether Chinese civilization can search out a new path to modernization for humanity's development."<sup>5</sup> This theme is common in Xi's speeches, and he has echoed this basic principle in commentary both before<sup>6</sup> and after<sup>7</sup> the critical *19th Party Congress Report*. The implication in these official statements is the PRC is increasingly dissatisfied with the level of control and influence it has in the world order and Beijing has increasing confidence that it has the capability to redefine the order. With that concept established, the question becomes: what steps is China taking?

A key aspect of influence in the world order is the ability of international institutions to establish and disseminate international norms. Prominent international relations scholars Drs. Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink define the relationship between norms and institutions by noting that norms are singular standards of "appropriate" or "proper" behavior, whereas institutions are the collective efforts that structure, interrelate, and protect the norms.<sup>8</sup> Norms can exist without institutions, and institutions can be established before norms have been accepted; however, the two strengthen each other when used in tandem.<sup>9</sup> The modern web of institutions, which was established in the aftermath of the two disastrous world wars in the first half of the twentieth century, has become self-reinforcing to a degree due to the overlapping liberal values the institutions support. Bretton Woods organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank<sup>10</sup> support liberal economic reforms around the world. Additionally, regional and global transnational governments such as the United Nations and European Union provide a platform to cooperate or resolve differences in a way that maintains national sovereignty. Furthermore, legal mechanisms such as the Permanent Court of Arbitration<sup>11</sup> and International Criminal Court<sup>12</sup> hold nations accountable when international laws—legally defined norms—have been broken.

The contention the PRC has with these institutions is that the CCP was not in power in the mid-to-late 1940s when the norms were being developed, and Beijing was not contributing to global governance in the 1950s when the institutions were being established. Therefore, the CCP should be able to adjust existing norms to support its worldview and priorities, in line with its position as a great power. The norms and agreements that uphold modern institutions are "Western" ideals in the CCP's view, and these norms and institutions provide an inherent advantage to Western nations—primarily the United States—to the detriment of non-Western nations—primarily the PRC. The concept that Western languages, theories, and concepts dominate international affairs, norms, and education and weaken non-Western views as a result is not a view unique to the PRC.<sup>13</sup> It is with that mind-set the PRC has begun to establish itself as the global counterweight

to the United States and the West as a whole, drawing supporters to its side in an effort to “rewrite” what is and is not accepted among the community of nations.

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Thomas Friedman’s 1999 book, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*, highlights the concerns a nation might have with international institutions that enforce norms the nation does not agree with. Writing specifically about the modern economic and trade system he refers to a “Golden Straitjacket” that simultaneously enriches the country and limits its political freedom.<sup>14</sup> Simply put, aligning with institutions—even those that correspond to one’s own beliefs and norm adherence—“narrows the political and economic policy choices of those in power to relatively tight parameters.”<sup>15</sup> While it may seem counterintuitive for liberal institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank to promote democratic ideals while simultaneously limiting the democratic options available to a member nation, researcher Robert Went contends, “the curtailment of democracy on a national level as a consequence of economic globalization would be the concomitant development of democracy on a global level.”<sup>16</sup> In this view, institutions restrict sovereign democracy to promote stronger global—presumably democratic—governance.

One of the CCP’s main talking points throughout its history has been its objection to “imperialism.” This view stems from China’s so-called “Century of Humiliation,” in which China experienced repeated outside interference from European colonial powers and Japanese imperial aggression from the First Opium War in the mid-1800s to the end of World War II in 1945.<sup>17</sup> This anti-imperialism theme has developed into one of the modern PRC’s “core interests”—national sovereignty.<sup>18</sup> *Core interests* is a new term in official PRC dialogue and represents the issues and narratives widely seen by observers as “red lines” that provoke the PRC to respond. This has become a recurring theme as the PRC has grown increasingly assertive in recent years, and Beijing is making known its most critical, nonnegotiable, and rigidly enforced requirements for bilateral and multilateral relations.<sup>19</sup> By establishing the narrative of the CCP’s core interest in maintaining national sovereignty at the same time that Xi is advocating for a reformation of the global governance system to more closely align with the CCP’s norms, the PRC is laying the groundwork for Beijing to ignore future international demands based on established norms. Concurrently, it is providing justification for the PRC to develop institutions that will prop up China’s own norms.

The establishment of parallel international institutions by itself does not demonstrate a nation’s desire to develop or maintain different international norms. Structures that enhance integration between closely aligned nations on geographic, cultural, or religious grounds can supplement the broader and more inclusive international institutions such as how the African Union, Arab League,



and Organization for Islamic Cooperation are all nonmember permanent observers of the United Nations.<sup>20</sup> One area in which this tendency can be easily viewed is in the regionalization of international development banks on the model of the World Bank. As of 2016, there are 15 recognized multilateral development banks focusing on broad regions, subregions, or specific member concerns.<sup>21</sup> The trend of smaller development banks began in 1959 as Latin America was attempting to combat the spread of communism, and other banks have opened since then as developmental priorities have waxed and waned, with the most recent development bank being the PRC-founded Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

Some critics have cited the AIIB as evidence of diminishing American influence over global financial and economic priorities.<sup>22</sup> Other critics contend the AIIB is the PRC's attempt to circumnavigate American and Japanese influence in the similarly focused, and much older, Asian Development Bank.<sup>23</sup> On closer examination, it seems that despite China's desire to wield greater soft-power influence in the region, the AIIB does not demonstrate an attempt by the PRC to defy international norms or establish new ones—yet. So far, the AIIB has gone through all the internationally recognized and expected steps necessary to create a respectable and responsible multinational development bank. The AIIB's founders heavily borrowed language from the World Bank to set up its treaty-bound charter, global membership beyond just a PRC-dominant hierarchy was established at the outset,<sup>24</sup> and a combination of transparency and political neutrality agreements are codified in the AIIB's constitution. Additionally, the AIIB is working closely with the World Bank and has even transferred several key responsibilities to the World Bank such as project supervision—an indication that the AIIB is at least as concerned about ensuring regionally relevant development as it is about soft-power projection.<sup>25</sup>

However, it is clear from other examples that the PRC is not content to supplement existing institutions and norms. The PRC-dominant Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is widely seen as a “vehicle for Chinese interests”<sup>26</sup> and has an expanding group of members, observers, and official dialogue partners across Central and South Asia.<sup>27</sup> The SCO lists priorities such as regional security, opposition to ethnic separatism, and regional development among its reasons for being established—all of which align closely with the PRC's specific concerns and priorities for its own western provinces of Xinjiang and Tibet, which are the closest provinces to the SCO's earliest member states.

A similar, Western-oriented organization is the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which bills itself as the world's largest regional security organization, featuring 57 countries from three continents.<sup>28</sup> The OSCE explicitly states that its priorities include strengthening “the sharing of norms”

with outside partner nations across the Middle East and East Asia, as well as to “develop [*sic*] norms” to address the proliferation of small arms.<sup>29</sup> The norms that the OSCE had hoped would diffuse from Western-aligned nations into Central Asia members such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan<sup>30</sup> have not always proceeded smoothly and have resulted in several tense diplomatic exchanges as fellow OSCE member Russia defended its former satellites in the halls of the OSCE.<sup>31</sup> These rifts make it easier for the SCO to infuse its influence and the PRC’s agenda into Central Asia.

The charter of the SCO made it clear that no members would use the institution to infringe upon the sovereignty of another member by emphasizing “mutual respect of sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity of states, and inviolability of state borders, non-aggression, non-interference in internal affairs, non-use of force or threat of its use in international relations.”<sup>32</sup> The SCO prioritizes governance issues that cannot be explicitly challenged by the OSCE’s liberal-leaning norms, including counterterrorism, combating organized crime, and border security. By creating a forum to discuss the PRC’s concepts of how to deal with these threats, the PRC opens a dialogue with partners who are looking for a voice that represents an alternative to the current international norms. The SCO’s focus on regime security, versus the OSCE’s focus on human security, is a defining difference between the norms championed by the two organizations.

The PRC’s (and Russia’s) support through SCO bodies to the Central Asian states has led to a diffusion and strengthening of PRC-backed “norms” that diminish freedom of speech, press, and assembly, as well as growing corruption and centralization of power by the political elite.<sup>33</sup> This leads to a civil conflict between the state leadership, open to the PRC’s support as an “alternate normative actor,” and the in-country opposition groups and nongovernmental organizations, which routinely cite and draw inspiration from “the rhetoric of liberal norms.”<sup>34</sup> Yet in an effort to retain influence in Central Asia, the OSCE is increasingly shifting its focus away from enforcing and promoting norms of democratic reforms, support for fundamental freedoms, and open markets in favor of transnational security norms to compete with the SCO’s vision—a policy shift that risks “changing its identity as the price of maintaining an active presence in Central Asia.”<sup>35</sup>

Christopher Walker of the National Endowment for Democracy believes organizations such as the SCO are part of a larger effort by authoritarian states such as the PRC to “contain democracy”—turning George F. Kennan’s Cold War containment policy against the authoritarian Soviet Union on its head.<sup>36</sup> In his view, the SCO, China-Arab States Cooperation Forum, Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, and the Forum of China and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States are explicitly designed to limit or exclude the

voices of democratic countries and enable the PRC to “not merely [defend] authoritarianism . . . but [reshape] the international norms that stigmatize such governance.”<sup>37</sup> Walker notes that the PRC has already had some success by getting the SCO nations to agree to support refoulement—the return of persecuted individuals to the country which had persecuted them—the prevention of which had long been a norm established in the international community. The embracing of this new norm goes beyond the SCO, however, as nonmember nations Malaysia and Cambodia have also agreed to the PRC’s push for a treaty to support the process.<sup>38</sup>

The PRC’s diplomatic initiatives are designed, in large part, to obscure the PRC’s purpose from foreign policy elites. Its diplomatic instrument of power is utilized to support the “inexorably linked”<sup>39</sup> economic instrument, and together the two instruments bind nations into an ever-closer dependency with the PRC. One particularly clear example of the PRC’s efforts on a regional scale is in the Middle East and North Africa, wherein the Belt and Road Initiative, the “1+2+3”<sup>40</sup> policy, the establishment of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum, and the 2016 publication of *China’s Arab Policy Paper* are all examples of tools used to build the PRC’s influence in bilateral and multilateral settings without the PRC explicitly building a coalition to achieve its strategic goals. The PRC can use that influence to garner support for its core interests in international institutions—such as Iran’s silencing of PRC criticism at the Organization of the Islamic Conference—and return the favor for Beijing’s partners in institutions that the PRC commands a particularly powerful presence—such as the PRC’s position as a veto-wielding member of the United Nations Security Council. By maintaining neutrality in regional conflicts, balancing rivals, and upholding China’s declared policy of nonintervention, the PRC is able to more easily leverage partnerships in the region when an overt display of influence is required—such as the 2019 United Nations Human Rights Council letter.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, the establishment of PRC-based, Beijing-dominated organizations such as the SCO provides a ready audience of like-minded states that are more pliant to the PRC’s preferred rules of international conduct. These like-minded states—in bilateral and multilateral settings—enable the PRC to slowly build its own international norms; challenge the established, rules-based international order and diminish the protections provided to weaker states within the current international system; deny individual freedoms; and empower central governments.

Within existing international organizations, the PRC has also attempted to make an impact on the enforcement of norms. The PRC helped block resolutions in the United Nations regarding intervention in the Syrian Civil War, citing Beijing’s belief in nonintervention in support of state sovereignty—but also because

of the PRC's negative opinions on how intervention unfolded in Libya, which it had initially supported.<sup>42</sup> The PRC's policy of alternating support for enforcement within existing institutions could fall under one of two motivations identified by China-expert Dr. David Shambaugh for the PRC's international organizations strategy: the "supermarket approach" in which the PRC selectively identifies the specific instances of norms it is willing to help enforce and the "hollow it out from within" strategy of weakening the existing liberal order through a lack of consistent application of its principles. Shambaugh notes the possibility that either of the motivations could be true to a degree, though he unfortunately does not come out firmly in favor of that interpretation or in any of the individual motivations as being the PRC's actual goal.<sup>43</sup>

Beyond international organizations, the PRC is also reaching directly to a global audience to spread its message and define the narrative Beijing wishes to champion. The PRC spends an estimated 9 billion USD per year in its mass media enterprise, with CCTV, Xinhua, and China Radio International reaching vast audiences in multiple languages. Erected under the banner of freedom of the press, these media outlets instead spread twisted versions of the news and openly acknowledged propaganda to show the PRC and fellow authoritarian states in a positive light and distort the actions of democracies.<sup>44</sup>

Walker identifies three elements of the PRC's containment strategy: erode the rules-based institutions that established democratic norms and support the post-Cold War liberal order, subvert the reform attempts of budding democracies and limit their viability, and systematically assail the established democracies to reshape the manner in which the world thinks about democracy.<sup>45</sup> This final step is of particular importance to the PRC and is one reason their media operations garner such large investments. The PRC's soft-power outreach through media, investments, financial benefits, and diplomatic overtures might be winning some support from the entrenched elites in fellow authoritarian countries, but the support from the average citizens in those countries is quite low.

Despite spending 15-times as much on public diplomacy as the United States, the PRC is seeing minimal returns on its investment.<sup>46</sup> In an effort to overcome their limited success so far, PRC media outlets are continuing to ramp up their self-proclaimed "discourse war" with the West. The PRC hopes the repetitive drumbeat of propaganda will lead to a shift in the popular narrative in nonaligned nations, struggling democracies, and anti-Western countries around the world, easing the transition from the current liberal-oriented structure and norms, to one more accepting of the PRC's closed, authoritarian system.<sup>47</sup>

The norm-altering ambitions of the PRC will not change in the near-to-mid future because, unlike democracies with a broad spectrum of views and ideologies

within and among various political parties, the CCP maintains a relatively stable political ideology. Party members who follow the senior leaders' views and are also successful in administrative positions rise to increasingly powerful positions, which reinforces the long-term focus of the Party's ideology. Fresh ideas are rarely introduced with new membership into high-level positions because the Central Committee members who supported Xi's more aggressive and assertive foreign policy in 2017 are likely to be the members of the next several iterations of the Politburo and Politburo Standing Committee. The goals and processes that have been building up from within the CCP will not change under the "next administration." This includes the PRC's desire to wield its influence on smaller nations in China's self-proclaimed periphery as well as to reshape international order and the norms that support that order. Xi may have accelerated the PRC's claiming of the world's "center stage" in 2017's *19th Party Congress Report*, but it has been, and will remain, a central goal of the CCP.<sup>48</sup>

The PRC hopes to rewrite the accepted norms through a combination of diminishing the credibility of existing liberal norms and the increasing acceptance of its own norms through soft-power influence and regional institutions. It sees the current system of norms and the institutions that promote and enforce them as relics of an era in which the PRC was not a great power and had no say in the establishment and development of the institutions and norms. As the PRC's power continues to grow, the CCP wishes to use its new norms to reinforce its power instead of facing the Western-dominated liberal norms, which it sees as confining. Any attempt to prevent the subversion of existing norms by the PRC or like-minded actors must begin with a strengthening of the institutions that themselves strengthen the norms. Only by providing a stable structure for nations, nongovernmental organizations, and individuals to put their faith in can those who support the existing norms hope to uphold the postwar liberal international order against the rising threat of the PRC's subversion of the old norms and its attempts to influence the new. 🌐

**Major Daniel W. McLaughlin, USAF**

Major McLaughlin currently serves as a staff officer working for the Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force, International Affairs. Prior to this assignment, he was a 2020 graduate student at the National Intelligence University, where he earned a master's degree in strategic intelligence, with a dual concentration in China and the Middle East. He is also a graduate of Air Command and Staff College (master's degree, military operational art and science, 2019) and Trident University (master's degree, education, 2012). He was previously an instructor pilot in both the KC-10A Extender and T-1A Jayhawk and has more than 3,100 flying hours, including more than 1,200 combat hours over the course of seven deployments.

1. Some examples: in 1978 the PRC exported 10 billion USD of goods, just 1 percent of global trade—by 2015 it was exporting 4.3 trillion USD and was the largest exporting country in the world; incomes have risen enough that 850 million people in the PRC have risen out of poverty by World Bank statistics since the 1970s; its gross domestic product rose from less than 50 billion USD in the 1960s to over 10 trillion USD today, second in the world behind only the United States: Virginia Harrison and Daniele Palumbo, “China anniversary: How the country became the world’s ‘economic miracle,’” *BBC*, 1 October 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/>.

2. Party Congress Reports are presented once every five years and are viewed by China scholars as the second most critical demonstration of the CCP’s strategy, ranking just behind the CCP Constitution and ahead of Politburo Standing Committee member speeches: Timothy R. Heath, “What Does China Want? Discerning the PRC’s National Strategy,” *Asian Security* 8, no. 1 (2012), 57.

3. The current official CCP English translation uses the term “shared future”; however, the original word, translated directly from Chinese reads as: “community of common destiny for mankind.” In early speeches, the PRC translated the word as “destiny” as well, but negative press and global public reaction led to future translations using the less intimidating “future” versus “destiny,” though Xi still uses “destiny” when speaking to domestic audiences. Liza Tobin, “Xi’s Vision for Transforming Global Governance: A Strategic Challenge for Washington and Its Allies,” *Texas National Security Review* 2, no. 1 (December 2018); and Xi Jinping, “Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era” (speech, Beijing, 18 October 2017).

4. Xi, “Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society.”

5. He goes on to clarify the PRC’s potential role in helping developing countries “shake off” capitalism and assisting their “cultural conflicts and difficulties.” Jiang Shigong, “Philosophy and History: Interpreting the ‘Xi Jinping Era’ Through Xi’s Report to the Nineteenth National Congress of the CCP,” *China History*, 11 May 2018.

6. “The pattern of global governance depends on the international balance of power, and the transformation of the global governance system originates from changes in the balance of power. . . . We must improve our ability to participate in global governance, and in particular, our ability to make rules, set agendas, and carry out publicity and coordination.” Xi Jinping, “Improve Our Ability to Participate in Global Governance,” in *The Governance of China II* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2017), 488–90.

7. In a speech at a central conference on diplomatic work, Xi stated Chinese diplomacy must “lead the reform of the global governance system according to the notion of fairness and justice.” Xi Jinping, “Using the Thought on Diplomacy for New-Era Socialism with Chinese Characteristics as a Guide to Create a New Landscape in Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics,” in *On Building a Human Community with a Shared Future* (Beijing: Central Compilation & Translation Press, 2019), 550.

8. Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change,” *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (Autumn 1998), 891.

9. Specifically, institutions can be established to enable the establishment of the norms they wish to advocate: Finnemore and Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change,” 899.

10. The “World Bank Group” is often referred to as simply the “World Bank” and constitutes five separate institutions that have slightly overlapping but diverse goals in terms of developing open, liberal economies, reducing poverty, and raising incomes around the world while directly

supporting the development of national economies through reforms and investments. Due to how widely recognized it is, the term “World Bank” in this article is used to refer to the five institutions collectively; The World Bank, “Who We Are,” retrieved 7 February 2020, <https://www.imf.org/>.

11. “The Permanent Court of Arbitration, established by treaty in 1899, is an intergovernmental organization providing a variety of dispute resolution services to the international community.” Permanent Court of Arbitration, “Home,” retrieved 7 February 2020, <https://pca-cpa.org/>.

12. “The International Criminal Court (ICC) investigates and, where warranted, tries individuals charged with the gravest crimes of concern to the international community: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression.” International Criminal Court, “About,” retrieved 7 February 2020, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/>.

13. Andrey Makarychev and Viatcheslav Morozov, “Is ‘Non-Western Theory’ Possible? The Idea of Multipolarity and the Trap of Epistemological Relativism in Russian IR,” *International Studies Review* 15, no. 3 (September 2013), 330.

14. To highlight the various requirements (norms) a country might need to adopt in order to be accepted into the international community (institutions) Friedman lists the following economic “to do” list: “To fit into the Golden Straitjacket a country must either adopt or be seen as moving toward the following golden rules: making the private sector the primary engine of its economic growth, maintaining a low rate of inflation and price stability, shrinking the size of its state bureaucracy, maintaining as close to a balance budget as possible, if not a surplus, eliminating and lowering tariffs on imported goods, removing restrictions on foreign investment, getting rid of quotas and domestic monopolies, increasing exports, privatizing state-owned industries and utilities, deregulating capital markets, making its currency convertible, opening its industries and stock and bond markets to direct foreign ownership and investment, deregulating its economy to promote as much domestic competition as possible, eliminating government corruption, subsidies and kickbacks as much as possible, opening its banking and telecommunications systems to private ownership and competition, and allowing its citizens to choose from an array of competing pension options and foreign-run pension and mutual funds. When you stitch all of these pieces together you have the Golden Straitjacket.” Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux: 1999), 103.

15. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, 103.

16. Robert Went, “Economic Globalization Plus Cosmopolitanism?,” *Review of International Political Economy* 11, no. 2 (May 2004), 340.

17. William A. Callahan, “National Insecurities: Humiliation, Salvation, and Chinese Nationalism,” *Alternatives* 29 (2004): 204.

18. “Sovereignty” takes the form of both territorial integrity (“one China”) and state sovereignty (freedom from external interference): Jinghao Zhou, “China’s Core Interests and Dilemma in Foreign Policy Practice,” *Inha Journal of International Studies* 34, no. 1 (April 2019), 33.

19. Michael D. Swaine, “China’s Assertive Behavior Part One: On ‘Core Interests,’” *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 34: 2.

20. United Nations, “Intergovernmental Organizations Having Received a Standing Invitation to Participate as Observers in the Sessions and the Work of the General Assembly and Maintaining Permanent Offices at Headquarters,” retrieved 7 February 2020, <https://www.un.org/>.

21. Examples of regional banks include the Inter-American Development Bank and Asian Development Bank; sub-regional banks include the Andean Bank and the Black Sea Bank; unique member concerns can be seen in institutions such as the Islamic Development Bank: Vikram

Raghavan, "The World Bank and Regional Development Banks," *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting* (American Society of International Law) 110 (March–April 2016), 274.

22. Paola Subacchi, "The AIIB Is a Threat to Global Economic Governance," *Foreign Policy*, 31 March 2015, <https://foreignpolicy.com/>.

23. "Addressing concerns with the AIIB," *Japan Times*, 1 July 2015, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/>.

24. Though the PRC still holds a veto-blocking percentage of shares of the AIIB, it must be acknowledged that the United States holds a similar veto-blocking number of shares at both the IMF and World Bank.

25. Raghavan, "The World Bank and Regional Development Banks," 275–77.

26. David Lewis, "Who's Socialising Whom? Regional Organisations and Contested Norms in Central Asia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 64, no. 7 (September 2012), 1220.

27. The United Nations recognizes the following membership of the SCO—Members: PRC, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan; Observers (states interested in full membership): Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, and Mongolia; Dialogue Partners: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Turkey; United Nations, "Partnerships and Cooperation: Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *Political and Peacebuilding Affairs*, retrieved 7 February 2020, <https://dppa.un.org/>.

28. Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, "Who We Are," retrieved 7 February 2020, <https://www.osce.org/>.

29. Norms are addressed in the subsections "Partners for Co-operation" and "Forum for Security Co-operation" here: Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, "Who We Are."

30. All four of whom are OSCE and SCO members.

31. Lewis, "Who's Socialising Whom?," 1222.

32. Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organizations, Article 2, Principles.

33. Lewis, "Who's Socialising Whom?," 1233.

34. Lewis, "Who's Socialising Whom?," 1235.

35. Lewis, "Who's Socialising Whom?," 1235.

36. Christopher Walker, "The New Containment: Undermining Democracy," *World Affairs* (May/June 2015): 42–51.

37. Walker, "The New Containment: Undermining Democracy," 46.

38. Walker, "The New Containment: Undermining Democracy," 46.

39. Sarah Kaiser-Cross and Yufeng Mao, "China's Strategy in the Middle East and the Arab World," in *China Steps Out: Beijing's Major Power Engagement with the Developing World*, ed. Joshua Eisenman and Eric Heginbotham (New York: Routledge, 2018), 175.

40. "1" is energy as the principal axis of cooperation; "2" is the two wings of infrastructure as well as trade and investment; "3" is the focus on the advanced technologies of nuclear energy, space satellites, and new energy. Xi Jinping, "Promoting the Spirit of the Silk Road, Strengthening Sino-Arab Cooperation," in *On Building a Human Community with a Shared Future* (Beijing: Central Compilation & Translation Press, 2019), 129–30.

41. In short, 22 nations submitted a letter to the Human Rights Council objecting to the PRC's mistreatment of its Muslim minorities. Within four days the PRC countered with a letter of its own signed by 37 nations which supported the PRC's actions, then two weeks later another 13 nations and the Palestinian Authority signed (bringing the total to 50). Roie Yellinek and



Elizabeth Chen, “The ‘22 vs. 50’ Diplomatic Split Between the West and China Over Xinjiang and Human Rights,” *China Brief* 19, no. 22, 31 December 2019, <https://jamestown.org/>.

42. The PRC initially supported the United Nations Security Council’s Resolution 1970 and felt as though the mandate had been exceeded by the time Resolution 1973—the no-fly zone—was voted on several weeks later. The non-intervention policy of the PRC government is a long-standing diplomatic effort by the Chinese Communist Party to support a nation’s rightful government. This policy started as an anti-imperialist policy in the Mao-era but has since evolved into the Chinese government staying out of military or diplomatic interventions into other nation’s internal political disputes—unless, as research Imad Mansour points out, the international community has already come to a consensus that intervention is the right course of action. Mansour believes that outright regime change is still a Chinese “red line,” even if that course of action has multinational support. Andrew Scobell and Alireza Nader, *China in the Middle East: The Wary Dragon* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), 32; and Imad Mansour, “Treading with Caution: China’s Multidimensional Interventions in the Gulf Region,” *The China Quarterly* 239 (September 2019): 656–78.

43. There is a third possibility which Dr. Shambaugh identifies, though it does not align with the PRC’s actions in this instance. The third possibility is the PRC is internalizing international norms by joining international organizations, which seems increasingly unlikely but was still a hopeful view when the book was published in 2013. David Shambaugh, *China Goes Global: The Partial Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 141–42.

44. Walker, “The New Containment: Undermining Democracy,” 50.

45. Walker, “The New Containment: Undermining Democracy,” 43.

46. The US Department of State’s budget for public diplomacy was \$666 million in 2014 compared to the estimated 10 billion USD spent by the PRC that year. David Shambaugh, “China’s Soft-Power Push: The Search for Respect,” *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2015): 100.

47. Shambaugh, “China’s Soft-Power Push,” 100.

48. Xi Jinping, “Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era” (speech, Beijing, 18 October 2017).

# Reconsidering Attacks on Mainland China

LT COL BRIAN MACLEAN, USAF

In 1962, American military leaders planned to conduct surprise air strikes in Cuba after discovering ballistic missiles there. However, Pres. John F. Kennedy ultimately decided such an attack would impose unacceptable risks to America's security.<sup>1</sup> Against the advice of his top generals, President Kennedy decided to limit American military power against Cuba to minimize escalation toward nuclear war and preserve the integrity of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Such a declination of recommended military action could realistically occur again during a crisis between the United States and China over Taiwan. In a Taiwan conflict scenario, military planners should anticipate the possibility that America's civilian leaders will restrict strikes on China's mainland and require military options that do not involve such strikes.<sup>2</sup> While a few unclassified academic studies minimize the potential for nuclear escalation, others point to significant risks; America's civilian leaders could adopt the views of the latter, determining that strikes on China's mainland are too risky or provocative for the stakes involved.<sup>3</sup> If this is true, then military services should ensure they are prepared to present viable options that offer lower risks of miscalculation and escalation alongside options which rely heavily on mainland strikes.<sup>4</sup> Failing to do so could leave US leaders with too few options in the event of a crisis, and insufficient time for necessary military capabilities to be developed and fielded.

Despite this possibility, a few academic defense studies have minimized the potential for nuclear escalation in their analyses of a future conflict with China. One notable (unclassified) analysis conducted by RAND Corporation in 2016 assessed the potential scope and scale of a China conflict in the 2015–2025 timeframe: "It is unlikely that nuclear weapons would be used: even in an intensely violent conventional conflict, neither side would regard its losses as so serious, its prospects so dire, or the stakes so vital that it would run the risk of devastating nuclear retaliation by using nuclear weapons first."<sup>5</sup>

The study appears to assume the United States can strike mainland China extensively without provoking nuclear escalation, despite China suffering massive damage to its defense infrastructure and significant degradation of its economy. While such an academic assumption may be reasonable and valid on the surface (nuclear escalation *would* be unlikely), taken too far, it could lure military person-

nel into committing to strategies, war plans, and weapons acquisitions that are not useful to America's civilian leaders during a time of crisis. Civilian leaders in the future may not be inclined to strike China's mainland, and China could easily prove academic assumptions wrong during actual combat. Military strategists, planners, and force requirements developers should anticipate America's civilian leadership needing effective military options short of mainland attacks on China. RAND analysts seem to appreciate the risks of homeland attacks, suggesting that "as low as the probability of Chinese first [nuclear weapons] use is, even in the most desperate circumstances of a prolonged and severe war, the United States could make it lower still by exercising great care with regard to the extensiveness of homeland attacks and by avoiding altogether targets that the Chinese could interpret as critical to their deterrent."<sup>6</sup>

Former US Director of National Intelligence and former commander of US Pacific Command, retired US Navy admiral Dennis Blair debated the likelihood of nuclear escalation in the pages of *Foreign Affairs* with Caitlin Talmadge, an associate professor of security studies at Georgetown University.<sup>7</sup> Blair stated "the odds are somewhere between nil and zero" despite mainland attacks, based on his confidence that military planners and targeting experts could adequately distinguish between mainland nuclear and nonnuclear forces.<sup>8</sup> While they seem to agree that the likelihood of "Chinese nuclear escalation is not high in absolute terms," Talmadge is more concerned about overall risk: "the danger is of high consequence, not high probability."<sup>9</sup> Blair and Talmadge also seem to agree that the closer America comes to "victory" in a Taiwan scenario, the more China might look to escalate to nuclear employment. Blair states that "the real danger of escalation in these conflicts would be when a Chinese attempt to capture a disputed island . . . was failing."<sup>10</sup> Such a failure "would undermine the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party and could make Beijing desperate enough to threaten the use of nuclear weapons."<sup>11</sup> It is impossible to predict any exact probability, consequence, or risk of nuclear escalation in this debate; it is important to recognize, however, that such predictions become increasingly difficult as crises unfold, and similar debates would likely occur during a real crisis.<sup>12</sup> In such a case, civilian leaders may call for military options that avoid striking mainland China.

One determinant of the likelihood of nuclear escalation is whether China's leaders decide to initiate hostilities in the first place (for example, by invading Taiwan). Could deterrence fail? If China views reintegration and defense of Taiwan as critical to its regime survival, then China's leaders may seek opportunities to impose its party's rule over Taiwan, by force, at a time when the perceived benefits of doing so outweigh the costs.<sup>13</sup> China's leaders may perceive such an opportunity in the future as their country establishes regional military hegemony,

and American defense analysts admit the United States may not win a war with China; any doubt about whether the United States would use nuclear weapons in a war with China over Taiwan could make an apparent opportunity even more appealing.<sup>14</sup> As China gains local military advantages over the United States, its leaders may conclude that America lacks the resolve to go to war with China over Taiwan.<sup>15</sup> According to Sam Goldsmith, an Australian defense research consultant, “Chinese leadership appears unconvinced that the U.S. would risk a conflict with China—one that could escalate to a nuclear war—over disputes concerning territories that geographically are distant from the U.S. mainland and seemingly are unrelated to core U.S. national security interests.”<sup>16</sup> Sulmaan Khan, an assistant professor of foreign relations at Tufts, wrote in *Foreign Affairs* that “China had concluded from U.S. inaction in 1995 that Washington did not care much about Taiwan.”<sup>17</sup> If China’s leaders one day view the United States as lacking the capability and resolve to impose military costs on China over Taiwan, they may assume the United States will not engage China militarily. As a result, China may elect to invade Taiwan based on misperceptions about US weakness or disinterest. China may also be prompted by growing perceived costs of delay: rising forces of democratization in Taiwan, a declaration of formal independence there, or a prospective economic downturn in China could make any perceived “opportunity” appear fleeting.<sup>18</sup> Deterrence could fail.<sup>19</sup>

While many experts now doubt that nuclear escalation is likely, once conflict begins, the perceptions, misperceptions, psychological biases, miscalculations, and domestic pressures that could lead either country toward escalation are well documented.<sup>20</sup> Once deterrence fails, perceptions among China’s leaders will become a primary determinant of whether nuclear weapons are used. They will also have made assumptions about the degrees to which the United States will intervene, degrade China’s defenses, threaten its political regime, or deny its takeover of Taiwan. If any of these assumptions fail and China’s leaders are surprised or disoriented, the chances of miscalculation become higher; China could deviate from past plans and conduct a limited nuclear employment to deter the United States from pressing its intervention further, to weaken US resolve, or to maintain escalation dominance.<sup>21</sup> Once China’s leaders commit to a political outcome they view as critical to the survival of their regime, surprising them could alter the trajectory of the conflict in unpredictable ways, nullifying past assumptions by prompting them to “take new risks even against long odds.”<sup>22</sup> According to Joshua Rovner, an associate professor of foreign policy at American University, “it is not difficult to see how mainland strikes could cause Chinese leaders to take enormous risks to avoid a humiliating and rapid defeat.”<sup>23</sup> Aaron Friedberg, a professor of politics and international affairs at Princeton University, recounted Chinese

analysts saying publicly that “in some instances,” the People’s Liberation Army “might be prepared to use nuclear weapons in retaliation to conventional attacks.”<sup>24</sup>

In 2016, RAND analysts examined

the circumstances in which the risk of nuclear war, however low, could be at its highest. In a prolonged and severe conflict, it is conceivable that Chinese military leaders would propose and Chinese political leaders would consider using nuclear weapons in the following circumstances:

- Chinese forces are at risk of being totally destroyed.
- The Chinese homeland has been rendered defenseless against U.S. conventional attacks; such attacks are extensive and go beyond military targets, perhaps to include political leadership.
- Domestic economic and political conditions are growing so dire that the state itself could collapse.

U.S. conventional strikes include or are perceived to include capabilities that are critical to China’s strategic deterrent—notably intercontinental ballistic missile[s] (ICBMs), ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs), strategic C2—which the Chinese interpret as preparation for a U.S. first strike or intended to leave China vulnerable to U.S. nuclear coercion.<sup>25</sup>

Sources of misperception and miscalculation can render supposedly “valid” assumptions at the beginning of a conflict invalid as a conflict grows more prolonged—heightening the risk of unwanted escalation.<sup>26</sup> Though academics acknowledge that homeland-based Chinese antiaccess/area-denial (A2/AD) systems raise “risks of escalation,” some seem to downplay the unpredictable effects of significant military losses that China and the United States stand to suffer in the “contested” A2/AD environment, especially in a prolonged conflict.<sup>27</sup> In the United States, large-scale Chinese attacks on American fielded military forces and remote bases may result in such high attrition that America’s leaders are prompted to escalate in ways they did not initially anticipate; foreign policy strategist Graham Allison suggests that “if a single U.S. carrier were sunk . . . in a showdown today, the deaths of 5,000 Americans could set the United States and China on an escalatory ladder that has no apparent stopping point.”<sup>28</sup>

In 1976, Robert Jervis, a professor of international politics at Columbia University, observed that attempts to coerce a state into halting aggressive actions can backfire and spiral out of control unpredictably, despite initial intentions to limit the scope of violence.<sup>29</sup> Steven Pinker, a psychologist, later found that innate human biases (known as “moralization gaps”) can lead actors to perceive their own provocations as “justified” and “mere acts of deterrence,” but to view their oppo-

nent's actions as unjustified and intolerably aggressive.<sup>30</sup> In crises and conflicts, decision makers do not share common "sight-pictures" of pertinent facts and events with their adversaries. Instead, they will tend to overestimate the righteousness of their own actions and the wickedness of their adversaries' aggression.<sup>31</sup> They will tend to view their own escalatory acts of deterrence as rational and justified to "even the score," just as their adversaries will have the opposite perspective, viewing such acts as provocative and warranting counterdeterrence in return.<sup>32</sup> These asymmetric perspectives can (and likely will) lead to mutual escalation—despite the best intentions on all sides to prevent it.<sup>33</sup> Talmadge believes that "amid the fog and suspicion of war, China's view of both U.S. intentions and nuclear deterrence could change radically."<sup>34</sup> These cognitive distortions could drive "levels of violence, duration," and costs "that might appear unjustifiable in times of peace" to become possible after hostilities begin.<sup>35</sup>

Known risks of misperception and escalation still may not deter nuclear-armed actors from quarreling over even small-stakes issues, as Michael O'Hanlon, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, explains in *The Senkaku Paradox*.<sup>36</sup> As with most complex phenomena, initial conditions are rarely deterministic, and assumptions can become fragile as conflicts grow more protracted. American military planners have experienced this in past wars; for example, their early expectations of "humane" daylight precision aerial bombardment in World War II were set aside in favor of fire-bombing cities at night and eventually nuclear attack. RAND analysts recognize the high likelihood of a protracted conflict with China, predicting that "once either military is authorized to commence strikes, the ability of both to control the conflict would be greatly compromised."<sup>37</sup> They assert "the assumption that a Sino-U.S. war would be over quickly is not supported by evidence that either side would rapidly exhaust its war making capacity" (emphasis added).<sup>38</sup> As each state commits greater levels of blood and treasure to achieving an outcome, they may become less likely to seek compromise, end the conflict, or accept anything short of total victory over their adversaries. As a conflict grows more prolonged, the probabilities of misperception only intensify.<sup>39</sup> According to Rovner, "there are clear pathways to both nuclear escalation and protracted war."<sup>40</sup>

Military planners should anticipate the possibility that during a crisis, America's civilian leaders might be more sensitive to risks of escalation than precrisis academic assessments had indicated they should be. Leaders may question the predicted effects of conventional military action the way President Kennedy did during the Cuban missile crisis (1962); he demurred from launching large-scale conventional attacks on Cuba to avoid escalation toward nuclear war and approved a naval blockade instead. A recent article by John Meyers, an assistant

policy researcher at RAND, reviewed historical cases where American presidents rejected such strikes due to concerns about unbounded risk.<sup>41</sup> According to Meyers, “the president will balk. Even in the midst of a full-scale war, he or she would reject mainland strikes for fear of precipitating a nuclear exchange.”<sup>42</sup> To avoid escalation in the past, the United States refrained from attacking the territories of China and present-day Russia during the Berlin crisis (1948), the Korean War (1950–1953), and the Vietnam War (1964–1973); the United States likely avoided confrontation with Russian forces during Russia’s invasion of Ukraine (2014) for the same reason.<sup>43</sup>

Following America’s virtually unrestrained military campaigns in World War II (including the world’s first and only employment of nuclear weapons), and the subsequent acquisition of nuclear weapons by America’s adversaries, something changed about America’s strategy in later conflicts with opponents backed by nuclear-armed patrons.<sup>44</sup> Mark Clodfelter, a professor of military strategy at the National War College, notes that in the Korean and Vietnam wars, the United States was no longer willing to employ unrestrained violence due to risks of expanding the scope of conflicts and escalating toward total or nuclear war.<sup>45</sup> In analyzing the Korean and Vietnam conflicts, Clodfelter distinguished America’s *positive* objectives from *negative* objectives. Positive objectives included unifying Korea and securing South Vietnam from the North’s aggression, while *negative* objectives emphasized avoiding total war with China and the Soviet Union. In the Korean and Vietnam wars, these negative objectives changed the course of American military strategy because they began to impose significant constraints on applications of force (such as restricting attacks on China and the Soviet Union).<sup>46</sup> Historical examples like these should lead military planners to expect their leaders to ask for military options that avoid striking a nuclear-armed aggressor’s homeland if America’s credibility is one day tested.<sup>47</sup> Similar to American leaders in the Korean and Vietnam wars, current leaders could view America’s ability to halt aggression wholly within third-party countries as beneficial for reducing risks of escalation toward nuclear war while preserving American credibility.

As the US military renews its strategies for deterring and, if necessary, defeating its adversaries, it is worth reviewing the range of alternatives for achieving military objectives on the peripheries of nuclear-armed states. Since the early years of the Cold War, American strategists have appreciated the value of superior conventional military capabilities and limited war as important components of deterrence in the nuclear age. National Security Council memo 68 (declassified in 1975) stated that in the event of Soviet “mischief,” the United States “should take no avoidable initiative which would cause it to become a war of annihilation, and

if we have the forces to defeat a Soviet drive for limited objectives it may well be to our interest not to let it become a global war.”<sup>48</sup> If today’s leaders worry as the National Security Council did in 1950 that “the risk of having no better choice than to capitulate or precipitate a global war” puts us “continually at the verge of appearing and being alternately irresolute and desperate,” then robust conventional options may provide more-flexible alternatives to risky strikes on mainland China.<sup>49</sup> This article avoids the sensitive task of prescribing such options but instead merely provides academic arguments for their existence along with supporting capabilities that America’s civilian leaders may require. While there are many possible approaches to a military conflict over Taiwan with varying degrees of risk, two examples that avoid mainland strikes are “maritime denial” and “offshore control.” Maritime denial would employ multi-domain combat power to deny China’s military use of maritime capabilities locally (including preventing a Chinese amphibious landing on Taiwan).<sup>50</sup> Recognizing the potential escalatory effects of mainland strikes on China, Thomas Hammes, a distinguished research fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies, saw a need for operational approaches like offshore control that avoid mainland strikes to minimize risks of nuclear war.<sup>51</sup> *Offshore control* is essentially a distant blockade that would strangle imports of critical resources to China, while halting exports of commodities vital to China’s economic viability.<sup>52</sup> The success of such approaches would likely depend on strengthening Taiwan’s defenses.<sup>53</sup>

While the United States modernizes its nuclear and conventional strike forces to strengthen deterrence, it should not neglect the types of forces required for options that avoid striking the homelands of nuclear-armed adversaries.<sup>54</sup> Critics of this idea may argue that creating less-risky military options could signal a reduction in America’s willingness to pursue more dangerous courses of action, making a Taiwan invasion appear less risky to China. This argument has a basis in deterrence theory originating in the 1960s: Thomas Schelling, a nuclear strategist, believed that states signal commitment to achieving political outcomes by eliminating their own escape routes from further escalation if provoked (essentially backing themselves into a strategic “corner”), while leaving any “last clear chance” to avoid further escalation for an adversary to act upon.<sup>55</sup> Such an approach could be attractive to America’s leaders if they believed their willingness to escalate to mainland strikes (rather than avoiding them) was credible in the minds of China’s leaders; however, if America’s leaders instead suspected China may doubt their willingness to aggressively strike China’s mainland, lacking other options could actually weaken deterrence.<sup>56</sup>

Deterrence could fail if China’s leaders believed—mistakenly or not—they could exploit “gaps” they perceive in America’s options and willingness to esca-



late; in this case China could attempt a regional fait accompli in Taiwan without fearing a risky American response.<sup>57</sup> Similar thinking was behind language in the 2018 *Nuclear Posture Review*, where the US Secretary of Defense directed development of a low-yield warhead to “counter any mistaken perception of an exploitable ‘gap’ in US regional deterrence capabilities.” This would strengthen America’s nuclear deterrence posture by shaping Russia’s perceptions and discouraging Russia from undertaking mistaken acts of aggression.<sup>58</sup> If America’s military options were limited to aggressively striking China’s mainland or doing little else to halt an invasion of Taiwan, China could confidently behave more aggressively if it believed America would choose the latter over the former. Military options that avoid or minimize mainland attacks provide civilian leaders a broad range of choices beyond devastating mainland strikes and doing little to prevent a fait accompli in Taiwan. Such options would leave China no room for confidence and would strengthen deterrence.

To be clear, this article is not suggesting any reduction in capabilities or preparation for mainland strikes; such options fit together with all others to ensure deterrence is credible across the entire spectrum of conflict.<sup>59</sup> Just as America’s civilian leaders may have interest in options that avoid mainland strikes during a crisis, they will also likely have interest in other options that are more escalatory; deterrence requires that America’s forces are ready to present them all. Designing, organizing, training, and equipping future military forces to provide such options requires decades of effort among all military services. To maximize their relevance, such deliberate processes should account for all possible leadership perspectives—foreign and domestic—that could materialize during a crisis rather than building forces and strategies tailored for particular government administrations. The composition and temperament of future Chinese and American leaders cannot be known; therefore, military options—and the forces that provide them—should be flexible enough to provide relevant effects regardless of who is in office. In 2005, a Chinese general called for nuclear retaliation against the United States if America were to strike China’s mainland during a Taiwan intervention; planners should consider the possibility that China could adopt such a policy in the future.<sup>60</sup>

While nuclear escalation in a Taiwan conflict would be unlikely, the severity of such an event is great enough to warrant a diverse array of options, yielding varying degrees of risk. America’s leaders may call for such options if deterrence fails, including those that avoid or minimize attacks on China’s mainland to halt its aggression. China may one day see a net benefit in testing America’s resolve and the strength of its commitments by marginally expanding its borders; such a test would simultaneously threaten America’s credibility, the strength of America’s alliances, the survival of distant democracies, regional stability and arms control,

and civilized life on Earth (if nuclear weapons are used). Demonstrating resolve and maintaining deterrence will rely heavily on America's nuclear posture and its leaders' demonstrated willingness to attack the homelands of adversaries conventionally to rapidly halt acts of aggression. However, in the cases where America's adversaries doubt or test the credibility of the foregoing sources of deterrence, America's ability to project military power into contested regions without attacking homelands of nuclear-armed adversaries provides some flexibility in denying acts of aggression and demonstrating resolve—without increasing the chances of nuclear war. ☛

#### **Lt Col Brian MacLean, USAF**

Colonel MacLean is an Air Force pilot and currently serves as a staff officer at Air Mobility Command Headquarters.

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#### **Disclaimer**

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# Indo-Pacific Demographic Shifts

## Effects of the Demographics in China and India on the Regional Security Environment

LT SAM MELICK, USN

### Introduction

“Demography offers a narrative about future challenges.”<sup>1</sup> This notion aptly describes the Indo-Pacific region’s current state, home to two of the world’s most populous nations: China and India. By extension, demographics also offer a series of opportunities from which nations can reap huge dividends if poised to take advantage. Demographics provide the potential to shape the security environment in the Indo-Pacific for decades to come, and the United States should be prepared to assist allies and shape policy and strategy to take advantage of the coming changes. This article seeks to answer the following questions: How will China and India’s demographics shape the Indo-Pacific region’s security environment? Additionally, what are the implications for the United States, and how should Washington respond to the demographic shift, if at all?

India’s and China’s differing demographics can shift the Indo-Pacific’s security environment toward a position more favorable to the United States via economic and social factors. China’s demographic boom is starting to conclude, and internal forces may bring about change favorable to US interests in the region. Meanwhile, India’s demographic dividend could soon be collected if the Indian government prepares its country.

### Chinese Demography

#### *History*

China’s management of its population began in the 1950s as Beijing saw an exploding population’s likelihood as a fundamental problem. During this decade and through the end of the 1970s, China saw a rapid decrease in infant mortality and rising life expectancy.<sup>2</sup> Identifying this trend, the Chinese Communist Party introduced China’s one-child policy in the late 1970s to stem the tide of population growth. Although demographers often cite the one-child policy as the main driver behind the demographic shift in China, it was primarily the Chinese citizenry and culture that drastically shaped China’s demographics.<sup>3</sup>

Urbanization allowed the Chinese to have fewer children as they became less reliant on agricultural labor.<sup>4</sup> Also, as health care and birth control became more accessible, the Chinese people opted to have fewer children. Finally, given the patriarchal nature of Chinese society, couples with only one child were more likely to prefer a male to a female, resulting in a massive gender imbalance throughout the population.<sup>5</sup> These social factors, combined with the one-child policy, successfully curbed the total fertility rate by the 1980s.<sup>6</sup> Even though Beijing was able to curb China's population boom, it was still left with a large working-age population entering the 1980s.

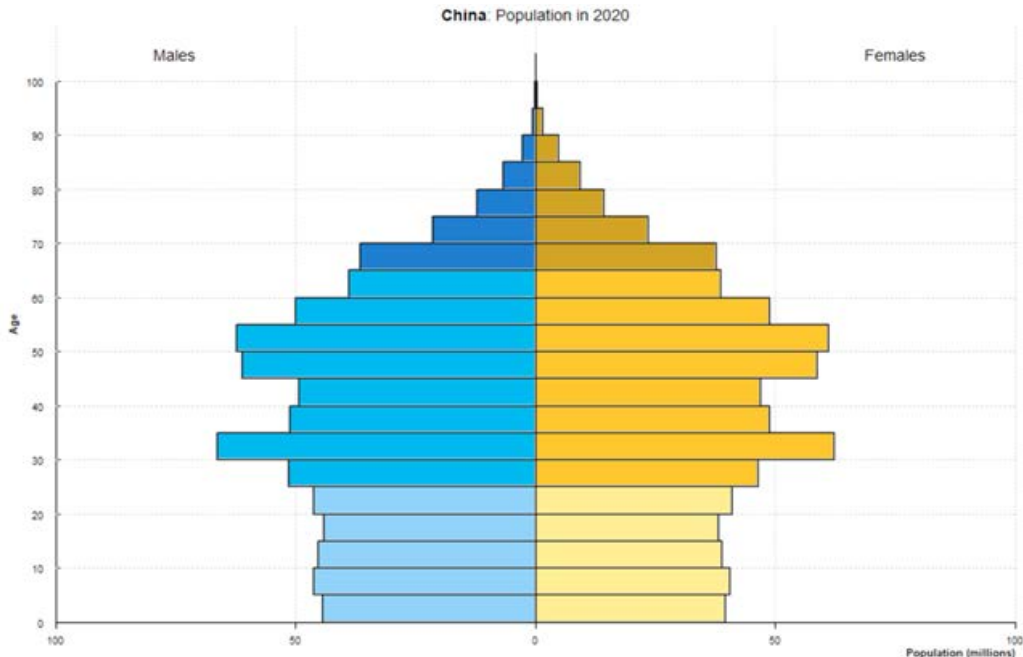
By the late 1980s and early 1990s, China was ready to take advantage of its glut of working-age citizens. During the last two decades of the twentieth century, China had the right climate for capital investment, an infrastructure network suitable for global commerce, and, most importantly, a sizeable workforce.<sup>7</sup> Chinese timing could not have been more fortuitous. As international shipping costs continued to lower, it became cheaper to make goods overseas and ship them to markets abroad. It is estimated these factors accounted for approximately 20 percent of China's economic growth between 1980 and 2000.<sup>8</sup>

However, the rapidly declining birthrate now presents a problem for China's security posture. Its population continues to grow more top-heavy, and its dependency ratio will only become larger over the next couple of decades. The *dependency ratio* is the number of dependent persons in a society, usually children and the elderly, to the working-age population. Higher dependency ratios typically foretell less economic progress, as fewer resources are spent on growing the economy.<sup>9</sup> A demographic chart for China is shown in figure 1, illustrating how the population pyramid has become inverted.

### ***China's Demographic Future***

It appears, "China has exhausted its demographic dividend" due to its demographic shift.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, now is the time to take stock of the future of China's economy, society, and military. China will be forced to revamp its economy in short order. No longer will China function as "the world's factory," shifting instead to focus toward other sectors of the population.<sup>11</sup> As Beijing spends increasingly on China's elderly, it is reasonable to expect that its economic boom will continue to slow. The slowing economic engine of China could have massive implications for its diplomatic initiatives. If China's economy cannot sustain the long-term financing that has been used around the region to fund infrastructure

projects, Beijing may have to call in debts. That could lead to substantial regional friction, as many Chinese debtors are likely to default.



**Figure 1. Demographics of China in 2020**

China's demographic realities will also affect the outlook of Chinese society. The effect of Beijing's family planning programs has been most pronounced in rural China.<sup>12</sup> Due to the limited number of females throughout China, the ones who do exist have often migrated to the cities. This urban migration has left an entire underclass of rural males who will likely never find a spouse. The "bare sticks," as the men are known, present a real social crisis for China.<sup>13</sup> If China has many poor, uneducated bachelors on its hands, Beijing will have to find something to do with them. Eventually, these men will require more end-of-life care, due to a lack of traditional family structure. Additionally, if their numbers and discontent continue to grow, they could present a source of civil unrest in a nation where party control and stability are essential.

Finally, the Chinese military will also face two different problems associated with demography. First, as China continues to age, there will be fewer military-age males to serve. The lack of military-age males is a significant consideration for a conventional war. Major ground operations, such as an invasion of Taiwan, tend to be manpower-intensive. While there is reason to believe that advances in automation and technology will reduce the manpower-intensive nature of some



aspects of war, there is no reason to believe that these advances will extend to the area of armed ground combat.

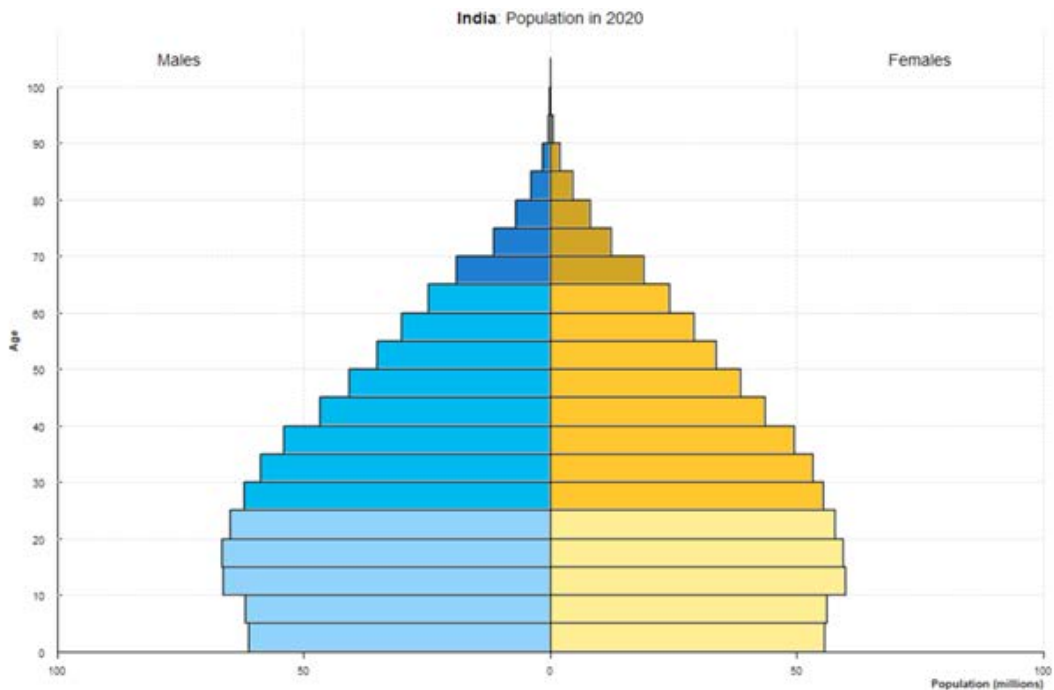
Additionally, as the population continues to age, citizens will generally be less predisposed to war in the first place.<sup>14</sup> Wars are expensive; in a nation where eldercare costs are rising, choices will have to be made regarding limited resources. Also, there are a higher number of families with one male child. Public sentiment might not support war with the same enthusiasm that a normally distributed family demographic would. While that consideration may not be as pressing in a country under single-party rule, it could still affect the mental calculus about going to war. As the sun sets on China's demographic rise, it simultaneously rises on India's demographic future.

## **Indian Demography**

### ***History***

After gaining its independence in the late 1940s, India embarked on a series of population control measures starting in the 1950s.<sup>15</sup> The primary goal of the National Family Planning Program was to stabilize the total fertility rate around the replacement level. This program was less successful than in China because of the lack of centralized government control and the cultural differences that persisted in India. Due to the government's failure, India has maintained a total fertility rate above the replacement rate, and its population continues to grow. The *replacement rate* is the average number of children born per couple to replace themselves. It is usually slightly higher than two and depends on the region. As recently as 1960, India's total fertility rate has been near six. However, its most recent reported number is slightly higher than two.<sup>16</sup> These trends also indicate that India will surpass China as the world's largest population in the next decade.<sup>17</sup>

As India's population continues to grow and the working-age population booms, this substantial number of working-age citizens could provide India with its demographic dividend over the next couple decades. India's demographic distribution is shown in figure 2, presenting a stark contrast to China's distribution. Given this demographic picture, India can become the next economic superpower over the next couple decades. This bright economic future, however, is not India's birthright. India faces challenges due to the global environment, its poor infrastructure, and cultural barriers to development.



**Figure 2. Demographics of India in 2020<sup>18</sup>**

### *India's Demographic Future*

The world in which China came of age in the global economy is vastly different from the global environment India faces today. China's demographic dividend came at the dawn of globalization. China was at the right place in its development at the right time to reap huge rewards from the offshore migration of manufacturing to China.<sup>19</sup> Its cheap labor supply kept prices low for global firms and saw increased capital investment. However, the economic landscape has changed. The world has already gone through the globalization cycle, as manufacturing has largely left economically developed nations for other less-developed countries where the labor is cheaper. For a nation like India to gain the types of jobs needed to sustain its economic boom, manufacturers would need to leave countries where labor costs are already low.

Additionally, automation has already eliminated many of those jobs that migrated to China in the first place.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, it is not as simple as moving the factory from China to India. Instead, India must create jobs in other sectors to compete globally. For New Delhi, this means leveraging India's advanced service and IT sectors to create more jobs for its growing working-age population.

India's infrastructure deficiencies will hamper the creation of the economic base that China used in the late twentieth century. China invested in the infrastructure necessary to move raw materials and processed goods to and from the sea. India does not have a system of similar capacity in place.<sup>21</sup> This lack of infrastructure hampers economic productivity in two ways. First, it physically limits the amount of material, goods, and services that can be transported around the country. Second, poor infrastructure serves as a deterrent to getting foreign direct investment. Foreign investors often look to a nation's infrastructure as a metric for investment success.<sup>22</sup> If the infrastructure is poor or missing, investors will shy away and invest in other countries. Infrastructure is even more important to India than China because China's economic development was highly concentrated along its coast, so it had little need to address inadequate infrastructure inland. However, in India's case, a substantial portion of its demographic boom will occur in states that are not near its coast, so it will have to mass migrate people to urban centers or develop more sophisticated infrastructure inland.

Finally, India has social issues that require change before it can receive its economic dividend. India will need to achieve substantially better health outcomes in general and allow for the more significant mobilization of its women to realize full economic potential. While India has been getting healthier as a nation, it still has progress to make toward the levels that will sustain economic growth.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, mobilizing women for the workforce will be a crucial economic enabler for India, adding up to two-percent growth per year.<sup>24</sup> Inability to mobilize the entirety of the Indian workforce and for women to plan their families will drag down the economy during its potential boom, negating much of its demographic dividend. If New Delhi can remedy these issues, India will be well on its way to the economic prowess foretold by its demographics.

### ***Doubts about India's Economic Success***

However, India has been here before. India always seems to be on the cusp of realizing its economic potential, yet it always comes up short. As far back as the early 2000s, commentators have noted India's military and economic potential.<sup>25</sup> Analysts predicted that India could sustain annual increases in GDP of over 10 percent per year.<sup>26</sup> However, India has consistently fallen short of that growth for the past two decades. Instead, figures have hovered around 6 percent, as seen in figure 3. Some of India's required changes cited 20 years ago are still relevant today, including social stability and economic openness.<sup>27</sup> Indian women are not appreciably more socially mobile than they were two decades

prior. Additionally, the protectionist measures used in the Indian economy are still intact, with indicators that they might be expanding. Since these changes have not yet materialized in India, there is no reason to suspect that their bright economic future will either.



**Figure 3. India's GDP growth per year as a percentage<sup>28</sup>**

### *But Things Are Different This Time*

There is one reason to suspect that things will be different this time in India: demographics. Demographic forces are a proven predictor of a country's economic future.

India's potential demographic dividend can be discerned by comparison with other similarly situated countries. This is the first time in modern history when India's demographic distribution is narrowing at the bottom, indicating that families are having fewer children. A lower birthrate will lower the dependency ratio and allow for more investment in the nation's economy rather than child-rearing. During the 1980s, China had a similar demographic outlook as India. China's demographic profile in 1980 and annual GDP growth are shown in figure 4 and figure 5, respectively. This trend also holds for fellow BRICS member Brazil in the 2000s. Brazil's demographic breakdown and GDP growth are shown in figure 6 and figure 7, respectively. There is a clear trend between demographic promise and the resultant sustained increase in economic output.

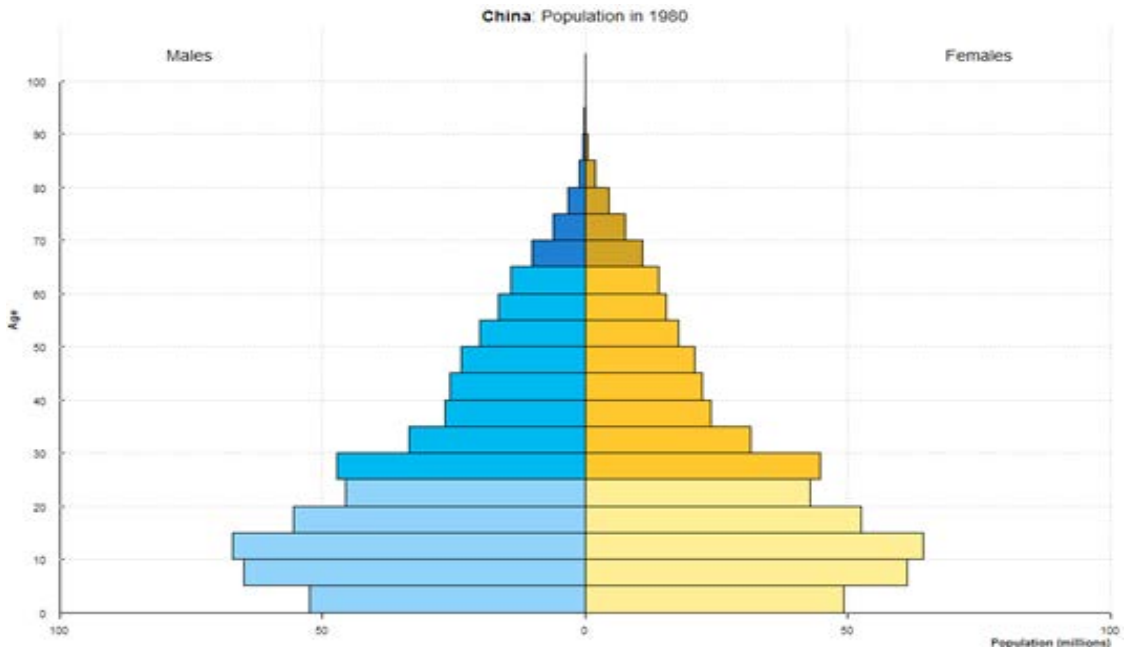


Figure 4. China's Demographic Breakdown in 1980<sup>29</sup>



Figure 5. China's annual GDP growth as a percentage from 1980 to 2000<sup>30</sup>

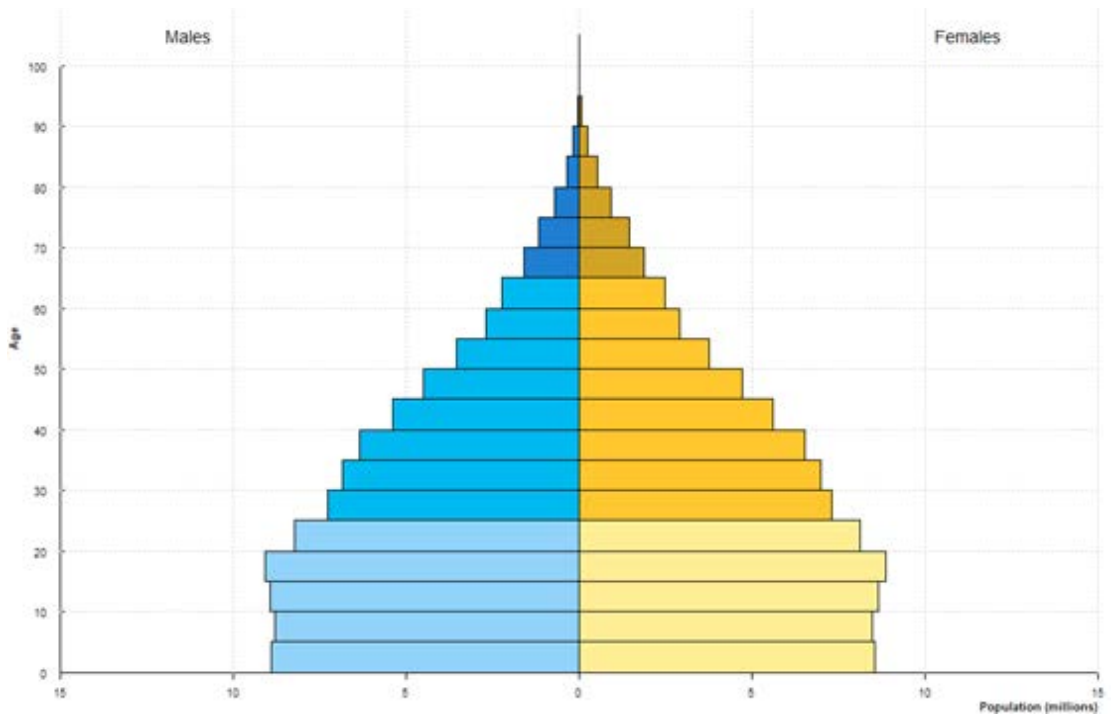


Figure 6. Brazil demographic breakdown in 2000<sup>31</sup>

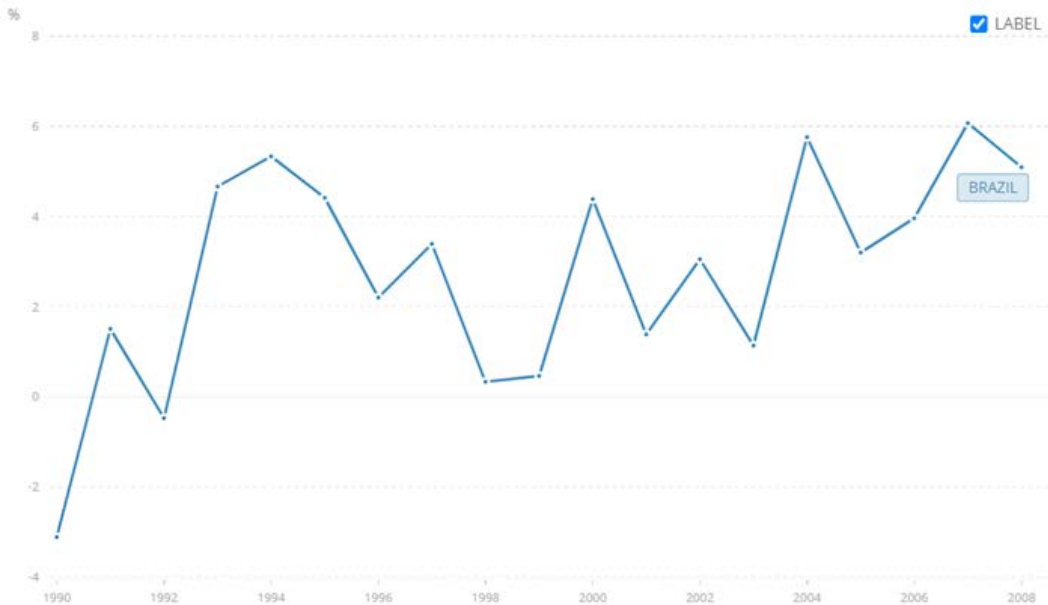


Figure 7: Brazil's annual growth in GDP as a percentage<sup>32</sup>

These charts point to a promising trend for India, whose demographic profile looks remarkably similar to China and Brazil before their economic booms. While China, Brazil, and India are quite different nations regarding culture, politics, and geography, their demographic potentials unite them. There are admittedly numerous factors that can affect a nation's economic future, but demographics is undeniably one of the most significant.

### **US Implications for China's and India's Demographics**

Given the demographic landscape in China, the best response from the United States is to wait. China's economic prowess is already waning and will continue to do so. For this reason, Washington is best served by allowing the demographic shift to run its course in China. By letting China's demographic situation unfold, Washington can expect to see better diplomatic and military outcomes in the future. Time is the United States' best ally regarding conflict with China.

Unlike China, India is a nation where the United States can make a substantial difference in the trajectory of the Indian economy. Fueled by the shared concern over the expansion of Chinese influence, Washington and New Delhi can help shift the economic center of gravity in the region toward India through smart investments in the nation's infrastructure and society.

First, US investment in the region sends a strong signal to the rest of the international community that India is safe for investment. While the investment climate has improved over the past couple of years, significant improvement is required.<sup>33</sup> American investment in India is an investment in its demographic potential. The US status as an early investor could help improve American and Indian relations. It would also be a great business opportunity for American firms looking to do business overseas. To improve foreign investors' investment landscape, the Indian government will need to continue to ease the requirements for foreign investment. Restrictions on e-commerce transactions are one of the most critical limitations on foreign business. Onerous rules and regulations have raised US firms' cost to do business in India and have created a less robust system for fraud monitoring. These policies will continue to limit US investment in India, and New Delhi must address this issue to develop the trade space necessary to capitalize on India's demographic shift.

Additionally, India will need to drop its protectionist measures if foreign investment in the country is to thrive. Tariffs in India are higher than in most other developed countries.<sup>34</sup> While tariffs are meant to incentivize domestic goods consumption and occasionally send political messages to other nations, in the case of India, they are the wrong policy for the country's economic future. Protectionist measures make foreign investment more difficult. In the global economy, if returns

are not satisfactory in India, companies will seek other emerging markets where the expected returns are higher. India cannot afford to be passed over if it wants to reap economic dividends. Rather than protectionist measures, India should import the materials required to build the requisite infrastructure needed to get the country moving toward economic prosperity. Tariffs are a short-term, domestic political measure, but such measures will make India a more challenging place to do business in the long run. Maintaining tariffs will continue to hamper the economic prospect conferred by India's booming demographics.

Finally, India must improve living and working conditions for its women. While progress has been made over the past couple of decades, India is still a fundamentally dangerous place for women.<sup>35</sup> Most of this mistreatment is cultural and tough to root out, especially in the country's northern, more rural areas. This region is where many of the working-age citizens currently live. If that workforce is artificially halved due to the hindering of women's mobility, then discussing India's potential economic boom is a moot point. Women will need full access to the growing knowledge economy in the county. They will also require access to education and training to fill newly created, skilled jobs. Finally, women will need access to reliable birth control to effectively plan their families around their new economic future. Women will be the lynchpin to the Indian economic boom, and they must be able to participate if India will fully realize its economic potential.

Washington should make a stand on this issue for two reasons. First, the United States should make a stand on the principle. Limitations by the Indian government to women's access to education and birth control are violations of fundamental human rights. This should be a red line for Washington, as the United States cannot afford to be seen doing business with such governments. Second, India is approximately 48-percent female.<sup>36</sup> For the United States to invest in only half of India's booming economic dividend is poor economic policy. Washington is better off spending precious resources on other nations with more economic promise than only half of India.

## **Conclusion**

A major demographic shift is already underway. China's demographic boom is concluding, and soon its economic and social problems will quickly multiply as its population continues to age. This shift presents an opportunity for the United States to reallocate capital and labor in the region such that it is realigned with US interests. India's opportunity is coming; there is still much unfinished work to prepare that country to reap its reward. While there is still time to complete the task, the window is closing, and substantial effort and money are needed to prepare India. 🌟



**LT Sam Melick, USN**

LT Melick is an active-duty submarine officer and student at the Naval War College in Newport, RI. His previous assignment was a division officer aboard the USS *Hampton* (SSN-767).

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# The Next War to End All Wars

MICHELE WOLFE

The United States does not know how much of an active role it should take in the South China Sea (SCS). Though Washington has interests and allies in the region, the United States stands on the periphery politically and physically. China declares the United States should stay out of its affairs.<sup>1</sup> The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries appeal for US ships to ensure freedom of navigation.<sup>2</sup> If Washington meddles too much, will it drag the United States into a great-power conflict? If Washington fails to defend US allies' shipping and fishing rights, will China assume control? The Korean War and the Vietnam War remain fresh in the minds of US citizens. Is all this saber-rattling a precursor to another embittered, proxy war?

The answer is yes. The countries bordering the SCS seize resources and land, jealously guarding what they have and watching for what they can take. Countries claim historical rights to the waters, which reignite memories of past wars' victories and defeats. Wartime history and territorial gains and losses spike nationalistic ire throughout the entire SCS area. This nationalism feeds the cycle, creating a hotbed of nations poised for the first strike.

The answer is also no. The hypothetical prewar escalation described above compares to no recent war. The best comparison relates to a similar scenario in the European region of Alsace-Lorraine more than a century ago. While two countries fought over Alsace-Lorraine's valuable resources, each employed diplomatic, information, military, and economic (DIME) efforts to embroil the rest of the European continent into their machinations. As Europe divided itself into uneasy alliances, leaders expected peace, thinking that no country would dare upset the delicate balance of powers. However, as nationalism spiked, one unforeseen incident incited each country's declaration of war.

As in pre-World War I (WWI) politics, the SCS is ripe for conflict, and despite all DIME efforts, the United States faces an impossible battle in securing peace because of fierce geographic, historical, and nationalistic roadblocks. Due to their resources and natural boundaries, the physical regions of the SCS (like those of pre-WWI Alsace-Lorraine before it) make control of its resources and security highly desirable to its neighbors. Historically, both areas possess parallel trajectories, beginning with golden ages, humiliating declines, and preconflict struggles. Finally, each period's nationalistic culture fervently escalates tensions regardless of US diplomacy and military presence. If the United States properly understands its

casted role, it will transition from prevention to preparation for the upcoming multinational conflict.

## Geography and Resources

Geographical hotbeds, like pre-WWI Alsace-Lorraine and the present SCS region, propagate persistent obstacles to successful negotiations. As the resource-rich geographical center of colonial Europe, Alsace-Lorraine provided political prose and military might. Similarly, the SCS represents the economic powerhouse of numerous Southeast Asian nations. In either respect, the competing countries either encourage the distant United States to take their side in the region's political and economic rights or warn Washington to stay out of SCS business.

Alsace-Lorraine is nestled among the borders of France, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland, and Belgium. To the east, the Rhine River and its tributaries provide a natural barrier between Alsace and Germany, and to the west, the Vosges Mountains protect it from France.<sup>3</sup> The geographic position established a "border-country separating ever hostile and seemingly incompatible peoples."<sup>4</sup> However, instead of the natural land features creating a shield for the people of Alsace-Lorraine, France and Germany frequently struggled to envelop this buffer zone into their own country's fold. The French wanted the Rhine as a border, while the Germans wanted the Vosges Mountains instead.

Alsace-Lorraine's neighbors coveted the region's important lines of communication (LOC) as much as they desired its resources. Not only excellent for crops, vineyards, and livestock, the rich soil boasted "great mineral wealth: coal, iron, copper, lead, potash, petroleum, rock-salt, silver."<sup>5</sup> Before WWI, Germany used large iron and coal deposits to create pig iron and steel.<sup>6</sup> Transport to Germany and other neighboring countries went by rail, road, and water. The primary LOC cuts between the Southern Vosges and the Swiss Alps to the south. To the north, another railroad crosses Lorraine and Alsace.

Despite the size differential, for China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Thailand, and Singapore, the SCS possesses similar appeal as Alsace-Lorraine did for its neighbors. A natural buffer from warring threats, the deep harbors protect, and the numerous islands make straight advances to the mainland slower and more difficult. Essential to regional economics, the SCS provides valuable access to China, Japan, India, and Australia. With physical terrain "not conducive to long-distance transport,"<sup>7</sup> key shipping routes, such as the Strait of Malacca, provide safe passage away from rougher seas.

For the SCS littoral countries, borders reach deep into the interior SCS islands. Over the past few decades, China stretched its influence in the SCS by constructing "helipads and military structures on seven reefs and shoals" within the Spratly

Islands.<sup>8</sup> Taiwan and Vietnam, which also claim all the Spratlys, occupy Itu Aba Island and 21 other islands, each similarly fortified with barracks, runways, and supplies. On the eastern border of the SCS, Malaysia and the Philippines occupy islands with naval detachments on 14 islands.<sup>9</sup>

Natural resources in the SCS make it hotly contested, from the single fisherman to the conglomerate. As a top resource, fish represent Southeast Asia's chief protein, making the SCS a direct food source for at least eight countries.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, with overfishing and pollution, SCS nations face shortages of quality protein.<sup>11</sup> Another valuable resource, the SCS "has proven oil reserves of seven billion barrels,"<sup>12</sup> and China anticipates more. Local oil will reduce regional countries' dependency on Middle East oil coming through the Strait of Malacca.<sup>13</sup>

Examining geographic and resource-driven sources of future contention, two potential scenarios incorporate Vietnam, Thailand, and, of course, China. Now and in the near future, China and Vietnam spar for SCS territory. In 2019, China sent ships to prevent Vietnamese oil drilling near the Spratly Islands. The international protests continued for four months, until China's *Haiyang Dizhi 8* departed Vietnam's claimed waters.<sup>14</sup> Vietnam's general secretary and president, Nguyễn Phú Trọng, declared Hanoi would "never concede the issues of sovereignty, independence, unification, and territorial integrity."<sup>15</sup> As Robert Kaplan said, "just as German soil constituted the military front line . . . the waters of the South China Sea may constitute the military front line of the coming decades."<sup>16</sup>

As the European colonial powers sought treasure and ease of passage, China's push for Thailand to cut a canal between its northern and southern sections could bypass nearly 700 miles of navigation through the Straits of Malacca. It could also cleave Thailand in two. As discussed by Salvatore Babones, the United States created an international conflict over Colombia's Panama, eventually creating a separate independent country more malleable to America's canal project. As is the case in Thailand today, a more powerful nation craved convenient access and sought to take control.<sup>17</sup> Thailand already "faces an active insurgency in its three southernmost provinces" and significant domestic political turmoil, including protests that might prove to be the end of the monarchy.<sup>18</sup> To protect its interests, "it is not inconceivable that China would support an independence movement in the south and seize control of the canal" and southern Thailand.<sup>19</sup> Oil disputes and geographic seizures could swiftly spark outrage throughout the international community.

As with the physical allure of Alsace-Lorraine, the SCS represents wealth, speed, and power. With no physical claim to the region, the United States approaches the SCS waters for trade and alliances. At the behest of weaker nations,

the United States appears as a temporary power balancer, enforcing navigation freedom while in the region, while Washington itself remains an ocean away.

### Contentious History

Pre-WWI Alsace-Lorraine and the SCS possess similar cultural and developmental periods of prosperity, decline, peace, turmoil, and infighting. Because the deep, bloody, and inevitable histories parallel each other so closely, Washington should not expect US diplomatic and economic efforts to erase memories of revenge and humiliation.

China boasts a rich, ancient history, and the Han Dynasty has a particular resonance in China today. Scholars identify the second century BCE as when the Chinese discovered the SCS and its islands, undertaking expeditions within the natural water boundary.<sup>20</sup> Early maps encompass much of present-day China, and current Chinese officials use these ancient borders to establish China's claim to the SCS.<sup>21</sup>

Though little is known of Alsace-Lorraine before Roman rule, Julius Caesar writes that he found a population of Celts who had already “experienced the repeated shock of attempted invasion from beyond the Rhine.”<sup>22</sup> After Caesar's conquest of the area, he declared it part of Gaul (France) and determined the boundary between Gaul and the Germanic tribes to be the Rhine (east Alsace-Lorraine).

Over the course of the subsequent centuries, warring factions, city-states, the French monarchy, and the Germanic Empire split control of Alsace-Lorraine. Though scholars differ on the legitimacy of Germany's claim to the region,<sup>23</sup> before the seventeenth century, Alsace “was one of the cradles of German thought, civilization, art, and architecture.”<sup>24</sup> After the Thirty Years' War, France ruled over Alsace, and Alsace-Lorraine fought with France in subsequent conflicts, thereby firmly tying the region to the French. By 1870, Prussia declared victory over the French following the Franco-Prussian War. Wilhelm I, King of Prussia, employing history as statecraft, assumed the title of German Emperor and associated his coronation with a restoration of the Holy Roman Empire to subsume many ancient Roman territorial claims—one of which was Alsace-Lorraine. He accomplished this through marriages and power plays.<sup>25</sup> The disputed Germanic annexation of Alsace-Lorraine further humiliated France and established the embittered phrase *revanche* in its modern usage, meaning to seek to reclaim lost territories.<sup>26</sup>

Like Europe, through dynastic changes, the wars of Genghis Khan, and the reign of Kublai Khan, China experienced intense millennia of turmoil. China's rule over Vietnam and its SCS coastline ended in 938 CE.<sup>27</sup> Rapidly progressing

to the nineteenth century, the Qing dynasty, known as the “sick man of East Asia,” soon lost territory to Japan, Russia, France, and Great Britain.<sup>28</sup>

The rest of the SCS countries fared just as poorly as China. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, six economic and political influencers dominated and partitioned the Western Pacific: Great Britain, France, Russia, the United States, Germany, and Japan.<sup>29</sup> When the European colonial powers arrived on Southeast Asia shores, wars followed, such as the Opium Wars, the Boxer Rebellion, and the Japanese Wars. From 1862 to 1945, France controlled most of Vietnam. Vietnam’s struggle for independence continued throughout most the twentieth century. Knowing France was overwhelmed by Germany’s assault, Japan invaded the French colony in World War II. When France attempted to regain control following the war, more conflict ensued, eventually involving the United States. Colonial struggle and strife existed throughout Southeast Asia, and, as countries regained their independence, interstate violence erupted for decades.<sup>30</sup>

The final periods of comparison, Alsace-Lorraine (1870–1914) and the SCS (early twentieth century to present), showcase the small skirmishes and insults preceding a war. In less than five decades, tensions between Germany and France infected the rest of the European continent.<sup>31</sup> Aware of the French sentiment, Germany prepared for reprisals,<sup>32</sup> Germanizing Alsace-Lorraine. Over the subsequent decades, France and Germany courted alliances, and each nation established its own coalitions. France and Germany allied with Russia and Italy, respectively. Further, Russia sympathized with the Serbs; Germany allied with Austria-Hungary. And while Paris and Berlin both wooed Great Britain, Paris and London came to an accord.<sup>33</sup> Many contemporaries assumed the forged alliances would preserve peace, but instead, it proved contrary. “Considerations of prestige and the need to keep alliance partners happy meant that Russia found it difficult not to come to Serbia’s aid, no matter how recklessly that small country behaved. For their part, Germany’s leaders feared that if they failed to back Austria-Hungary, they risked losing their only dependable ally. Anxious to counterbalance to Germany, France supported Russia in a quarrel with Austria-Hungary.”<sup>34</sup> Attempting to refocus away from Alsace-Lorraine, France concentrated on its colonies, acquiring Tunis in Africa, but this only incited conflict with Italy.<sup>35</sup> In the end, not even colonizing Indochina deterred France from seeking to reclaim its lost European territory. The French vowed *revanche* against the Germans in 1870,<sup>36</sup> and approximately 50 years later, Paris exacted its vengeance, regaining Alsace-Lorraine in the aftermath of World War I.

Like prewar France, present-day China possesses intense desires to recover what Beijing perceives to be lost territories and to regain its “rightful” place as a great power following its “century of humiliation.” In addition to the European

colonial powers snipping portions of China away, Japan bloodily seized Manchuria and the Shandong Peninsula in the prelude to World War II. Western nations took more control with the Treaty Ports, and internal turmoil created more disparate divisions. Fearing complete dismemberment, China blamed outside influences and closeted itself from the rest of the world as best it could.<sup>37</sup> Now that China has emerged from its century of humiliation, Beijing seeks to insulate itself, declaring “it never again intends to let foreigners take advantage of it.”<sup>38</sup>

Alike in ancient roots, war, loss, and humiliation, nations scorned demand reclamation of former glory. Because pre-WWI Europe parallels the events unfolding in the SCS, an unforeseen trigger within one of the many invested countries could escalate events. Margaret MacMillan remarks, “had Archduke Franz Ferdinand not been assassinated in Sarajevo in June 1914, World War I might not have erupted. One can only imagine the chain of potentially catastrophic events that could be set in motion if Chinese and American naval ships or airplanes collided in the South China Sea today.”<sup>39</sup> The assassination of Vietnam President Nguyễn Phú Trọng or a political coup in Taiwan would draw ire from neighboring countries. An unintended blockade or seizure<sup>40</sup> within the SCS waters may reach significant headlines and deepen political rifts.<sup>41</sup> Assuming no government wishes increased conflict, mistakes still happen, and most likely, the spark that ignites the SCS tinderbox in war will surprise everyone and reside outside of US control.

### **Rising Nationalism**

Though many factors signal a war preparation, such as increased military spending and leadership propaganda, the most subtle and yet powerful indication is when a nation’s own citizens and leaders espouse the nationalistic rhetoric. Nationalism identifies the government-state with the people, along with a religious, ethnographical, or cultural principle.<sup>42</sup> In most cases since the eighteenth century, revolts and revolutions, including the American and French democratic revolutions, the Russian and Chinese communist revolutions, and both world wars, can be attributed to varying degrees to nationalism.<sup>43</sup>

The pre-WWI nations politically jockeyed for allies and firmly established partners and threats for the upcoming fight. Is this not the *modus operandi* in the SCS? All the SCS nations vie for support from stronger countries, namely the Quad. With the core consisting of the United States, India, Australia, and Japan, the Quad may act as a NATO-like body to face the looming Chinese threat. Currently adding countries like South Korea, New Zealand, and Vietnam, the Quad looks further to incorporate more ASEAN countries to bypass the pro-China stalemate within the full consensus structure. In pre-WWI continental Europe, France courted the United States, but the most valuable allies were powerful and



nearby neighbors: Great Britain and Russia. Likewise, though SCS nations will welcome US support, they will ally themselves with powerful neighbors like India, Australia, or South Korea when opportunities arise.

Both pre-WWI Germany and present-day China have tenuous ethnic and cultural reasons to claim their respective territories. After the Franco-Prussian War, Germany claimed rights to Alsace-Lorraine because the region's citizens spoke German.<sup>44</sup> Sections of Italy, Austria, and Switzerland also spoke German as their first language. Still, Germany did not claim them as "historical rights,"<sup>45</sup> even though, when claiming the Holy Roman Empire mantle, they could have. Politically, Germany used coincidence and convenience to take what they could when they could. China continues to use the Han Dynasty and ancestral rights to claim land and waters.

Similarly, Beijing believes China owns the SCS because over the course of 2,000 years many states around the SCS—including, Vietnam, Taiwan, and others—were part of the Chinese Empire at one point or another and because maps call it the South *China* Sea. Peter Kang, a professor at the National Dong Hwa University, Taiwan, wrote on how names imply sovereignty, especially regarding this Southeast Asian sea. Though some claim naming issues began in the 1980s, when the United Nations marked exclusive economic zones, implying territorial waters,<sup>46</sup> neighboring countries would mark the 2010s. During this time, China's new passport map claimed the SCS, its islands, and lands disputed with India.<sup>47</sup> Claiming a place just because it shares a portion of a country's name may seem childish, but titles, just like languages, denote power. Many former colonies renamed themselves to establish a new national identity apart from their colonial parent, such as the Gold Coast becoming Ghana.<sup>48</sup> Ferooze Ali notes, in a 2015 article in *The Malaysian Insider*, that China has not always used the South China Sea moniker for the sea and that employing the relatively new name is a strategic tool that "cloaks China with the appearance of legitimizing power that allows it to continue roaming the disputed waters and launch military operations."<sup>49</sup> Therefore, as the name of a place evokes power and control, China holds as much of the South *China* Sea as possible. As a result of this subtle form of propaganda, Vietnam and the Philippines refer to the contentious waters as the East Sea and the West Philippine Sea, respectively,<sup>50</sup> and Vietnam issues Chinese visas on separate pieces of paper, refusing to acknowledge the validity of Beijing's new passport.<sup>51</sup>

As the core of SCS geopolitics, territorial disputes govern many expressions of SCS nationalism.<sup>52</sup> To combat China's encroachment into the SCS, the surrounding countries appeal to the UN. As mutually supportive neighbors, in 2013–2014, when the Philippines took China to the international court, Vietnam reinforced

the Philippines' sovereignty claims.<sup>53</sup> As a consequence to Chinese encroachment, each ASEAN country plans to defend its rights to SCS waterways and resources. In recent years, the 10 ASEAN countries increased their defense budgets, some as much as 700 percent, mostly spending funds on "naval and air platforms: surface warships, submarines with advanced missile systems, and long-range fighter jets."<sup>54</sup> While maintaining good relationships with the United States, Vietnam paid Russia 3 billion USD for submarines and jet fighters,<sup>55</sup> using close and powerful neighbors to satisfy military needs. While building homeland defense, ASEAN countries, especially Vietnam, encourage a US presence in the area to dispel and prepare for Chinese disputes and interference.

Creating "us-against-them" factions, pre-WWI nations merged and allied, and SCS countries will use each other and their neighbors to protect their own land, waters, and interests. Presently, ASEAN countries hold divided opinions on China and the United States, and being a full-consensus body,<sup>56</sup> one dissenting vote halts progress. Nationalism will drive deeper wedges in this potentially powerful group. The ASEAN countries will not just divide, but they will seek influential neighbors to bolster their causes. Just as France and Germany pulled Russia and Great Britain into European politics, so too will the SCS countries solicit support from influential neighbors. Rotating chairs yearly, Vietnam recently handed over leadership of the community to Brunei with the advent of 2021, and ASEAN continues to build partnerships with countries outside of Southeast Asia, such as the United States, Japan, and South Korea.

As nationalism grows within the SCS, the nations will seek firmer alliances with powerful neighbors, who appear culturally, ethnically, and physically similar, diminishing alliances with the United States. Ethnic groups, such as the pan-Serb and pan-Slav movements,<sup>57</sup> heightened nationalism in Austria-Hungary and Russia.<sup>58</sup> Pre-WWI, many disparate lands joined together over common ancestry and a need to appear united before larger neighbors. Like the Germanic regions, Italian city-states and monarchies pulled together into a robust and central force to create modern Italy. Unification and nationalistic fervor turn smaller, weak nations into strong, influential ones. Swift and advantageous, Malaysia and Indonesia could join and create a monopoly on south and west freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific. Controlling the shortest waterway to India, could they deny China access? If other countries bordering the SCS allied to restrict Beijing's freedom of navigation, would China strike and seize key passageways to preserve its sea LOCs?

Just as European nationalism rose before WWI, the SCS countries' nationalistic pride spikes in preparation for conflict: "Although they might not have realized it, many Europeans were psychologically prepared for war. An exaggerated respect

for their own militaries and the widespread influence of social Darwinism encouraged a belief that war was a noble and necessary part of a nation's struggle for survival."<sup>59</sup> With military defense surged, allies courted, and borders challenged, the SCS nations prepare to fight for their own identities and pride.

### **Counterpoint**

If the United States applies all DIME resources available to deconflicting the SCS, could Washington reduce the geographical, historical, and nationalistic issues and deter the impending multinational, high-intensity conflict? Not all tension leads to war; some nations solve their quarrels diplomatically. In 1921, the League of Nations resolved a dispute between Finland, Sweden, Germany, and the Soviet Union regarding the Åland Islands. In the aftermath of Russia's Bolshevik Revolution, Finland desired retention of the islands, but culturally, the islanders were Swedish. The courts declared Finnish sovereignty, and yet the inhabitants could retain their Swedish heritage.<sup>60</sup> Being a waterway disagreement, experts may claim it as more applicable than a landlocked Alsace-Lorraine. Similarly, "during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962—probably the most dangerous moment of the Cold War—President John F. Kennedy and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev found channels through which they could broker a face-saving deal."<sup>61</sup> Like these examples, the United States could exert efforts and appeal to the UN to preserve peace. Unfortunately, China has excused itself from diplomatic arbitration meetings to avoid repercussions from poor international behavior regarding the SCS.<sup>62</sup> China will continue to misbehave on the international front, and its SCS neighbors will feel emboldened to push international and physical boundaries in a similar style.

Historically, the United States could push narrative changes, such as using Vietnam's term "The East Sea." The United States can encourage the reinvigoration of Southeast Asian cultures surrounding China. Reviving narratives may diminish the Han Dynasty narrative that China works so hard to promote. Through purchase or construction, the United States could attempt to place itself physically in the SCS waters, establishing a garrison and supply base (see earlier example of the United States constructing the Panama Canal). Instead of appearing in the SCS for freedom of navigation exercises, the United States would maintain a constant presence. Outraged, China and other threatened SCS countries would increase their own military operations. These nations would demand the immediate exit of the US interloper.

Even if the United States utilized all its DIME influence, there are no guarantees of successful tension de-escalation and navigation freedom. Involved SCS parties have a vote, and whether positive or negative, determination resides outside of US control. Because an outsider cannot affect another region's geographic,

historical, and nationalistic foundation, the United States should prepare for the most unfavorable outcome.

## Conclusion

The haunting comparison of turbulent, pre-WWI Alsace-Lorraine and the contentious, present-day SCS implies impending warfare. The SCS nations do not want such a fight. Instead, like the pre-WWI European nations, they position themselves to defend each other so that war seems impossible. Yet, as neighbors take over resources and LOCs, nations with the resources claim their local islands, ready to defend their piece of the proverbial pie.

During early WWI, the outsider United States applied DIME from an ocean away. Now in the twenty-first century, the United States, once again, finds itself in the same position. Washington rightly fears the SCS escalating into a large-scale conflict, but that does not mean the United States can prevent such a thing from happening. History parallels the similarities in multinational resource demands, territorial pressures, and rising nationalism. Presently, geographical, historical, and nationalistic roadblocks thwart all DIME efforts. Consequently, US intentions best appear like a nosy neighbor and, at worst, a military power trying to establish dominance. Making little progress in its Quad alliance, the United States should recognize its inability to prevent this imminent, multinational war and shift from prevention to preparation. ♣

### Michele Wolfe

Ms. Wolfe is a Department of Defense operations research systems analyst civilian, previously assigned to Headquarters, Department of the Army, G-8, in the Pentagon. She holds a master's degree in mathematics from Wichita State University and currently attends the College of Naval Warfare to earn a master's in national security and strategic studies.

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# Exposed

## Commanding in the Gray Zone During COVID-19

LT COL JARROD KNAPP, USAF

Cruising through the middle of contested seas and responsible for operating the world's largest force of mobile conventional military power while the world is erupting with a new, deadly, and relatively unknown virus. The virus' true impacts were still being uncovered when reports began streaming in that dozens, if not hundreds, of the ship's crew were infected. This was the situation facing CAPT Brett Crozier as he steered the USS *Roosevelt* carrier battle group throughout the Indo-Pacific in March 2020. Facing this situation, and after pleading with higher headquarters for more guidance, Captain Crozier made the fateful decision to pull into port and try to mitigate the virus' impacts to his crew. Doing so cost him his command,<sup>1</sup> created an uproar throughout the Department of Defense,<sup>2</sup> and led to the resignation of the acting Secretary of the Navy.<sup>3</sup> Beyond that, the incident brought to the forefront a new dynamic in a commander's risk assessment process: the acceptance of risk in gray-zone conflict. This incident showed that commanders leading in the gray-zone conflict can no longer rely on the binary choice of war or peace to base their risk assessments. Commanders must now include elements of gray-zone conflict and corresponding battles of influence in their decision-making processes and learn where and how to accept risk in this new environment.

### The Nature of Gray-zone Conflict

*Gray-zone conflict* is a term that has become ubiquitous throughout recent strategy documents and discussions. While there is no single agreed upon definition, a recent RAND study defines the *gray zone* as "an operational space between peace and war, involving coercive actions to change the status quo below a threshold that, in most cases, would prompt a conventional military response."<sup>4</sup> If the Clausewitzian nature of war is a battle of wills,<sup>5</sup> the nature of gray-zone conflict is a battle of wills below and just up to the point of state-on-state conventional warfare. It is battle absent the act of overt force to compel an enemy. In that regard, conflict in the gray zone may be more in line the Sun Tzu tenet of the true acumen of strategy being able to subdue an adversary without fighting.<sup>6</sup> The ability to get into the mind of the adversary and influence his or her decision making

is paramount. Therefore, the ability to influence should be at the forefront of a commander's decisions and actions in gray-zone conflict.

The peripheries of state influence are the contested points at which we witness the most visible of influence activities in the gray zone—none more so than in East Asia, where Beijing's rise as a regional hegemon is most noticeable and where the United States is attempting to constrain China's expansion. Here, every flight, naval operation, and even fishing and mineral survey have implications beyond those of just the physical manifestation of the plane in the air or vessel in the water. In attempting to gain the influence advantage, each action has meaning. For the United States, already at a geostrategic disadvantage in the region, the battle of influence is twofold. The United States is attempting to deter China and demonstrate resolve to potential allies in the region.

The events immediately surrounding Captain Crozier's decision to dock his carrier because of a COVID-19 outbreak highlight the battle of influence in the gray zone. In late March 2020, the USS *Roosevelt*, facing a COVID-19 outbreak on the ship, hastily pulled into port at Guam<sup>7</sup> and offloaded most of its crew. This left the Indo-Pacific devoid of an active US carrier presence. China quickly seized on the opportunity by sailing its own carrier battle group between the Japanese islands of Okinawa and Miyako and east around Taiwan. The media headlines that followed served to boost Chinese sway while marginalizing US influence; some examples include: "Chinese aircraft carrier sails past Taiwan as US Navy struggles with coronavirus,"<sup>8</sup> "Chinese Aircraft Carrier Sails into Pacific as State Media Mock U.S. Navy's Coronavirus Troubles,"<sup>9</sup> and "Chinese state media claims country's navy is not affected by coronavirus."<sup>10</sup> China took advantage of the situation to boost its own naval and military power in the region while simultaneously planting seeds of doubt in the minds of regional leaders about United States resolve and America's ability to project force to the region.

### **Assessing and Accepting Risk in the Gray Zone**

COVID-19 impacts across the globe have been catastrophic, and the US military is not immune. COVID-19 has hampered deployments, training, and readiness and is a constant threat to overall health of the force. In the short term, some commanders were more willing to accept risks in readiness and operations to maintain the health of the force. Many organizations stood down for short periods, adopted telework schedules, or, more often, simply kept people home and isolated from others. However, as weeks turned into months, commanders began accepting more risks to the force to avert longer-term readiness concerns. Additionally, some organizations were unable to pause due to mission requirements. In these cases, commanders accepted risks to the health of the force in order to accomplish the



mission. Some were fortunate in that they were not directly struck by COVID-19. Others, such as Captain Crozier, were not so lucky.

When Captain Crozier sent his plea to Washington, he gave some insight into his risk assessment process, stating, “in combat we are willing to take certain risks that are not acceptable in peacetime. However, we are not at war, and therefore cannot allow a single Sailor to perish as a result of this pandemic unnecessarily.”<sup>11</sup> This sentiment echoes other statements often expressed in combat operations. There is a general agreement among many leaders that greater risks are acceptable in war, but times of peace require more restraint. Unnecessary risks are simply unjustifiable without cause. As an Airman flying sorties over Afghanistan, this author saw firsthand that higher risk thresholds were often justified to support the troops on the ground. Greater risk was acceptable, and expected, to support those that were in imminent danger.

The gray zone presents a different challenge, because there is no binary choice of war or peace to anchor a commander’s decision. As former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Joseph Dunford, USMC, stated, “Our traditional approach where we are either at peace or at war is insufficient to deal with that dynamic.”<sup>12</sup> Indeed, Captain Crozier, in defending his decision, stated that he could still go to war if necessary. However, absent was any reference to the battle for influence in the gray-zone conflict. One can assume that if such considerations were part of his decision-making process, they did not outweigh the safety of his crew.

## **Conclusion**

COVID-19 has exposed a new dynamic in a commander’s risk-acceptance process while operating in the gray zone. For many commanders who have grown through the past two decades of war, the idea of continuing to risk people and equipment during times of peace may be difficult to accept. However, the simple binary choice of war or peace is now blurred with gray-zone operations and the corresponding battles for influence. Commanders must not only include this dynamic in their decision-making processes but also understand how their decisions and actions influence others in gray-zone conflict. As during a state of war, commanders must look beyond the single event or operation, understand how their decisions affect the overall campaign within the gray zone, and then measure and accept risks accordingly. 🌐

### **Lt Col Jarrod Knapp, USAF**

Colonel Knapp is a career intelligence officer currently serving as a squadron commander in the Indo-Pacific. The views expressed in this article are the author's and do not represent the official position of the US Air Force, the Department of Defense, or the US Government.

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# How the Biden Administration Should Counter China in Southeast Asia

CAPT DAVID GEANEY, USAF

## **Abstract**

For years, Southeast Asia has become more reliant on China, striking a Faustian bargain, wherein they accept Chinese investments in return for acquiescence to Chinese hegemony and a commitment not to criticize its central government. In 2021, the Biden administration must take bold diplomatic, messaging, military, and economic actions to curtail Chinese influence and coercion in the region. Many of these actions can begin immediately and will benefit both Southeast Asia and the United States for years to come. Failure to solidify the US role in Southeast Asia will result in China becoming inextricably entrenched in the region and embolden Beijing to take even more aggressive actions against American allies and interests.

## **Introduction**

Building the US relationship with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member-states must be an immediate priority in the Biden administration. With the recent signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), ASEAN has welcomed more Chinese investment, with all the baggage that entails. In so doing, they have sent a clear signal that if the United States does not act soon to solidify an economic partnership it will be too late. The United States must provide ASEAN member-states with an alternative, lest Chinese power and influence becomes inextricably entrenched in the region.

## **Catching China**

Before assessing methods for partnering with ASEAN, it is essential to understand the benefits all parties would gain from closer ties. For ASEAN member-states, partnering with the United States would reduce reliance on China and diversify available products and services available for import. For Washington, stronger partnerships in Southeast Asia mean more trade partners and greater ability to roll back and counterprogram China's influence campaigns in the region. Further, since the international system relies on consensus to uphold norms, it is imperative that the United States keep ASEAN member-

states from becoming little more than Chinese proxy votes on issues ranging from human rights to nuclear nonproliferation. The more entrenched China becomes in the region the more levers Beijing will have to manipulate ASEAN governments and populations alike—with negative ramifications for the United States in areas around the globe.

For examples of China's increasing influence in the region and globally, look no further than Beijing's recent success securing a major construction contract for a new Cambodian airport<sup>1</sup> in Phnom Penh, or its assurances that China will supply vaccines for all ASEAN member-states.<sup>2</sup> See the essential *carte blanche* given to Beijing during its crackdown on prodemocracy figures in Hong Kong<sup>3</sup> and internment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang. The latest *State of Southeast Asia Survey Report* (2020) shows that ASEAN populations increasingly see China as the most influential actor in the region but are concerned about Beijing's intentions.<sup>4</sup> China's strategic investments build rapport with ASEAN governments and populations alike but come with an expectation of acquiescence to China's ambitions of regional hegemony. China's recent economic assault on Australia has shown Southeast Asian countries the downside of the Faustian bargain China demands of them. The United States can provide ASEAN with an alternative to reduce reliance on China, but quick, decisive actions from the Biden administration will be needed to make up ground.

The Biden administration should take diplomatic, messaging, military, and economic initiatives, many of which can begin in 2021. Additional diplomats should be hired and deployed to ASEAN member-states, and more high-level media events should be focused on the region. The United States should increase foreign exchange opportunities for students and military, initiate an intelligence-sharing agreement with ASEAN, expand joint patrols in the South China Sea, and immediately begin the process of joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

### **Diplomatic and Messaging Initiatives**

The deployment of additional diplomats to ASEAN member-states will help the United States better understand the needs and perspectives of Southeast Asian populations. Emphasis should be on establishing a presence in underdeveloped areas within each country, where the needs of the population greatly differ from the cities and the impact of investment will be greatest. As noted in a 2013 UN report,<sup>5</sup> in many underdeveloped communities more people have access to mobile phones than toilets, a fact I witnessed firsthand in 2019 when I spent a few weeks in a Laotian remote village. It was during this visit that I noted China

seemed to be enmeshing itself into the rural Laotian social fabric by supporting Chinese entrepreneurs willing to live in the area.

If the Department of State deploys diplomatic and USAID teams to rural Southeast Asia, they can identify needs and orchestrate small infrastructure projects that will significantly improve the lives of millions, while building rapport with the local populations. China has also made inroads with lopsided trade deals<sup>6</sup> and well marketed infrastructure projects, including longstanding investments in power generation<sup>7</sup> dating back to at least 1996. A more sustained and visible presence in Southeast Asia would go a long way toward changing the growing perception that China is overtaking the United States as the dominant regional power.<sup>8</sup>

These Department of State initiatives should be accompanied by more opportunities for education and military foreign exchanges. Student and military exchange programs build connections between countries that enable successful future cooperation, and they have a long history of launching diplomatic careers. These programs create unofficial ambassadors for both nations and develop the bench of future business, diplomatic, and military leaders.<sup>9</sup> More funding should be given to Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs programs at State, like the International Visitor Leadership Program. Additionally, the International Military Education and Training Program, Peace Corps, and other exchange programs should be expanded. Further, institutions like the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies should be grown, enabling them to offer additional programs and host students from even more diverse backgrounds. These diplomatic efforts will be vital to building and sustaining relationships at the local and national level but must be accompanied by economic and military measures that demonstrate a long-term commitment to the region.

### **Economic Initiatives**

The Biden administration should also immediately enter negotiations to join the CPTPP, the successor to the deal originally negotiated by Pres. Barack Obama. This will undoubtedly receive a degree of substantive bipartisan backlash, but as has been noted elsewhere,<sup>10</sup> many in Congress have become more hawkish on the need to counter China's attempted implementation of a pseudo-Monroe Doctrine in Asia.<sup>11</sup> The Biden administration could demand substantive changes before entering but should prioritize reassuring allies shaken by our abrupt abandonment of long sought deals. To do so, the United States could join the deal as is, with the stipulation that Congress put it to a vote again in two years; this will enable substantive changes to be made gradually, while garnering initial support from Congress members that typically eschew multilateral agreements.

Becoming party to the CPTPP will take some time, but while negotiations are in progress, the Biden administration can develop other mechanisms to build a stronger economic relationship with ASEAN partners. The existing Quad framework (with Australia, Japan, and India) could be used to facilitate deals with ASEAN or its individual members, while working on a broader multilateral arrangement like the CPTPP. The Biden administration could also use the clout that Japan has built in Southeast Asia, especially in countries less disposed to favor the United States, like Laos and Myanmar,<sup>12</sup> to open the door to mutually beneficial bilateral agreements.

### **Military Initiatives**

The United States should initiate an intelligence-sharing agreement with Five Eyes and ASEAN member-states, creating an easy mechanism to help our partners detect and disrupt subversive Chinese Communist Party plans and actions within their countries. If the United States can easily share intelligence with our ASEAN partners, then we can demonstrate how seemingly benign actions and investments are actually serving to make them more dependent on China. These actions are relatively easy to initiate, would show commitment, and demonstrate the value of a US partnership.

The aforementioned recommendations bear little risk of escalation or retaliation from China, but there must also be a concerted effort to dramatically increase US military presence in the South China Sea. If China can control the South China Sea, and particularly access to the Strait of Malacca, Beijing can hold more than a third of world trade hostage, including more than 30 percent of rival India's trade and more than 19 percent of Japan's.<sup>13</sup> Even the possibility of China restricting trade in the South China Sea could serve as deterrent to countries that would otherwise challenge Beijing.

The creation of a new fleet based out of Singapore, as suggested by former Secretary of the Navy Kenneth Braithwaite,<sup>14</sup> would enable the US Navy to focus its efforts in the region and help boost the confidence of our ASEAN partners that the United States is there to stay. Establishing this new fleet within the South China Sea and near the Strait of Malacca would give the United States a more rapid response capability to Chinese provocations and enable a more proximate hub for freedom of navigation operations. A ubiquitous United States in Southeast Asia will also serve as a deterrent to an increasingly belligerent China<sup>15</sup> and its gray-zone operations<sup>16</sup> that have allowed Beijing to expand China's sphere of influence in the region relatively unopposed. Greater US military presence in Southeast Asia will not only inspire confidence from our partners in the region

but show China that its implementation of a Monroe-esque Doctrine in Asia will not go unchallenged.

Building the confidence of partners in Southeast Asia is essential to curtailing China's expanding influence in the region. ASEAN member-states need to feel confident in the US commitment to their security and economic prosperity, otherwise they may acquiesce to China's encroachment out of perceived necessity. Implementing strategic initiatives with long-term benefits will go a long way toward building regional confidence that the United States is there to stay. The Biden administration should immediately take diplomatic, messaging, military, and economic steps to counter China if it hopes to maintain and even build upon US influence and power projection capabilities in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. 🌟

### **Captain David Geaney**

Captain Geaney is an alumnus of the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies. He has served on multiple assignments and deployments to the Middle East and the Pacific region. His analyses have been published in *Foreign Policy* and *Defense News* and cited in Congressional reports. The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the US Air Force, the Department of Defense, or the US government.

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# Chinese Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Systems

LT COL THOMAS R. McCABE, USAFR, RETIRED

The best weapons in the world are useless unless aimed accurately, which requires a sophisticated intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) system to detect and track targets, preferably in as close to real time as possible. Even more important, at the strategic level, the People's Republic of China (PRC) views war between modern states as a conflict between systems of systems,<sup>1</sup> which means weapons and targeting require an accurate and comprehensive view of those enemy systems to target them. China has been building a wide variety of ISR systems to provide its forces with such capabilities, including systems that we must expect will be available for military use even if nominally civilian. (China has said its policy of military-civil fusion will include the outer space and maritime domains; so, we must assume that all the surveillance resources PRC civilian agencies have will be integrated into crisis/wartime military ISR.)<sup>2</sup> These systems include the following:

*Satellites.* China has developed and deployed constellations of dual-use and military satellite reconnaissance systems, especially the Yaogan ("China remote-sensing satellite") systems, with both electro-optical imagery reconnaissance satellites and synthetic aperture radar satellites.<sup>3</sup> Many of the Yaogan satellites are also reported to be electronic intelligence satellites,<sup>4</sup> intended to track and locate foreign warships by their optical and electronic signatures, and these systems and constellations have grown steadily more sophisticated over time.<sup>5</sup> Further, China has deployed the Gaofen 4 imagery satellite, which boasts a very high resolution but low rate of imagery—72 images every 24 hours<sup>6</sup> reportedly intended to track American aircraft carriers,<sup>7</sup> in geosynchronous orbit,<sup>8</sup> and may be reinforcing this with the recently launched Gaofen 13.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the Chinese Academy of Sciences has started to deploy a series of nominally civilian satellites (reportedly called the Hainan satellite constellation system) to maintain a real-time watch on the South China Sea (SCS), a system that is supposed to include six optical satellites, two hyperspectral satellites, and two radar satellites.<sup>10</sup> China has also announced the intention to launch large constellations of optical microsatellites.<sup>11</sup>

*Signals intelligence (SIGINT) sites, ships, and aircraft.* China evidently has an extensive and sophisticated SIGINT capability (one estimate from 2018 was that Beijing was spending a tenth of China's military budget on SIGINT<sup>12</sup>) and

is reportedly heavily dependent on these systems for tracking American ships. For example, in December 2013, the USS *Cowpens*, operating under emission control—EmCon—conditions, with all its electronic transmitters turned off, sailed within 12 miles of the Chinese aircraft carrier *Liaoning* before being spotted visually. The Chinese reacted with near hysteria.<sup>13</sup>

*Radars.* China has deployed over-the-horizon (OTH) radars, which operate on radio frequencies that either reflect off the ionosphere (sky wave) or follow the surface of the earth (surface wave) and are not limited to line-of-sight like higher-frequency radars.<sup>14</sup> Observers report that China had at least five OTH radars in 2010 (four surface-wave OTH sites along the coast and one OTH-Backscatter site inland)<sup>15</sup> and has presumably added more since then. China also claims to be developing a ship-based version of these radars.<sup>16</sup> An additional major part of the Chinese sensor system are the radars China is deploying as part of their integrated air defense system. In addition to longer-range air search radars, this includes the radars for surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems deployed along the coast. These SAM systems likely include long-range Russian-made SAMs (including SA-20s and S-400s/SA-21s,<sup>17</sup> with the 40N6 missile, developed as part of the Russian S-400 system and tested to a range of up to 250 miles<sup>18</sup>) and the Chinese-built HQ-9 system (Chinese-built version of the Russian SA-10) with missiles having a range of up to 125 miles.<sup>19</sup> While radars have a variety of limitations (especially line-of-sight and reduced range at lower altitudes due to the curvature of the earth), we must assume that the radars of these system reach at least as far as the maximum ranges of their missiles.

*Unmanned Air Systems.* China is making an extensive effort in ISR unmanned aerial systems (UAS). Military systems include at least two reported analogs to the American high-altitude, long-endurance (HALE) Global Hawk—the Divine Eagle, which entered production before 2018,<sup>20</sup> and the Xianglong/Soaring Dragon, which first deployed in 2018<sup>21</sup>—and several systems for the medium-altitude, long-endurance (MALE) UAS role. The most widely reported MALE systems are the Yilong/Wing-loong and the BZK-005, roughly similar to (or larger than) the American Predator,<sup>22</sup> and the CH-5, roughly equivalent to the American Reaper.<sup>23</sup> The People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) has also recently revealed the DR-8, a supposedly supersonic UAS reportedly intended to be used for searching for aircraft carriers.<sup>24</sup> In addition, the Chinese are deploying nominally civilian drone fleets, such as the one being deployed by the Ministry of Natural Resources for surveillance of oceanic areas, especially the SCS,<sup>25</sup> that we must expect to be at the disposal of the Chinese military if and when needed. Finally, China has tested a large, unmanned airship<sup>26</sup> and has been at least testing aerostats,<sup>27</sup> both of which can be used as sensor platforms.

*ISR aircraft.* While China has historically deployed a modest force of ISR aircraft,<sup>28</sup> it has recently started to mass produce the KJ-500 airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) aircraft for the People's Liberation Army Navy Air Force (PLANAF) and PLAFAF, with 14 deployed as of 2019.<sup>29</sup> In addition, China has about 24 earlier KJ-200 AEW&C aircraft.<sup>30</sup> China is also reported to be developing a new AEW&C aircraft, the KJ-3000.<sup>31</sup>

*Ships.* We should expect the PRC to use its maritime militia (84 full-time large vessels in 2019),<sup>32</sup> coast guard (225 vessels larger than 500 tons in early 2019),<sup>33</sup> fishing fleet (187,200 "marine fishing vessels" in 2018),<sup>34</sup> and sea traffic as potential surveillance assets to detect and track movements of hostile surface warships. In addition, we should expect the PLAN to deploy "tattletales," ships trailing American and allied warships and task groups.

*Antisubmarine warfare sensors.* China is working on a variety of sensors that can be used to track and detect hostile submarines and ships. These include military passive sound-detection arrays on adjacent sea bottoms,<sup>35</sup> nominally civilian acoustic listening systems on the deep-sea bottom near Guam and Yap Islands in the Philippine Sea,<sup>36</sup> and hundreds of anchored buoys throughout the western Pacific. Additionally, in 2017, Beijing announced plans for a massive dual-use military-civilian sensor system for adjacent seas (the "Underwater Great Wall"),<sup>37</sup> projected for completion in 2022.<sup>38</sup> Further, by October 2018, China had deployed nine surface-towed array sonar systems (SURTASS) ships.<sup>39</sup> In addition, China is reportedly working on other potential submarine detection methods, including lasers from satellites and wake detection.<sup>40</sup>

*External—especially Russian—assistance.* Russia considers China to be a strategic ally against the United States<sup>41</sup> and is helping China deploy a missile attack warning system, which evidently includes missile warning radars and satellites.<sup>42</sup> Russia could potentially also provide other intelligence support to China. Of particular significance would be data from Russian systems supposedly capable of tracking American aircraft carriers.<sup>43</sup>

Data is, of course, useless by itself; it must be processed into usable intelligence. After doing this China then faces the formidable and most likely enormous challenge of integrating the intelligence from the various platforms, systems, and undoubtedly different military and civilian organizational stovepipes into a coherent and comprehensive picture of the Chinese mainland, the lands and seas bordering it, and whatever other areas Beijing considers necessary. China will then need to extract military or security-relevant intelligence from undoubtedly enormous amounts of what must be considered background clutter. This is likely to be an early priority for application of artificial intelligence. This task will be made even more complicated by the fact that it is a dynamic and constantly

changing picture. Then this picture must be provided to the command, control, communications, computer, cyber, ISR (C5ISR) system for the Chinese command structure to use for making decisions. And all this in a dictatorship obsessed with information control and a dual military-political command system (commander and Communist Party political commissar)<sup>44</sup> in their units. Finally, China faces the daunting challenge of making this structure survivable in wartime. The United States has wrestled with these problems for decades, with mixed success. China clearly has its work cut out for it. ★

**Lt Col Thomas R. McCabe, USAFR, Retired**

Colonel McCabe (BA, West Chester State College; MA, Georgetown University; MS in Strategic Intelligence, Defense Intelligence College), is a retired lieutenant colonel from the US Air Force Reserve, a retired career military analyst for the US Department of Defense, and a lifelong student of China. His writings on China have appeared in *Air & Space Power Journal*, the *Air Force Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, the *Mitchell Papers*, the *Mitchell Institute Forum*, and Air University's *Wild Blue Yonder*. This article reuses some information previously published in those sources. Reused with permission. This article represents only his work and should not be regarded as reflecting the position of any agency of the United States government.

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# The Day After the Battle

KENNETH W. ALLEN  
DR. BRENDAN S. MULVANEY

Articles discussing the People's Republic of China's (PRC) likelihood of attacking Taiwan are appearing with increasing frequency and seeming rising urgency. While we acknowledge the "high impact" such an action would have on not just Western interests, but global stability, this is not the topic of our concern. We will defer to the strategists to discuss how such a conflict could arise, to the war gamers to develop ideas about how such a scenario would develop, and to military strategists on how to prepare for and, if necessary, fight the battle. What we are concerned with in this article is ensuring that all sides—US, PRC, Taiwan, as well as other nations around the world—take a long hard look at what the world may look like on the backside of such a conflict. Post-hostility planning is notoriously hard and often gets short shrift. Diplomats care about the "road to war" and how to avoid it; military planners care about how to fight the battle and rightly focus their efforts there. And thus, "The Day after the Battle" is put aside. In the case of a conflict over Taiwan, we feel such an oversight would be a mistake of monumental proportions.

The rise of the PRC over the past four decades is well documented. First, the economic expansion unleashed by Deng Xiaoping, followed by the start of the military reforms under Jiang Zemin, and finally capped with rapid double-digit growth in budgets has led us to a point where General Secretary Xi Jinping was able to reorganize the People's Liberation Army (PLA) into a force focused on joint war fighting through theater commands—one explicitly focused on Taiwan. This has created an armed wing of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) that is far different than it was in 1979 when the United States established diplomatic relations with the PRC and passed the Taiwan Relations Act, ensuring the United States could provide "defense articles and defense services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capabilities."

According to the Department of Defense's 2020 *China Military Power* report, the PLA now has "capabilities to provide options for the PRC to dissuade, deter, or, if ordered, defeat third-party intervention during a large-scale, theater campaign such as a Taiwan contingency." In addition, "The PRC has the largest navy in the world," "the largest standing ground force in the world," "one of the world's largest forces of advanced, long-range surface-to-air missiles," "the PLA Air Force (PLAAF) and PLA Navy (PLAN) Aviation together constitute the largest aviation

forces in the region,” and “the PLA Rocket Force (PLARF) fields a variety of conventional mobile ground-launched short-, medium-, and intermediate-range ballistic missiles and ground-launched ballistic missiles.” Taiwan is now no longer even close to parity with the PLA. Taiwan’s military struggles to sustain an adequate defense budget, to fill out its ranks with enlistees or professional servicemen, and acquire the platforms necessary for a robust self-defense. Given the realities of the cross-Strait military dynamic and the growing divide between Washington and Beijing, it may only be a matter of time before Chinese leaders deem military preparation sufficient for invading and occupying Taiwan.

This article focuses not on the how we arrive at armed conflict, nor how the battle is fought, but rather seeks to provoke thought and discussion about the aftermath, in any number of war-termination scenarios. For arguments sake, we posit there is armed conflict, likely involving the full myriad of forces from the United States, Taiwan, and the PRC, and may or may not include allies, partners, or other third nations. This is more than just military coercion; it is an aggressive action.

We examine three issues: diplomatic/political, economic, and military. Although the article provides speculation and not firm answers about certain issues, it provides policy makers in Washington and Taipei a foundation of key issues that they should examine and think through to prepare for a postconflict scenario with the PRC. Despite disagreements about the answers to each question, these are important questions that all three sides need to think about seriously.

### **PRC Invasion Fails**

The first, and perhaps most obvious, consideration is what becomes of the political entity on the island of Taiwan. If the PRC fails to invade and conquer the free and democratic people living on Taiwan, there is a high likelihood of a formal declaration of an independent Republic of China, or perhaps Republic of Taiwan. This has implications not just for diplomatic relations with the United States but also, more broadly, to the international community. Indeed, a postconflict polity in Taiwan would likely seek wide international recognition, including membership in the United Nations and other international bodies. While we are unlikely to see diplomatic trickery like that which allowed the PRC to assume the “China” seat at the UN in 1971, it is conceivable that a path toward eventual membership could be found, despite PRC objections. Does Washington recognize the government of Taiwan; does it attempt to recognize both the PRC and Taiwan; do Japan, Korea, Australia, and other like-minded democracies follow suit; or is there diplomatic pushback?



Many of those answers are probably impacted by the road to war; if the PRC is the clear aggressor, there is likely more diplomatic breathing room. If the CCP's propaganda machine can make it appear that Taiwan bears part of the burden for the conflict, it may become more difficult to build a group of nations willing to recognize an independent Taiwan, regardless of relations with the PRC. Again, there are practical considerations. Does the PRC close its embassies in countries that recognize Taiwan; does Beijing expel diplomats from the PRC from those nations that supported or recognize Taiwan; and what happens to travelers to or from the PRC and any nations that recognize an independent Taiwan?

The PRC cannot simply cut all ties and ignore the United States, much less any group of nations including the United States, upon recognition of Taiwan. Formal diplomatic ties are easy enough to break, for a short time at least, but reality will soon set in. The PRC and the United States are too intertwined bilaterally and multilaterally to cease interacting; some accommodation will have to be made. That is not to say all will be stable and calm. As one astute observer pointed out, during the government of Japan's 2012 Senkakus purchase, the PRC put the Embassy of Japan under heavy siege more than 60 days and "allowed" daily protests and violence outside of the embassy and consulates.

Regardless of whether Taiwan survives or is occupied, its economy will most likely be severely damaged, especially if key facilities, like the power grid, are destroyed by PLA missiles. However, the PRC's economy will also be impacted, especially if any key port facilities or power grids are destroyed. Additionally, Taiwan faces a very real possibility that the crisis would create an internal stability problem, or at least fear of it, that results in martial law as occurred from 1949 to 1987, internal counterinsurgency, and likely protests and negative press against the government's heavy-handed internal stability efforts. Taiwan will have a real problem of how to deal with the insider threat; they will find some sleeper cells; and they will fear others. How Taiwan plans for and manages these concerns will have an important impact on life "the day after."

Today, the PRC is Taiwan's largest trading partner, accounting for nearly 30 percent of the island's total trade, and trade between the two reached 150.5 billion USD in 2018 (up from 35 billion USD in 1999). In 2015, the number of direct flights between them hit just under 900 per week, up from 270 in 2009. Nevertheless, the economic relationship is not all roses and has taken a downturn since Taiwan's president, Tsai Ing-wen, took office in 2016. In 2018, Taiwan investment in the mainland declined for its fourth consecutive year, and mainland investment in Taiwan is declining. As a result of the conflict, Taiwan's stock market would take an immediate hit and might not recover. For example, when the PLA fired 10 short-range ballistic missiles into waters north and south of Taiwan during the

Third Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1995–1996, the stock market plummeted 1,000 points (27 percent) in three days and 15 billion USD in investment reportedly fled the island, and insurance rates for companies and shippers rose rapidly to prohibitive levels. It took a full year to recover. And what would happen if any declared or actual, full or partial, blockade or embargo remains after the initial cessation of hostilities?

Taiwan's energy needs would be equally affected, insofar as it is completely dependent on crude oil imports. Every day, Taiwan consumes 250,000 barrels of crude, while a supertanker docks in Kaohsiung harbor every three days. This is compounded by the fact that Taiwan is chronically low on oil reserves (now, during peacetime): the 120-day strategic reserve built up after the 1995–1996 crises had dipped to a mere 18 days by 1999 (as a result of environmentalists forcing the government to scrap an armada of oil tankers anchored offshore). The dependence on shipping for trade and energy imports also points out the extreme vulnerability of the port of Kaohsiung—through which the majority of both passes. Just a couple of well-targeted surface-to-surface missiles could render Kaohsiung inoperable.

Taiwan would also require massive assistance for recovery efforts. Given the history of typhoons and earthquakes that have hit Taiwan over the past several decades, the island is prepared to deal with the power outages immediately thereafter; however, outages caused by missiles during a conflict will be more difficult to deal with rapidly. We have seen how attacks on infrastructure affect a population's ability to recover and to function: for example, see the cases in Syria and Libya. Targeted destruction via weapons is far more difficult to repair and restore than that caused by wind and rain.

The human dimension looms large. In 2018, a total of 404,000 people from Taiwan were working in the PRC, including Hong Kong and Macao, accounting for 54.9 percent of all nationals working overseas. What will happen to them if the PRC fails in its invasion attempt? Will those Taiwan passport holders be arrested, allowed to stay and do business, or forced to return to Taiwan for good and lose their companies in the PRC? And if they try to leave the PRC, will they be able to; will there be flights across the Taiwan Strait; or even from Hong Kong? And what about the vast numbers of Taiwan citizens in other countries, namely the United States, Japan, and Australia. They would certainly be exercising their freedom to assemble and speak out against the PRC; this would likely have an impact on domestic politics as well as foreign relations.

Militarily, in the aftermath of the conflict does the United States send forces to assist the government in Taiwan; does the United States establish a long-term military presence? Prior to the switching of diplomatic recognition in 1979, the

United States had 30,000 troops, aircraft, vessels, and weapons systems stationed on Taiwan. Do these troops and assets return, and who will pay for them? This is perhaps one of the most daunting aspects with which policy makers and planners must contend. An open return of active American military presence on Taiwan would be a major change in policy and is likely to have wide-ranging implications, not just vis-à-vis the PRC but for other allies and partners in the region as well. Many fear that even broaching this topic would incite, or invite, the very action we are trying to avoid and, thus, avoid discussing this as an option. However, it is precisely because it is of such importance that we must think this through ahead of time and be ready to act, or not, based on calm, clear analysis and not driven by circumstances.

What will happen to the PRC's civilian and military leadership? Will they survive or be replaced? If the PLA does not succeed in winning the conflict and forcing Taiwan to capitulate, there will most likely be a major change in leadership within both the CCP and in the senior leadership of the military. This is not to imply that the CCP would necessarily fall from power; the party has proven most astute at bending facts and reality to serve its purposes. However, it is likely that those who "lost" this chance to capture Taiwan would be moved out in favor of a new group of leaders. Whether those new leaders are more hardline or more conciliatory is anyone's guess.

If the PLA "loses" this conflict, how much does it need to rebuild, upgrade, and increase the size of its forces opposite Taiwan, and how long would it take? It seems unlikely that the CCP would simply accept this defeat as a permanent status, barring widespread diplomatic recognition of a free and independent Taiwan (and perhaps not even then).

Phase IV planning is tough and is not the most enticing work for planners and strategists, but it is very important, as we should all be well aware after two decades of Americans fighting in the Middle East. It is because these very important questions remain unanswered that the US government should host a workshop with experts in each of the three areas—political, economic/trade, and military—to provide their analysis for all three countries in each scenario. The results of the workshop should be able to help the US government prepare for and then execute the necessary steps to deal with the situation after the conflict. ✪

#### **Kenneth W. Allen**

Mr. Allen was previously the research director for the China Aerospace Studies Institute, Air University, Montgomery, AL. For decades, his primary focus has been on China's military organizational structure, personnel, education, training, and foreign relations with particular emphasis on the People's Liberation Army Air Force. During 21 years in the USAF, he served as an enlisted Chinese and Russian linguist and intelligence officer with tours in Taiwan, Berlin, Japan, China, Washington, and Pacific Air Force Headquarters. From 1987–1989, he served as the assistant

air attaché in the US Embassy in Beijing. He was inducted into the Defense Intelligence Agency's Defense Attaché Hall of Fame in 1997. He has BA degrees from the University of California at Davis and the University of Maryland and an MA degree from Boston University. He has written multiple books, monographs, chapters, journal articles, and online articles on the PLA.

**Dr. Brendan S. Mulvaney**

Dr. Mulvaney is the director of the China Aerospace Studies Institute. He served as a Marine for a quarter of a century, flying more than 2,000 hours as an AH-1W Cobra pilot, and was an Olmsted Scholar in Shanghai, China. He served at Camp Pendleton, CA; in China as an Olmsted Scholar at Fudan University, where he earned his Ph. D. in international relations; in Iraq; in Washington DC, as the inaugural director of the commandant of the Marine Corps' Red Team; and most recently at the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD, where he was the associate chair for languages and cultures and taught Chinese language and culture.

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## Warning

### There Are Two Other Chinese Epidemics— Finance and Technology

WILSON VORNDICK

While the world remains transfixed and in a state of ongoing coronavirus response, it is easy to overlook China's drive to open its markets to global finance further as it produces more of the commonly used information communication technologies (ICT). The dynamic change and growing convergence in both sectors not only transform the digital landscape but also threaten economic stability and political freedom inside and outside of China. Over the past few decades, the synthesis and profusion of financial algorithms and electronic communications, lightning-fast data streams, abundance of cheap surveillance capabilities, and increased access to emerging technologies have propelled opportunities to enhance society, generate prosperity, and offer new digital goods and services. Indeed, China pioneers many of the technologies and techniques available for the digital marketplace, from electronic payment via Alipay to communications infrastructure with Huawei servers.<sup>1</sup>

More importantly, there are signs of systemic weakness and rising risk to the global community as China expands its market share and competes globally in both sectors. There is the specter of an immediate pandemic in global finance and an emergent pandemic in ICTs. These pandemics may even coincide. However, both directly point back to China, as did the coronavirus pandemic. The symptoms of these two diseases are not overtly apparent. Based on reporting from Chinese sources, China appears to be at best "healthy" and at worst "asymptomatic."

Conversely, an objective diagnosis reveals that the prognosis may be dire. As experience with COVID-19 highlights, it is critically important to rapidly identify a pathogen and then correctly prescribe treatment. Quarantine or other preventive measures may be necessary. If not, these contagions could spread rapidly from an epidemic level to a pandemic level across the globe.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, the global community cannot socially distance itself from China's growing influence across international finance or the proliferation of a Chinese-backed digital environment. Moreover, there are no vaccinations available to inoculate from either. Luckily, antibodies are coming together in the form of pushback on multiple fronts. However, it may not be enough.

## How Are Global Finance and ICTs Like the Coronavirus?

COVID-19 laid bare many assumptions and vulnerabilities for the United States and the global community. The world feels smaller now, watching the virus's rapid transmission, witnessing the spread of medical information (and disinformation), and delivering lifesaving supplies from abroad. Almost a year into the global pandemic, disease-related fatalities continue to climb past 1.6 million, and affected economies expend trillions of dollars in stimulus.<sup>3</sup> Critical questions remain unanswered. How secure or vulnerable are the supply chains from disruption and manipulations? Should ICTs that share personal information, like virus-tracking apps, be mandated during a public health crisis? How should governments invest resources in a crisis to improve outcomes? What is the role of global organizations to address common problems? Can governments adequately sustain the appropriate level of fiscal stimulus response?

As the global community and Americans sort through the answers to these and other questions as they combat the virus, it is critical to take a pause and recognize two other looming threats. Both are spreading, relatively undetected, out of China. And their transmission rates are enhanced because they are digitally interwoven. China is using foreign capital to continue an artificial, debt-fueled supply-side economic growth model, while government-linked Chinese firms are exporting vulnerable hardware and software with the expertise to leverage them to control and oppress populations. For example, it is possible to purchase Renminbi or trade shares of Sinopec, while on a Chinese-produced smart device with little effort. At every point along the way, the user's most personal and intimate information can be tracked by a digital "eye." A digital chain now exists that links a user and their data directly to China from anywhere in the world. With 4 billion people online, increased Internet access equates to an increased risk of exposure.<sup>4</sup> This level of financial and digital interconnectedness was unheard of until recently. Still, the revelation becomes more unsettling against the myriad of warning signs and indicators emanating from China in both finance and ICTs.

### China's Financial Epidemic

China rapidly became a focal point for investment as finance was globalized over the past few decades.<sup>5</sup> As China absorbed capital, Beijing pursued economic policies that synergized and mimicked the strength of capitalism and the free market-based economy in tandem with preserving the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) authoritarian governance structure. Often, this synergy is referred to as authoritarian capitalism or statist capitalism.<sup>6</sup> Regardless of nomenclature, China's economy is heavily influenced by and subservient to the desires of Chi-

nese leadership, which ultimately rests with the CCP. The recent and prominently publicized dispute between the party and billionaire Jack Ma over his highly anticipated Ant Financial initial public offering (IPO) illustrates this point all too well.<sup>7</sup> After evoking the ire of key officials, Ma delisted and withdrew the IPO. The action scuttled a valuation in the tens of billions of dollars and rattled international investors. Another billionaire, Ren Zhiqiang, who criticized General Party Secretary Xi Jinping's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, faces an 18-year prison term.<sup>8</sup> These are two of many concerning incidents in China's business community. However, there was a string of other unsettling financial trends detected in China before the COVID-19 pandemic.

China's domestic economy now exhibits a litany of symptoms associated with severe financial infection. First, China had accumulated over 40 trillion USD in debt—nearly 15 percent of the global total—by late 2019.<sup>9</sup> Second, China's debt as a percent of gross domestic product ballooned to a record 327 percent, whereas the United States is around one-third of that.<sup>10</sup> Third, bankruptcies tripled in the past few years leading into 2019.<sup>11</sup> To compensate, China adopted significant portions of the United States' bankruptcy laws and stood-up more than 90 bankruptcy courts, because no comprehensive bankruptcy system existed in China. Fourth, China's growth rate slowed to a 30-year low in 2019 and was projected to slow even more into 2020 before the pandemic.<sup>12</sup> Fifth, China now has the world's largest property asset bubble, valued at nearly 52 trillion USD, mainly in real estate.<sup>13</sup> Sixth, China publicly maintains financial solvency despite two significant and historic hits to its currency reserves. In 2008, China dipped into its coffers and spent 586 billion USD on domestic projects to stave off economic decline.<sup>14</sup> In 2015, China dipped into those reserves a second time to inject up to 1 trillion USD to buoy its crashing stock market.<sup>15</sup> China took these hits before the COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc on its economy and bottom line. Surprisingly, Chinese financial reserves appear to be unaffected by these incidents. Chinese bank officials claim their foreign currency reserves have hovered around 3.1 trillion USD, leaving many economists perplexed.<sup>16</sup> Regardless, it is unclear how much is left in the currency reserves for future exigencies. Finally, there is a spate of high-level defaults among Chinese state-owned enterprises that is spooking investors.<sup>17</sup> However, looking beyond China's borders, another debt contagion flares too.

China's global financial portfolio is chronically infirm. Hundreds of billions of dollars in loans linked to its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) show signs of distress.<sup>18</sup> One BRI project, the 4.5 billion USD Djibouti-Ethiopian Railway, is a case in point. The Chinese export and credit insurance company Sinosure lost close to 1 billion USD on this railway, which continues to operate at a loss.<sup>19</sup>

Examples like the railway continue to pile up elsewhere. Some states beholden to China have avoided default by restructuring their debts or conceding to land or commodities swaps, raising concerns of more “debt-trap diplomacy.”<sup>20</sup> For others, like Zambia, the financial crunch was unavoidable. Zambia captured headlines when it defaulted because it pitted Chinese creditors against Eurobond holders and others seeking recoupment.<sup>21</sup> Zambia is just the latest to fall, like a row of dominoes, with others behind it. Venezuela, which holds billions in Chinese debt, defaulted earlier this year.<sup>22</sup>

Separately, Chinese companies listed on overseas exchanges, like the Nasdaq, have come under increased scrutiny. When it was disclosed that Luckin Coffee reported 300 million USD in fraudulent sales, the Nasdaq subsequently delisted the company.<sup>23</sup> Under the recently passed Holding Foreign Companies Accountable Act, US officials now will require Chinese companies listed on American stock exchanges to use American auditors instead of Chinese auditors.<sup>24</sup> Finally, the pandemic has accelerated trends from increasing online commerce to experimentation with drone delivery and supercharging income inequality.<sup>25</sup> Dubious investments were already showing signs of fracturing before the coronavirus. They will be no different, even in China.

Consequently, the accumulation of these various, adverse transactions leaves a Chinese financial ledger less than desired. Unfortunately, the financial community seems to have misdiagnosed the fact that China is bust. China may indeed be insolvent, but it is too global to fail. An economic collapse in China will be worse than the American financial meltdown in September 2008 or the Chinese stock market crash in 2015. This is because Chinese-driven consumption and production are so widespread and adequate financial resources are not available for a larger, more systemic bailout this time around. Additionally, many nations are spread thin financially by their response to COVID-19.

In China, economic remedies ran lower than anticipated earlier this year, as its economy shrank significantly for the first time since the Mao Zedong era.<sup>26</sup> Equally, the United States’ already tapped a 2.2 trillion USD stimulus package in the spring.<sup>27</sup> The US deficit has breached 3.1 trillion USD for the year, and future stimulus packages remain uncertain.<sup>28</sup> The bottom line is that there is little financial medicine left to dispense. As a result, America’s national security establishment should take heed. The US defense budget, which remains at historically high levels, likely will be reduced after 2021.<sup>29</sup> China, on the other hand, probably will press ahead with its newly stated goals for military modernization by 2027 with few, if any, resourcing trade-offs or concessions.<sup>30</sup>

Beijing more than likely recognizes the precarious financial state China is in. It is even likely that China knew this for some time. That would explain various



patterns in Chinese financial behavior that seek to capture as much capital and foreign currencies as possible without losing control of any. It would justify the People's Bank of China's obfuscation of official state financial reporting and opaque financial system.<sup>31</sup> And it would rationalize currency manipulation.<sup>32</sup> China's roll-out of the Digital Yuan *e*-currency, which enhances centralized control over currency, lends itself to this pattern.<sup>33</sup> Draft laws that raise the Chinese retirement age, shaving trillions of dollars in benefits, suggest another option that Chinese policy makers are pursuing to shore up finances.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, Beijing accelerated the opening of major portions of China's financial markets to foreign investment for the first time, while severely restricting the ability of investors to exit those markets with their currencies.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, China strictly controls the flight of foreign currencies out of China through the heavy hand of the State Administration for Financial Exchange.<sup>36</sup> These patterns reveal severe weakness. Even though the globe seems to have missed the diagnosis in finance, there is still time to diagnose the one in ICTs.

### **An ICT Epidemic**

China delivers much of the global marketplaces' content, devices, cables or conduits, financing, programmers, hardware, software, and protocols. Furthermore, China backs this up in conjunction with state-based initiatives such as Made in China 2025 and the Digital Silk Road as part of the broader BRI.<sup>37</sup> In Africa alone, Huawei provided 70 percent of the 4G networks.<sup>38</sup> Yet, Huawei has come under criticism for assisting Uganda's president to spy on political opponents.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, the Shenzhen-based Transsion's TECHNO phone remains the top-selling phone on the continent. However, Chinese smart devices can curate a user's content.<sup>40</sup>

As more ICTs are digitally interconnected, China stands to enhance monitoring and surveillance not just in China, but elsewhere. This becomes more pronounced as there may be 25.1 billion connected devices.<sup>41</sup> They include DaHua-produced surveillance cameras found in Xinjiang detention centers or a neighbor's home surveillance system.<sup>42</sup> These devices also include DJI Drones that surveil quarantine breakers in Beijing or that are flown by your local drone enthusiast<sup>43</sup> and commercially available facial recognition technologies that come prepackaged in Smart City/Safe City applications for cities like Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.<sup>44</sup> These are sensors sold at scale.

China has been working on a comprehensive Internet security and surveillance program for domestic use for some time.<sup>45</sup> China's global drive in ICTs further enables this development. That is why the revelations of the broad collection and aggregation of millions of peoples' personal data, like the Shenzhen Database,

should be no surprise.<sup>46</sup> Simply put, if any of Edward Snowden's revelations regarding the clandestine surveillance system called PRISM are to be believed, then basically China is creating and packaging its version of PRISM for sale into the stream of global commerce.<sup>47</sup> The Senate Foreign Relations Committee found that technologies such as these enable China to "establish, expand, internationalize, and institutionalize a model for digital governance," enhancing Beijing's influence over participating regimes and their citizens across the digital domain, especially by leveraging ICTs.<sup>48</sup>

Moreover, China's conduct reveals that it has few qualms about harnessing any or all these technologies and techniques to advance its interests. In fact, China's technologically enforced authoritarianism has been coined "digital dictatorship," "digital authoritarianism," or the "new panopticon."<sup>49</sup> The panopticon is particularly disturbing. It harkens back to a prison model championed by the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham in 1795 that was revived in the twentieth century by French intellectual Michel Foucault to describe a government's extension of social control over its citizens.<sup>50</sup> Today, it is possible to replicate and export the digital dragnet in Xinjiang to the farthest corners of the world. While not as pressing and immediate as the financial epidemic, the ICT epidemic represents a steady dosage of digital control along with a gradual deterioration in personal privacy.

### **Will These Epidemics Reach Pandemic Level?**

China did not pioneer the free market, nor did it create the Internet. Still, Beijing has learned to leverage global finance and ICTs for China's interests. By opening its financial markets, pulling in global capital, and building out the digital information environment worldwide, China is exporting an excessive level of risk to the world. The overriding concern is that there is no holistic appreciation of the unintended consequences and the impact from the spread of these capabilities and capacities by China abroad. China has spawned an immediate and dangerous financial contagion that risks the health of the global economy. Simultaneously, Beijing promotes a digital control chain that not only links participating governments with their citizens and one another but also binds their data to China.

The global community and the US national security establishment need to recognize these epidemics for what they are. However, the diseases must be accurately diagnosed first. That way, it will be possible to anticipate and plan accordingly. There are signs of antibodies in the form of pushback from the United States and others in critical areas, like delisting Luckin or contesting Huawei's encroachment on 5G; yet, more is required.<sup>51</sup>

It remains to be seen how China will react to these two contagions. There are viable solutions to forestall or mitigate these epidemics, but the time for the

United States and others to act is closing. Perhaps the best treatment is openness and transparency. Beijing could come clean regarding China's finances or disclose more clearly how it processes the information harvested by its ICT infrastructure. However, this would be anathema to China's leadership. Ostensibly, it may be too late for them to change course. Looking back to the initial COVID-19 outbreak in China, openness and transparency were crucial to identifying the virus and alerting the global health community. Unfortunately, by the time China did so, COVID-19 had already exploded to a pandemic level. American and global officials may avoid infection this time, but proper diagnosis is required immediately. ☛

### Wilson VornDick

Mr. VornDick is a China Aerospace Studies Institute associate, a RANE network analyst, and Duco expert on China. These views are his own.

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## Crossroads

### Why and How the US Must Revise and Revolutionize Its Approach to North Korea

1ST LT SHAQUILLE H. JAMES, USAF

In the wake of North Korea's 10 October 2020 military parade, in which the Kim regime unveiled what is speculated to be the world's largest road-mobile intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), it is clear that the United States is at a crossroads with North Korea. Decades of economic isolation and international pressure have done little to dissuade Pyongyang from its current course, and most observations are that North Korea has either achieved a legitimate nuclear deterrent or is very close to doing so. Though there may still be time to stop North Korea's nuclear and missile development, continued pressure and further isolation alone have little to no prospect of success. In the face of a changing and resilient challenge, Washington must adopt a strategy and policy that are novel, flexible, and equally resilient. This new policy must be based upon informed analysis and assessment of North Korean intentions and what can and cannot be reasonably expected of the regime. This approach, titled *strategic engagement*, aims to continue deterrence and pressure but simultaneously adopt a policy of engagement and openness to negotiation on a wider range of fronts separate from nuclear weapons, including the economic, cultural, scholastic, diplomatic, military, humanitarian, and civilian. The primary goal of this policy is not to achieve denuclearization but to first reduce—or contain—the threat that a nuclear North Korea poses, and then lay the foundation and trust necessary for not just future negotiations on nuclear weapons but also the engagement of the hearts and minds of the North Korean people and the planting of the seeds for meaningful societal change in North Korea from the ground up. This policy, conducted in conjunction with a negotiated freeze on North Korea's nuclear and missile testing, alters North Korea policy from one of reactive deterrence to one of proactive deterrence: deterring the threat while actively working to reduce the threat in a way not entirely hinged upon the success of negotiations on nuclear weapons and offering Pyongyang viable alternatives to and incentives to deviate from its current path.

The US policy of maximum pressure against North Korea has failed. Despite considerable damage to the North Korean economy, Pyongyang's missile and nuclear programs have steadily progressed forward, and nonkinetic provocations by the North Koreans still occur on occasion. Maximum pressure is not unique in

this regard—indeed, it is just the latest in a long lineage of failed US policies on North Korea. If Washington is to achieve its goals on the peninsula vis-à-vis North Korea, there must be a change in this policy. However, before the United States can work to establish a strategy for effective negotiations with the North Koreans, Washington must first develop a proper understanding of the North Korean threat.

Today, the most critical variable in establishing US policy on North Korea can be formulated into a simple question: Are the North Koreans truly willing to denuclearize? The answer to this question could determine whether nuclear-focused negotiations are even worthwhile. In this case, and at this point in time, the likely answer to this question is “no.” The North Koreans are likely not good-faith negotiators when it comes to nuclear weapons. This determination stems not necessarily from a degree of nefariousness on the part of the North Koreans but from a practical understanding of Pyongyang’s goals. Though it is possible that nefariousness plays a part, the paramount goal for the North Korean regime is always, above all else, survival. Despite some rhetoric to the contrary, *all* actions taken by North Korea—including the fielding of nuclear weapons, vast human rights abuses, cyber vandalism, and the food insecurity of the North Korean populace—are done for the singular goal of ensuring regime safety and survival. Furthermore, there are no actions taken by the regime that will work against this singular goal.

To this end, from the North Korean perspective, a bona-fide nuclear deterrent is a far more reliable guarantor of safety than any agreement with the United States. For the North Korean leadership, America’s reneging on nuclear agreements with countries such as Iran and assisting in regime change in countries lacking nuclear weapons—such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya—in addition to the liability of US leadership to change every four to eight years all paint a picture of unreliability on the part of the United States. As such, if the Kim regime’s goal is to survive and avoid military conflict with the United States, nuclear weapons are, on paper, a more stable option. The desire to survive and deter conflict, however, also means that Pyongyang is unlikely to use nuclear weapons without major provocation. This, when considered alongside the fact that North Korea has not yet demonstrated the ability to build and deliver a reliable and survivable nuclear warhead on an ICBM, implies that North Korean nuclear weapons currently do not yet pose an immediate and credible national security risk and the United States has no reason to expect or fear a sudden North Korean nuclear strike tomorrow. In other words, Washington still possesses a very valuable commodity in nuclear-focused negotiations: time.



And yet, given the history of policies such as maximum pressure and strategic patience, and given North Korea's apparent proximity to a credible nuclear deterrent, the odds of these policies ultimately denying North Korea its ambitions—whether by diplomatic success or economic and political pain—are slim, and the Kim regime is likely one day to achieve its deterrent. It would be incorrect, however, to take this to mean that continued negotiations with North Korea are not worthwhile; it only means that purely nuclear-focused negotiations are likely a nonstarter for the time being, and at least for as long as the regime believes nuclear weapons to be its best guarantee for survival. There is certainly still space for negotiations with the North Koreans, if the correct understandings and expectations are set. The best use of the remaining time is for the United States to formulate a new, informed, and reasonable North Korea policy cognizant of past failures.

To make a diplomatic breakthrough with the North Koreans, Washington must negotiate and engage like never before and on a much wider variety of fronts. Now is a particularly compelling time for this approach, as despite the inability of sanctions and pressure to stop North Korea's nuclear program, there has nevertheless been extensive damage done to the North Korean economy. Natural disasters and the anti-COVID-19 measures enacted by the Kim regime have exacerbated this social and economic damage and include a complete closure of the border with China, through which the great majority of North Korean trade flows. At a time when North Korea is politically, socially, and economically fragile and relations with China are not particularly good, there is a massive opening for the United States to provide an alternative for Pyongyang. To capitalize on this opening, Washington must pivot from its laser-like focus on North Korea's weapons programs and expand the totality of issues that it is willing to discuss and negotiate with or without success in the weapons program negotiations. The US leadership can achieve this pivot by adopting a policy of strategic engagement.

While it may be exceedingly difficult to negotiate North Korea's nuclear weapons away outright, it is nevertheless quite possible to reduce the threat that such weapons pose in the meantime. The central goal of strategic engagement is to create an environment in which there is a significantly reduced likelihood that North Korean nuclear weapons will be used and, eventually, create an environment in which legitimate denuclearization talks are more feasible and total denuclearization is a real possibility. To achieve this, Washington must be willing to not just negotiate but also engage with the North Koreans on issues other than nuclear weapons. Engagement, in this case, refers not simply to the offering of confessions but also to the forging of cultural, scholastic, diplomatic, economic, humanitarian, and perhaps even military rapports with the North Koreans as a

matter of long-term trust building. To forge these ties, the United States must be willing to make groundbreaking overtures to the North Koreans.

Such overtures can start relatively small. Washington, for example, could offer humanitarian aid in exchange for North Korea allowing further divided family reunions, particularly for Korean-Americans who have family members in North Korea. Following this, the United States may offer to send high-level diplomats to North Korea for public events and meetings with high-ranking government officials, perhaps, in return for North Korean transparency on kidnapped American, South Korean, and Japanese citizens.

If such lower-level overtures succeed, Washington can progress from there. For example, the United States can agree to offer small and preliminary forms of economic investment in North Korea in exchange for transparency on and solutions for North Korea's human rights situation. Alternatively, the United States can commit to scaling back military exercises or flyovers in return for a long-term freeze on North Korean nuclear and missile testing. Ultimately, if negotiations continue to go well and ties improve, Washington can take further, bolder steps: such as the lifting of a small number of sanctions in return for greater information and transparency on North Korea's nuclear facilities, program, and stockpile, in which a viable road to denuclearization is also discussed or agreed upon. The United States can also continue to make more innovative, lower-level overtures such as, for example, allowing North Korean students to study in American universities or organizing a series of workshops in which US and North Korean military officers meet in informal settings and discuss military issues. This can be offered perhaps in exchange for a direct and official line of communication with the North Korean leadership, though such a line should fall well short of formal diplomatic ties. These are just examples of possible avenues and do not reflect an actual policy road map.

While Washington must be willing to offer concessions in such negotiations, unlike past negotiations, no concessions should be granted without a corresponding, tangible North Korean concession of comparable magnitude. That being said, however, the United States must understand that strategic engagement is effectively a pivot from merely offering deterrence vis-à-vis North Korea to offering practical alternatives to Pyongyang's current path. While progress on such issues may not directly affect North Korea's nuclear program, there are many positives to this approach. Forging such ties can, primarily, reduce the Kim regime's anxiety about its security and thus, ideally, gradually decrease its willingness to use and need for nuclear weapons. Additionally, such overtures may also impart to the North Koreans that there is a viable, alternative path to safety, security, and prosperity that lies with cooperation with the United States and its allies.

Despite the emphasis on engagement, Washington must maintain a hard line on certain issues. The top four goals for the North Koreans: removal of sanctions, maintenance of peace, establishment of prosperity, and progress toward normalization, are carrots that the United States must hold in reserve and only negotiate when real progress is possible and the North Koreans are willing to offer major concessions in return. Sanctions, for example, must not be lifted in any way unless Pyongyang offers something significant in return—such as the total dismantling of North Korean political prison camps and/or the disbanding of its secret police apparatus, in response to which the United States may offer to lift a certain percentage of sanctions. Peace and normalization, similarly, should only be seriously negotiated if the Pyongyang is willing to agree to full and verifiable denuclearization, and economic investment should only occur if, for example, the regime is willing to enact social and economic liberalization or make significant changes in its behavior on the international stage regarding illicit activities and international terrorism.

By using this strategy, Washington can achieve progress on multiple goals at once. It can continue to deter the North Korean threat while also actively working to reduce the threat by nonmilitary means. Additionally, the United States can build the trust and rapport necessary to offer Pyongyang a viable alternative to the regime's current path and, perhaps, create the environment necessary for true denuclearization and normalization to take place. Furthermore, the forging of trust and a rapport with the North Koreans will not be limited to just the regime but will also include the North Korean populace as well. This wider front of engagement can help create a greater appetite for systematic change in North Korea down the line.

Such diplomatic overtures to Pyongyang can also help with clarifying the true North Korean stance on critical issues such as nuclear weapons and human rights, and thus better guide future US policy. If the regime is truly not willing to denuclearize under any circumstances, then the threat will nevertheless be significantly reduced due to success on other fronts, and the United States can use this experiment to better inform future, more hardline policy. That being said, Washington must again understand that many North Korean positions are assumed based upon the premise of regime survival. Pyongyang enacts certain policies because the regime views them as necessary for its political survival. If the United States is to make major breakthroughs with the North Koreans, US policy makers must consider how, or if, Washington can make it so that such policies are *no longer* essential to North Korean survival. Whether or not this is practical or possible is not yet clear, but success in this area can certainly allow the regime to better align its path to survival with reform, liberalization, and denuclearization in

North Korea. The viability of this approach can only be determined by engagement and the forming of trust between the United States and North Korea.

## **Conclusion**

Historically, negotiations and engagement with the North Koreans have not yielded many results in the areas of reform and denuclearization. In fact, some testimony from high-ranking North Korean defectors indicates that, during the sunshine era of the early 2000s, the primary goal of the North Korean regime was to extract as many concessions as possible during negotiations and not necessarily come to any agreements. Indeed, the memory of that failed policy looms heavy over efforts at negotiating or engaging with the Pyongyang today and in the future. However, the North Korea of 2020 is vastly different from the North Korea of the turn of the century. With a new generation of leadership and a slew of different challenges facing the country, it is nevertheless quite possible that Kim Jong-un and his regime have the stomach for an alternative course for North Korea—stomach that their predecessors lacked. With the recent moratorium on North Korean missile and nuclear tests and the damage dealt to the country's economic and social fabric by sanctions and the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States has, at present, a major opening for steering relations and negotiations with North Korea in a more positive and, as yet, unexplored direction. Strategic engagement, though by no means guaranteed to succeed, has at present a more significant chance of success than the continuation of maximum pressure exclusively. At this critical crossroads, and with time yet remaining, Washington needs a new North Korea policy with hope for success. Strategic engagement may just be that policy. 🌟

### **1st Lt Shaquille H. James, USAF**

Lieutenant James is a 13N ICBM operator and graduate of Georgetown University. He has worked extensively with North Korean defectors as well as with multiple agencies, organizations, and university programs relating to North Korean affairs. Lieutenant James graduated with a major in linguistics, a minor in Korean, and a certificate in Asian studies and has studied in multiple Asian countries and territories, including South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. He is currently a member of the Language Enabled Airman Program (LEAP).

# Strategic Surprise from the Bike Trail

## The Republic of Korea and the Bicycle

MAJ RACHAEL NUSSBAUM, USAF

Strategic surprise is often a goal of nation-states that are considering engaging in an internationally unpopular course of action. A good strategic surprise, if capitalized upon, can change the course of history. Consider Russia's "little green men"—by inserting troops without insignia and denying all responsibility for the operation, Russia surprised Ukraine and seized the Crimean region. The world had no response to Russia's thinly deniable act, and as a result, the region has been plunged into an ongoing crisis, to Russia's benefit. Nation-states that are not considering initiating unpopular acts but are in areas of the world that have unsettled situations, such as territory claimed by many nations or armed cold conflict, may create plans and develop options that can cause strategic surprise. Such nations, rather than initiating a crisis, may prepare plans and options in hopes that diplomacy or time will resolve problems or improve their situation. South Korea is a nation in such an area of the world. While the United States, South Korea's most significant ally, often depends on strategic advantage based on technical innovation, such as stealth or precision weapons, as shown by Russia's employment of little green men, strategic surprise does not require advanced technology. South Korea is building a low-tech system around bicycling that sets the stage for effective strategic surprise in case of a North Korean incursion.

Japan used a concept based around bicycling to execute a low-tech strategic surprise early in World War II, while simultaneously attempting a rapid knockout punch at Pearl Harbor with what was then modern tech. The Japanese used the even then venerable bicycle to outmaneuver and surprise the British. In Singapore, the Japanese "accomplished the invasion of the entire 1,120-km-long Peninsula in less than 70 days and triumphed over the allied British, Australian, Indian, and Malayan defenders while moving forward through Malayan jungle."<sup>1</sup> The defenders used typical efforts to slow the invasion, blowing up bridges and roads to make them impassable for invaders, but the Japanese "were able to use narrow roads, hidden paths, and improvised log bridges. Even when bridges were missing, soldiers waded across the rivers carrying their bicycles on their shoulders."<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, imperial hubris, as "victory for the British forces was considered a foregone conclusion," combined with the loss of airpower after the Japanese "bombed the Royal Air Force bases to the north of Singapore on the Malay coast," resulted in what some British historians have termed "The worst defeat of all time for British-led forces."<sup>3</sup> In an offensive that ran from 8 December

1941 through 15 February 1942 General Tomoyuki Yamashita led his 23,000 troops to move 700 miles and claim victory,<sup>4</sup> with British Lieutenant-General Arthur Percival surrendering more than 130,000 allied forces.<sup>5</sup> Also of note, during the invasion of Singapore, the Japanese did not land their troops with bicycles; they planned and successfully used captured civilian equipment.<sup>6</sup> This major Allied defeat occurred as a direct result of the Japanese making unexpected and extensive use of stolen bicycles in terrain impassable to other vehicles. However, it is often said that amateurs talk tactics, while experts consider logistics.

The Japanese used bicycles for tactical operations and unpredictable maneuver, but during the Vietnam War, the North use bicycles for logistics. This enabled Hanoi to outlast the United States in the conflict. During congressional testimony,

Laughter erupted at the idea of vast numbers of sophisticated American aircraft hunting down bicycles in the thick jungles of Vietnam. In contrast to the smirks and snickering, the stone-faced silence of the uniformed members of the U.S. military in attendance was revealing. They, along with their bosses in the Pentagon and in Vietnam, knew that the enemy's employment of bicycles in the war in Southeast Asia was hugely significant to sustaining their war effort against the United States. It was no laughing matter. The bicycle had survived the most modern weapons in the American military arsenal.<sup>7</sup>

Before US involvement in Vietnam, French Army general Henri Navarre attempted a knockout blow on the Vietnamese logistics hub at Dien Bien Phu. In his favor were French air superiority and comparatively significant financial and military strength. In contrast, North Vietnamese general Võ Nguyên Giáp utilized bicycle porters and inconspicuous trails, greatly undermining the French technological advantage.

The French had unchallenged air superiority over the Vietnamese and could bomb any road or convoy at will. Giáp chose to bypass easily targeted roads in favor of inconspicuous trails. He moved hundreds of thousands of tons of materiel into the hills ringing the valley of Dien Bien Phu using Peugeot bicycles.<sup>8</sup>

This technique proved decisive against the French, and the Vietnamese did not abandon it. When the United States entered the war to contain communist expansion, the Vietnamese had a network of 64,000 pack bikes, which could handle nearly 1,000 lbs. apiece, pushed by as many as 200,000 porters.<sup>9</sup> The Vietnamese understood not only bicycles but also the effect a distributed, resilient logistics network could have on countering US effort to interdict supply. These historical examples of the skillful use of low-tech to achieve decisive strategic effect have echoes in modern South Korea.

The Republic of Korea (ROK) exists in an area of the world with multiple unsettled situations; its immediate neighbors include Russia, China, the Democratic

People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and Japan. There are ongoing territorial disputes among Russia, China, Japan, the ROK, the DPRK, and Taiwan. There are emotionally charged issues of colonial history and unresolved political issues arising from World War II. The ROK has historical experience and good reason to prepare for a rapid devolution of stability in its neighborhood. Japan brutally colonized Korea prior to World War II, China and Russia intervened in the Korean War to support the DPRK, and the DPRK itself tried to conquer the ROK. According to written international agreement and consensus, a state of war exists between the DPRK and the ROK; and only one of those nations possesses nuclear weapons: the DPRK.

The ROK Ministry of Environment is staffed by strategists who, perhaps unknowingly, are engaged in implementing the lessons of Vietnam and Singapore with respect to the bicycle. In the early 2010s, the ministry began investing in the construction of a network of bicycle routes across and along the peninsula. In addition to the physical infrastructure, the government established a competitive reward system, including easily obtained helmet stickers, more difficult medals, and a top-tier plaque that anybody can earn by riding the entire system. Currently, this network consists of approximately 1,500 kilometers of mountainous, well-maintained trails supported with covered benches, bathrooms, and campsites—all supporting civilian recreation and fitness activities. As a means for strategic surprise, this all may seem quaint in an age of electronic, space, and airborne warfare. However, I submit to the reader a few thoughts.

During the initial stages of a renewed conflict in Korea, the greatest problem will be controlling the flow of refugees south while enabling military assets to flow north. A robust system of bicycle paths and a citizenry self-trained in their use reduces the problem. Well-prepared and physically fit citizens can, and many will, immediately begin moving south on their bikes and will not be affected by any roadway nationalization, traffic jams, or limitation in the supply of fuel. Establishing the paths now, along with the award system, which visibly rewards use and achievement, encourages ROK citizens to learn how to use the trails and habituates them to the physical effort involved in riding long distances. The author recently took a trip from Kunsan Air Base to the port of Busan, crossing roughly 700 km of this network, earning four helmet stickers, and making a little over half the progress needed to earn a medal, and somewhat less progress toward the final trophy. En route, she saw hundreds of Korean citizens on the trail each day, even workday afternoons. Elderly citizens were out getting exercise, completing multi-hour rides of 20 or more kms for fun, often doing so faster than the author. Men and women were riding bikes loaded with gear for fishing, picnicking, or other activities. Youth were out on smaller bikes, earning scabbed knees

and developing skills in basic first aid, route navigation, rapid repair, and bike maintenance. After receiving four stickers, the author immediately began to calculate how to complete the remainder of the trail network prior to permanent change of station. “A soldier will fight long and hard for a bit of colored ribbon” ~Napoleon Bonaparte. The motivation technique is effective, and riding the trail develops physical fitness and practical skills—all without a training course or onerous mandate. Thus, for Korea’s citizens, evacuation away from areas of conflict may be unexpectedly swift and orderly. Compare that to images and stories of evacuation from hurricanes in the United States, which come with days to weeks of fairly unambiguous warning.<sup>10</sup>

There is more advantage generated by this network beyond easing civilian evacuation. In a renewed Korean conflict, bicycle infantry soldiers are more agile than any tank or other military vehicle in the mountainous terrain that comprises much of Korea. The Swiss military retained bicycle infantry until 2003, and figure 1 illustrates the volume and weight of equipment troops would train to haul through and use in the environment of the Swiss Alps.<sup>11</sup>



Source: Campfire Cycling

**Figure 1. Agility and lethality.** A Swiss soldier poses with his MOdell-93 bicycle, circa 1999. One could expect ROK forces would carry a similar load in the mountain trails of the ROK.



The US military considered bicycle infantry and maintains a limited capability in the special operations community. According to Dr. Kevin D. Stringer, then an Army infantry officer, “Bicycle infantry is an ideal operational tool for a defensive strategy that is focused on a small geographical area...more responsive than mechanized and foot infantry for short distance . . . traverse areas where tracked or motorized vehicles have difficulties . . . range and endurance advantage over foot infantry . . . rather quiet . . . low logistical support requirement.”<sup>12</sup> These listed advantages are heightened in Korea; the Demilitarized Zone is only 250-km long, rideable in a single day for a fast bicyclist on a good bike, and the ride from Seoul to Busan is only 325 km. Most of Korea is mountainous and impassable for vehicles except along roads, which necessitates the extensive use of tunnels and bridges that are easily interdicted. As noted in both Singapore and Vietnam, interdiction does not significantly affect the use of a bicycle, which can be carried across a crater or floated across a river and only needs a narrow uneven trail to swiftly haul war fighters or thousands of pounds of equipment. Stringer continues, “Three possible uses for a modified bicycle infantry unit . . . would be rear area combat operations, occupation or pacification duties, and peacekeeping or peace-making operations.”<sup>13</sup> The alliance of ROK and US forces in the Korean theater is heavily concerned with rear-area combat operations, as the alliance is defensive in nature.

The bicycle trail network has become ingrained in ROK recreational culture. As a result, today’s ROK leadership have granted their successors a physically fit and prepared citizenry, a military filled with personnel habituated from childhood to long, even multi-day bike rides, using and camping in the prebuilt sites established along the trails. In case of a war, this force will be able to move in and through mountains inconspicuously and swiftly, with a small support requirement. The camping sites that already exist at intervals along the trail will easily transform into resupply nodes or defensible strong points. The force will consist of personnel fully capable of maintaining its own means of transport with a few pounds of tools and supplies, eliminating the need for specialized maintenance units and facilities. In defending the rear, this creates conditions for decisive strategic surprise.

There is the possibility of the DPRK taking advantage of this trail network to bypass defenses on the main road network. Given what we know about the DPRK, it is unlikely that North Korea is inclined to build an equivalent network of recreational trails for its citizens; however, its road network lends itself more to biking than vehicle traffic. This means the two nations may well be fairly even in the widespread use of bicycles. In addition, as seen with the Japanese, an invading force can easily procure high-quality bicycles from what the local citizens already

possess. That said, the ROK is not the same as World War II-era Singapore. If established, ROK bike infantry forces would be deeply acquainted with their assigned region, could remove or alter path signs and markers without becoming lost, could easily direct any invading force or invading logistics convoys into prepared ambushes, and could transport supplies across a network that can absorb and circumnavigate any attempt at disruption. Furthermore, ROK defensive corps will be able to engage invading forces with little worry regarding civilian safety, as civilians will be capable of riding to a safe distance in a matter of hours, and well into the rear in a matter of days.

This is how a network of recreational bike trails becomes a tool to generate strategic surprise. The ROK, by the simple act of building recreational trails and tangibly rewarding citizens who use them, have begun to ready generations of robust, skilled defenders, a uniquely surprising strategy of defense and a transport system nigh invulnerable to interdiction. ♣

#### **Maj Rachael Nussbaum, USAF**

Major Nussbaum (BS, USAFA; MA, American Military University, MA University of Leicester) is the Plans and Operations Officer, US Forces Korea (USFK) Engineers, USAG Humphreys, Republic of Korea. She provides the Engineer input to USFK contingency plans, directs the development of the Joint Engineer Common Operating Picture on GeoBase, and supports the creation of robust training events for the headquarters and components. She commanded the 821st Support Squadron at Thule Air Base, Greenland, where her squadron provided civil engineering, communications, airfield operations, deep-water seaport operations, logistics, the base hospital, and force support to the northernmost US installation. She led her team of 51 Airmen to win seven Air Force Space Command functional awards. Prior to command, she was the program element monitor for 22 programs, totaling 5 percent of the USAF Total Obligation Authority. As a captain, she was the flight commander for the Explosive Ordnance Disposal flight at Seymour Johnson AFB, South Carolina, and Lakenheath Air Base, United Kingdom, and deployed flights in Kuwait and Qatar, served as the programming chief at Lajes AB, Portugal, and served a tour as director, US National Support Element, Pápa AB, Hungary. As a lieutenant, she stood up the Asset Management Flight at Kunsan AB, South Korea, and was the maintenance engineer at Yokota AB, Japan. Major Nussbaum grew up reading the science fiction of Bujold, Asimov, Heinlein, and Clarke, among many others, and firmly believes that we are living in their novel worlds and that we have a responsibility to create an even better future for our successors.

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# Legitimizing and Operationalizing US Lawfare

## The Successful Pursuit of Decisive Legal Combat in the South China Sea

CADET JESSICA WILLIAMS

The term *lawfare*, first coined by Maj Gen Charles Dunlap, USAF, retired, in 2001, now enjoys widespread, if varied, usage. General Dunlap most recently defined *lawfare* as “the strategy of using—or misusing—law as a substitute for traditional military means to achieve a warfighting objective.”<sup>1</sup> Although its study as a concept is relatively new in the United States, being popularized only within the past decade, states have employed lawfare for centuries. The most prominent, current example is China’s strategy of lawfare in the South China Sea, with many current scholars arguing that China has been more successful in employing lawfare strategies as compared to the United States or other Western nations. This article argues that the United States must recognize, define, and legitimize its own use of lawfare through a comprehensive strategy to generate success in the South China Sea. In turn, this article provides a recommended definition of *lawfare*, contrasts the United States’ and China’s use of lawfare in the South China Sea, and discusses potential options for the United States’ strategic legitimization and operationalization of lawfare.

### Overview of Lawfare

As asymmetric warfare and gray-zone conflicts become more prevalent, lawfare’s relevance is increasingly heightened. Before General Dunlap, writing as a US Air Force Judge Advocate, developed his aforementioned definition, he viewed “law as a weapon of war” and lawfare as “a method of warfare where law is used as a means of realizing a military objective.”<sup>2</sup> Orde Kittrie, in his book *Lawfare: Law as a Weapon of War*, defined two major types of lawfare: instrumental lawfare and compliance-leverage disparity lawfare. *Instrumental lawfare* is the use of legal tools as a substitute for conventional military action, in, for example, creating or reinterpreting international law to disadvantage an adversary. The United States exercised instrumental warfare when disabling the Iraqi Air Force and when utilizing financial lawfare against Iran.<sup>3</sup> In this instance, the president used executive orders and Congress passed statutes that identified and imposed sanctions on

financial institutions that supported the proliferation of nuclear weapons, which coerced Iran to negotiate about its nuclear weapons program at the time.

Separate from instrumental lawfare, nations use *compliance-leverage disparity lawfare* to gain advantages “from the greater influence that law and its processes exert over an adversary.”<sup>4</sup> An example would be terrorists operating among civilians to inhibit the operations of the Law of War—adhering nations, such as United States.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, China utilizes compliance-leverage disparity lawfare through signing nonproliferation treaties publicly, yet not fully committing by, for instance, using private-sector proxies to augment Iran’s nuclear program. These examples demonstrate that the United States and China employ lawfare in varying manners. However, there are disparities in both countries’ emphases on “the rule of law” and in their views on the necessity of a lawfare strategy.

### **The United States versus China Today**

Whereas the United States fails to officially define a lawfare policy, it is one of the tenets of China’s “Three Warfares.” This doctrine includes psychological, media, and legal warfare, which are closely integrated with China’s kinetic capabilities at the strategic and tactical levels.<sup>6</sup> Although Beijing’s definition is very similar to that of the United States, China’s understanding of lawfare differs for a few reasons. First, as expressed by Sun Tzu and exemplified in China’s Three Warfares, Beijing has a long-standing belief that defeating the enemy without fighting is the “pinnacle of excellence.” This belief amplifies its focus on lawfare.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, as detailed by Kittrie, China’s tumultuous legal history, with its constant removal and reconstruction of law, lends itself to a natural favoring of instrumental lawfare. The People’s Liberation Army’s handbook on international law states that officers “should not feel completely bound” by international laws that are harmful to China’s national interests and should look to beneficial international laws while “evading those detrimental to [their] interests.”<sup>8</sup> China’s legal mind-set is aggressive, utilizing “legal activities that are designed specifically to hamstring the opponent.”<sup>9</sup> Specifically, Beijing recognizes an objective then selects and examines laws that China can undermine to achieve that objective. It also takes advantage of the United States’ comparatively strict conformance to international law through compliance-leverage disparity lawfare. This is evident not only with nonproliferation treaties but also in maritime and space law.<sup>10</sup> Beijing also wages instrumental warfare in these arenas, particularly maritime, by attempting to alter customary international law (CIL; e.g., United Nations Convention for the Law of the Sea [UNCLOS]) through rapid publication of China’s ideas, advocacy in international forums, and establishment of domestic laws in its favor combined with military pressure.

In contrast, the United States occupies a more defensive, rule-based approach toward lawfare that is constrained by its lack of a systematic, strategic doctrine. Nevertheless, the United States has creatively used lawfare within the past decade. Kittrick describes the United States' coordination with nongovernmental organizations (NGO) that scrutinize public satellite imagery to publicize other nations' war crimes. Moreover, Washington has achieved enormous successes in suing banks and other organizations that fund terrorism.<sup>11</sup> However, Kittrick also explains that, unlike China, which supports the private sector actively acting as proxies and using lawfare in favor of state interests, the United States' executive branch maintains control over foreign policy and prefers limited lawfare action with the private sector given such behavior might be disruptive to international relations.

The concern over a lack of defined strategy in addition to the United States' rule-restraining culture presses for consideration of both international support and legal constraints.<sup>12</sup> Unlike the Chinese mind-set, which uses law as a weapon, government leaders in the United States are more diligent about employing policy objectives that are in compliance with the law.<sup>13</sup> Ultimately, these concerns combine to create a primarily negative—although adapting—and bounded US perspective about lawfare. Consequently, the United States views lawfare as separate from military operations and has not legitimized it as a defense strategy.

However, the South China Sea presents the United States with opportunities to use legal warfare. China has already begun doing this through building and militarizing islands as well as through attempting to alter CIL by popularizing its interpretation of the United Nations Convention for the UNCLOS.<sup>14</sup> Beijing originally contended that UNCLOS forbids foreign naval operations in China's exclusive economic zone (EEZ). China also asserted that it has territorial claims over waters within its nine-dash line. In fact, in 2009, Beijing disseminated maps of its nine-dash line that depicted it cutting into other nations' EEZs. In this self-contradicting argument, China now holds that Chinese archipelagos and features have EEZs that validate the nine-dash line.<sup>15</sup> Other nations, including the United States, argue for freedom of navigation established by CIL, and, in response, used limited lawfare. For example, the United States supported, and perhaps enabled, the Philippines to take China to arbitration over UNCLOS, where the Philippines prevailed (although China has arguably ignored the rulings).<sup>16</sup> Here, China simply failed to follow the law rather than enact lawfare through choosing to take advantage of the absence of law itself or of the international community's unwillingness to enforce law. Moreover, strengthening their position of the law, the United States holds forums and publicizes works that advance Washington's position on UNCLOS. Examples here include the *Commander's Handbook on Operational Law*, the Pacific Command annual international military law and operations conference, the

Department of State's Limits in the Seas series, and the "kinetic demonstrations of its legal positions" through freedom of navigation operations (FONOP).<sup>17</sup> However, despite these efforts, Beijing has done a remarkable job of advancing China's viewpoints and, in turn, establishing and expanding its dominance in the South China Sea.

### **The United States' Lawful Pursuit of Legal Combat**

The United States can generate lawfare successes in the South China Sea if it legitimizes and systematizes its own use through a comprehensive strategy. A strategy could also establish lawfare precedent for other nations to follow while upholding the rule of law and international order. As a world superpower, if the United States publicizes and legitimizes its approach, it could be highly influential on other nations, especially allies, as was demonstrated with the United States and Israel modeling each other's tactics against terrorism.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, a comprehensive strategy could constrain use of lawfare when required, such as ensuring the private sector is not interfering with foreign policy. Additionally, such a strategy could form an effective and organized force structure to align military and legal instruments of power, increase government innovation, and allow for more effective communication within the government and between the government and private sectors. Through completing all these actions, the United States can enable more effective use of lawfare, specifically in the South China Sea.

In the development of a lawfare strategy, it is extremely important that the United States consider allied opinions,<sup>19</sup> as the strategy should be in accordance with international law and norms.<sup>20</sup> However, a defined lawfare strategy should also explain that offensive, instrumental lawfare is a necessary component of US strategy that is required to uphold America's valid interests. As put forth by Dean Cheng and Orde Kittrie, some possibilities include aggressively publicizing violations, intensely studying other nations' cultures and legal history to identify advantages (legal "red teaming" as explained by Aurel Sari at the 2020 LENS Conference), and popularizing the US legal mind-set through published research and media.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, Washington should detail further means and methods toward private integration into the government sector given such measures offer outside perspectives and ways to coordinate with NGOs. The strategy should also provide ways to expand legal defensive and resilience capabilities,<sup>22</sup> including aligning laws to avoid exploitable loopholes and inconsistencies. To that end, it would be beneficial to study past examples of lawfare utilized by different countries to identify patterns and to be very intentional about new legal advancements and precedent.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, the doctrine should provide a means to integrate lawfare

personnel and strategies into current force structure and military objectives, as the Chinese have done, to optimize its effectiveness.

A lawfare strategy containing these components could yield meaningful results in the South China Sea. China's use of lawfare in the South China Sea demonstrates its systematic approach to lawfare, which has aided in the military pressure placed on nearby nations, forcing their consideration of lawfare tactics.<sup>24</sup> Although the United States has used lawfare here in a limited, semi-successful manner, if Washington approximated Beijing's methodical approach—rapidly publishing works and seriously analyzing sources of exploitation in Chinese law—in combination with US military strength and influence at international forum, it would be much a more effective strategic tool against China. This, in turn, could persuade the international community to reject Chinese interpretations of law and perhaps join the United States in tactics such as FONOPs. As demonstrated by previous use of lawfare by the United States in Iran, as detailed by Kittrie, its proactive outreach can be quite influential.<sup>25</sup> Although China wields more power internationally than Iran, Washington could still utilize these strategies, US military force, and an increased understanding of Chinese culture, which takes advantage of Beijing's need to “save face.” However, as Cheng warns, the United States should be wary of China leveraging Japan's current “peaceful” laws or using cyberwarfare to delay US strategic efforts.<sup>26</sup> The United States should also be prepared for Beijing to use financial lawfare due to China's considerable economic power or even leverage Law of Armed Conflict distinguishability tactics (compliance-leverage disparity lawfare) in the event of escalation.<sup>27</sup> However, through an increased focus on lawfare, enabled by a legitimate doctrine, Washington would have the opportunity not only to protect the United States and allies through increased resilience and prevention of degradation of the rule of law but also cripple China's systematic approach in the South China Sea.

## **Conclusion**

The United States should devise a comprehensive, systematic lawfare strategy promptly and decisively while also considering its allies and their roles in upholding the rule of law. This implementation could have beneficial, dramatic effects on the current status of the situation in the South China Sea, as well as on relations with China, Russia, rogue states, and nonstate actors. Ultimately, lawfare should become more relevant and resolutely employed for defensive and offensive purposes in US policy. ❁



**Cadet Jessica Williams**

Cadet Williams is a junior cadet and recently served as the superintendent of her squadron at the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado. She began to contemplate the concept for this article after participating in Duke Law School's 2020 Law, Ethics, and National Security (LENS) Conference as a LENS Scholar. Williams will be receiving her bachelor's degree in legal studies and in English with a minor in Portuguese upon graduation in May 2022.

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