



Chinese armored vehicles pass in review September 2018 at the end of the Vostok 2018 military exercise at the Tsugol training ground in Eastern Siberia, Russia. The exercise involved Russian, Chinese, and Mongolian forces. Chinese participation included three thousand troops, nine hundred tanks and military vehicles, and thirty aircraft. (Photo courtesy of the Office of the President of Russia)

Contemporary China

In Conflict, Not Competition



Timothy L. Faulkner

Any assessment that the United States and China are in competition and not conflict is flawed and reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of core Chinese operational and strategic end states. Within the U.S. Department of Defense, this misunderstanding stems in part from two misguided

approaches to China. First, our current joint doctrine lacks joint operating concepts that integrate all services and domains, and it does not posture the United States to be in a positional advantage for conflict. Second, and more importantly, we misunderstand the Chinese approach to warfare. As stated in Qiao Liang and Wang

Xiangsui's *Unrestricted Warfare*, the new principles of war are no longer “using armed force to compel the enemy to submit to one’s will, but instead using all means, including armed forces or non-armed forces ... lethal and non-lethal means to compel the enemy to accept one’s interest.”¹ We would do well to understand this mindset.

Most Department of Defense officials tend to classify the current stance with China as a competition. However, instead of a competition, which implies a steady state, I would argue that we are in a mature state of *conflict*. Although this controversial stance may cause a stir inside various departments of the U.S. government, it is plausible when we apply China’s thought process to the current U.S. situation and accept that China’s view of the world causes us to miscalculate Chinese intent.

To rectify the “competition versus conflict” misunderstanding, one needs to consider China’s extensive expansion of its military capabilities through the lens of the nation’s historical references and contemporary political objectives. China’s published political objectives clearly define its strategic goals of becoming the premier world power. These goals are in line with the upcoming one hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the communist state in 2021 and 2049, respectively.

Military objectives include plans for advanced weapons that will enable China to have the positional advantage in the first island chain, an area that extends from Japan along the South China Sea, by 2021 (see figure 1). Moreover, by 2035, China plans to have a fully modernized military possessing a positional advantage in the Pacific; and, by 2049, the regime intends to be a rich and powerful country that will challenge, and potentially impose its will on, all democracies in the Indo-Pacific.²

Additionally, the Chinese political system has created a purpose-built military to defeat the United States. The ruling regime in China, led by President Xi Jinping, desires to supplant the United States in the Pacific and change the existing world order. Coupled with China’s economic growth, the regime’s modern and capable military will ensure the U.S.-China conflict will endure for the next two decades. China’s focus is on displacement, not replacement, in this current conflict. Displacement

is one component of removing the United States from its post-World War II guardianship of the Indo-Pacific and the global commons.

China’s ambitions are not confined to the Indo-Pacific. The nation also seeks to displace the United States globally in order to exert total social, cultural, ideological, and economic influence as a global power. China’s strategic end state is to be both a regional hegemon and a global superpower, giving the country the socioeconomic leverage, power, and influence its desires. Until recently, China has been able to move this plan forward by creating man-made features



(Figure from Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China, 2006* [Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2006]; boundary representations are not necessarily authoritative)

Figure 1. Geographic Boundaries of the First and Second Island Chains

in the South China Sea that contribute to success in the current and future conflicts with the United States. China pursues conflict with the United States through extensive military expansion, improvements in joint integration, political coercion of regional neighbors, and a twisted “whole-of-government” approach in its long worldview of Pacific supremacy and eventual totalitarian world order.

This world order uses military intimidation in economic coercion, transactional political payoffs, and lethal and nonlethal levers to support its current campaign. To create further challenges for U.S. forces, the Chinese use economic espionage, intellectual theft, cyber operations, and academic espionage to mitigate

U.S. technological advantages and ensure the United States has no traditional rear area.

Failure to understand or take this conflict seriously will have grave consequences for the United States, just as it did when China entered the Korean War. History can illuminate other cases where the United States approached a growing threat with a competition mentality instead of a conflict mindset. Imagine if the United States had taken a conflict approach to handle Adolf Hitler's free land grab or the Imperial Japanese invasions of Korea, China, and other Pacific nations before World War II. If Japanese Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto had not attacked Pearl Harbor, would the United States have come to "competition" terms with Imperial Japan? Moreover, if so, what would that have meant to the future world order and, more importantly, America's national security?

World War II and the Korean War were conflicts as horrible as one can imagine, but they do not compare to the warfare potential of the all-domain military and

civilian capabilities the Chinese are building. These include weapons, such as the DF21 and DF26 missiles, that can kill a carrier strike group, an air wing, or an Army brigade within seconds. Alternatively, these capabilities can set the conditions for controlling sea lines and air lines of communication (SLOCs and ALOCs) with man-made islands in the South China Sea, where more than one-third of the global shipping passes.³ These capabilities and improvements will allow China to slowly take possession of the Indo-Pacific without firing a shot via a methodical information campaign and emplacement of a sophisticated network

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of state-owned enterprises that control other countries' energy, telecommunications, medical, informational systems, and intellectual property.

The current conflict with China takes place across all domains and is unlike anything the United States has ever faced, and, unfortunately, few people seem to be considering the consequences. As former Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Gary Roughead stated, "We have not thought about the significant capital losses that will occur—and the American people not being prepared for that."⁴

The way we address the China threat now will determine the United States' standing in the twenty-first century and beyond. Accordingly, the United States must recognize that it is, as Simon Sinek stated in his leadership discussion at the U.S. Special Operations Command headquarters, playing an "infinite game."⁵ Infinite games are played by those who want to keep playing versus a finite game, which is played by those who seek a short-term win. In competitions, a finite player believes there can be a distinct near-term win. This mindset will not be the case with China. Infinite games are zero-sum: the country is either ahead or behind in military terms, and there can be no win-win scenario. Applying this to the current conflict and in the context of multi-domain operations, the United States either has a positional advantage or disadvantage; currently, it is at a disadvantage.

In this infinite conflict, we must embrace the fact that there will be positional advantages, and the United States' ability to limit China's maneuverability or obtain a permanent positional advantage is critical. It is crucial to challenge China in all traditional domains: land, air, and sea; however, it is equally important to challenge China in the nontraditional domains of intelligence, information, influence, cyber, and space (I3CS). The conflict China is waging has put it in a positional advantage in traditional and nontraditional areas that, if left unchecked, will allow it to dominate in terms of diplomatic, intelligence, military, and economic power by 2050. However, that is not to say that these results are inevitable. Understanding Chinese history, all-domain objectives, the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) transformation, a whole-of-government approach, and military force employment will provide critical insights into U.S. forces gaining the positional advantage in this conflict.

History is Religion

“For Chinese people, history is our religion,” wrote Chinese writer Hu Ping.⁶ This statement is key to studying China’s history, understanding the future China envisions for itself, and enhancing the United States’ ability to know the enemy. Two important historical reference points tie China’s history to the Song (960–1279) and Qing dynasties (1636–1912). During both these periods,

objective is for the PLA Navy to evolve into a global navy by 2050.¹² Liu’s vision is an excellent example of the standard Chinese belief that their rightful place is to control and dominate their region and the world. Chinese policy statements state that the path to success is waging a long war, much of which will be indirect and nonkinetic, to supplant U.S. leadership in the Pacific and dictate the Chinese totalitarian new world order.

“World War II and the Korean War were conflicts as horrible as one can imagine, but they do not compare to the warfare potential of the all-domain military and civilian capabilities the Chinese are building.”

China was reunified, and during the Song Dynasty, it originated many significant technological innovations such as mass printing, the magnetic compass, gunpowder, and paper money.⁷ Today’s China is once again seeking to lead the world innovatively, including in the areas of artificial intelligence and quantum communication. As in the past, many of these technologies have dual civilian and military uses. More importantly, all these capabilities are essential for the PLA to become a world-class military.

With the intent to intimidate, awe, and charm other countries and regions including Mongolia, Tibet, Central Asia, and Taiwan into submission (or at least acquiescence), Xi uses references to the Qing dynasty to remind his people and his neighbors of China’s past economic and cultural glory.⁸ His ability to leverage historical underpinnings provides his road map for rejuvenated Chinese dominance. Recent historical references paint the picture of Chinese determination to dominate the Asia-Pacific and beyond. Policies of insulation, all-domain objectives, the PLA transformation, and the all-of-government approach best explain China’s efforts.

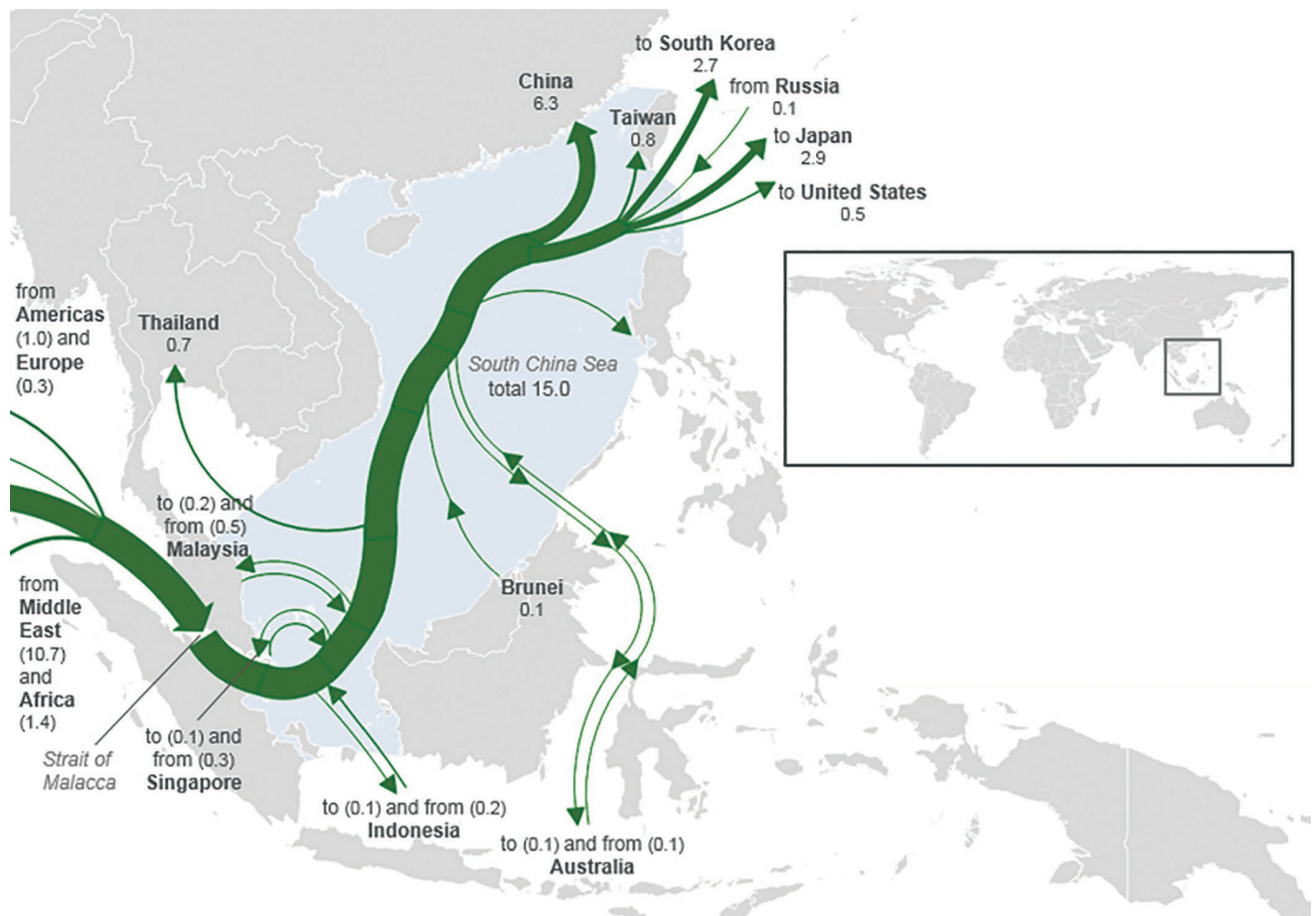
Insulation. Insulation plays a key role in Chinese strategic thinking. In 1989, Chinese Adm. Liu Huaqing, father of the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLA Navy), shifted the PLA Navy’s focus to an offshore defense strategy by outlining a series of phases.⁹ In phase 1, the PLA Navy would dominate the first island chain to include the South China Sea, the East China Sea, and the Yellow Sea by the year 2000.¹⁰ In phase 2, the PLA Navy will extend its control to the second island chain beyond Guam by 2020 (see figure 1, page 43).¹¹ In phase 3, the

China’s race to build islands in the pathway of key SLOCs and ALOCs is by no means a coincidence. The Chinese have purposely built them to provide the PLA the ability to control the first island chain, providing a buffer from U.S. air and maritime dominance. The combination of geography and its recent militarization of these man-made features allows China to enjoy a positional advantage, enabling the country to challenge the United States on the sea and in the air. Furthermore, China has taken an aggressive stance against U.S. allies and partners by challenging any nation that comes within twelve nautical miles of its man-made features in the first island chain.¹³ Through these moves, China has extended its ability to control an area where \$3.37 trillion, or 21 percent, of global trade and 30 percent of the world’s maritime crude oil and numerous fishing, transportation, naval vessels, and communication cables must pass through (see figure 2, page 46).¹⁴

Further complicating the situation, China’s obsessive nature and concern of events on the Korean peninsula and Taiwan and border disputes with other neighbors such as India prompted Xi to declare at the 19th CCP Congress in 2017 that the PLA must “prepare for military struggle in all strategic directions and the military was integral in achieving China’s national rejuvenation.”¹⁵

All-domain objectives. China continues its influence with fabricated facts while it is simultaneously building a similar capability in the I3CS domains. As with traditional domains, the goal is to surpass and defeat the United States in I3CS.





(Figure from the U.S. Energy Information Administration, based on Clipper Crude Data Service and IHS EDIN; total includes small flows, less than 0.1 million barrels per day, not shown on map)

Figure 2. Major Crude Oil Trade Flows in the South China Sea during 2016 (numbers in millions of barrels per day)

China has built an intelligence layer that starts with its own population, thus controlling the domestic information domain. Implementing the intelligence layer is especially evident in China's social casting, which provides insights into the intricate intelligence apparatus China has built for its citizens. In China, the Ministry of State Security controls every aspect of the internet, and citizens who do not conform to the state's restrictions are placed on a no-fly list or, worse yet, are reeducated in various communist concentration camps.¹⁶

In the next intelligence layer, China conducts outward surveillance that focuses on key countries in the Asia Pacific and then branches out toward areas with strategic value such as the Panama Canal and the Middle East. The intelligence apparatus then starts intelligence preparation of the environment in order to facilitate the information collection and needed influence to achieve China's desired

strategic end state. Part of this intelligence preparation is leveraging the cyber and space domains.

A web of state-owned enterprises, private companies, and Confucian centers are platforms to collect and influence local governments and populations. The Chinese also control media platforms that promote the Chinese narrative. Additionally, the Chinese have sought to spread influence by selling military technology with no questions of efficacy or moral obligation. (So, if we do not fight the Chinese tomorrow, we will surely fight their weapon systems.)

China is also trying to replace the United States in international military education and training. The Chinese are willing and able to train officers from all the countries where China seeks to challenge the United States. Add in language training, and the Chinese are slowly building a pathway for foreign



countries' leaders to align with China. If all officers received their training from China instead of the United States, where will we be when one of these officers is the minister of defense or the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the United States or another country?

Finally, the U.S. global advantage depends in large part on sovereign countries allowing the United States to base or overfly their countries. Chinese influence may preclude this in the future. China's all-domain approach is a key foundation of its holistic joint transformation.

PLA transformation. Underpinning the PLA transformation was China's inability to confront U.S. forces during the 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis and observing U.S. military operations in Middle East conflicts. Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu opined, "Know your enemy and know yourself; in one hundred battles you will never be in peril."¹⁷ Modern China has taken this to heart. Not only did the Chinese study, steal, and observe any writings of U.S. performance in conflicts, but it also made critical decisions not to have PLA forces strictly army based.

The Chinese have reformed traditional PLA units to work jointly and integrate all joint capabilities and nontraditional capabilities, including intelligence; information operations; and electronic, space, and cyber warfare. Not only has the PLA aligned joint theater-level headquarters to fight in complex joint environments, but

During a Chinese military parade marking the seventieth anniversary of the end of World War II, a military vehicle carrying a Pterodactyl I unmanned aerial vehicle drives past the Tiananmen Gate 3 September 2015 in Beijing. China is the world's leading exporter of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS). Low pricing and lack of export restrictions make Chinese-made UAS especially appealing to markets in Asia, Central Asia, and Africa. (Photo by Jason Lee, Reuters)

it has also vastly improved its weapons capabilities.¹⁸ The ability to employ sophisticated weapons is reinforced with an intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance network that provides commanders real-time intelligence to facilitate decision-making.¹⁹ China also furthered its battlefield capabilities by creating a robust network that moves data across all domains.

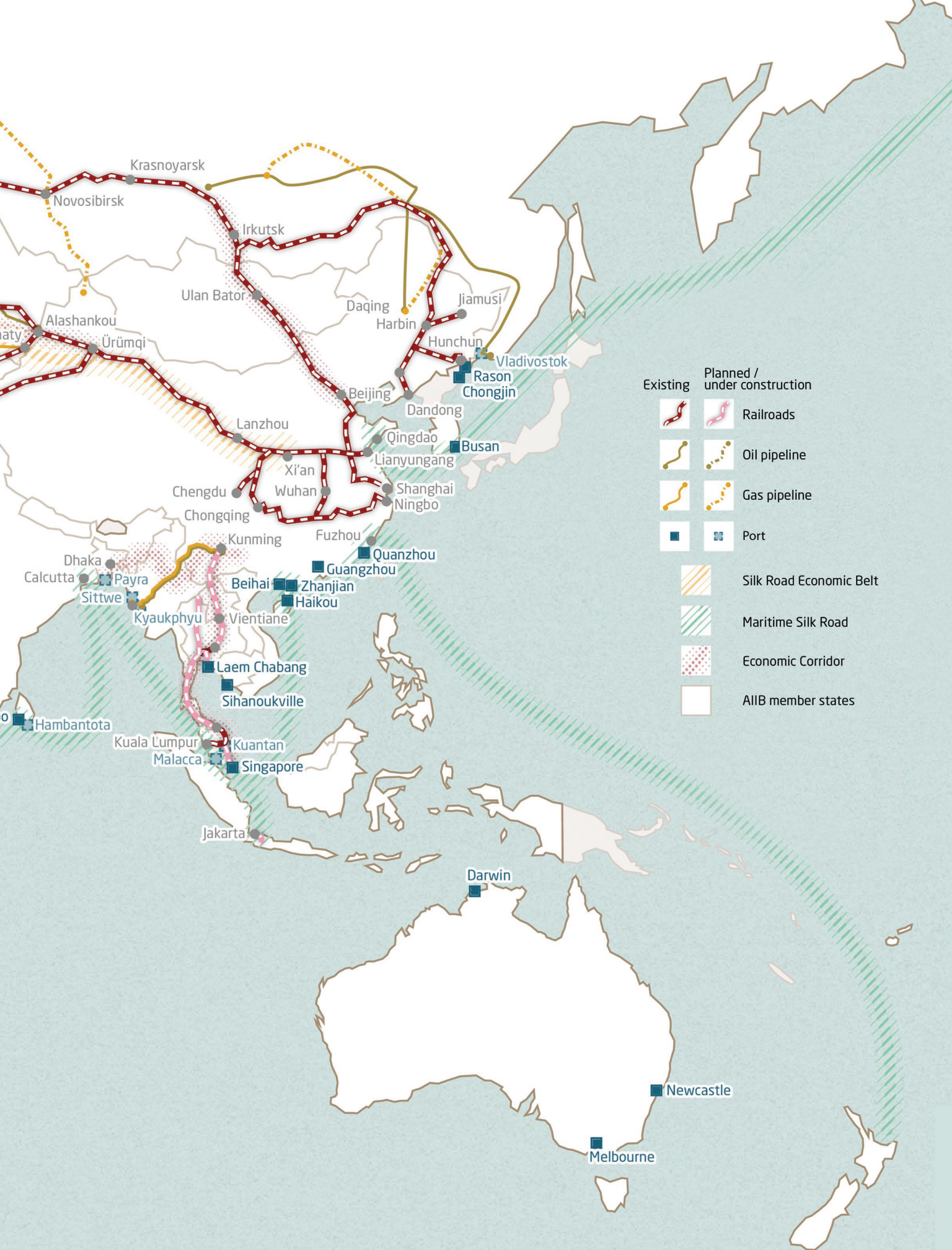
China knows that equipment alone will not make the PLA a robust force; it takes training and integration. Since 2012, China has conducted combined-arms unit rotations with an opposing "blue force" at its training centers. These training events are not scripted and emphasize empowering junior leaders, much like U.S. combat training centers. In 2015, PLA leaders directed changes to ground forces training based in part on lessons learned from these rotations.²⁰

These training adjustments have given China a competent joint warfighting capability that resembles



(Figure and information by Mercator Institute for China Studies [MERICS], May 2018)

Figure 3. The One Belt, One Road Initiative





A naval soldier of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy looks through a pair of binoculars from onboard China's first aircraft carrier, *Liaoning*, as it visits a military harbor circa 2013 on the South China Sea in Sanya, Hainan Province, China. (Photo by Hu Kaibing, Xinhua)

that of the United States. Overcoming the integration of forces, breaking cultural barriers, and including highly critical after action reviews are telling signs of military maturity. Strategic opportunity has given the PLA the ability to reinvent its fighting capability while not being in a hyperwar. With a trained and capable joint force, the PLA is prepared for employment.

Whole-of-government approach. China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative enables debt-trap diplomacy, leveraging countries' inattentive acceptance of loans that can never be paid off (see figure 3, pages 48–49). And, China's use of state-owned enterprises is a key and essential way to use Chinese businesses as a façade for permanent military and intelligence capability. Again, this global expansion has been put to practice in Djibouti and recently in Sri Lanka.²¹ China conducts meticulous studies of where it requires military positioning, securing of invaluable

SLOCs, global military responsiveness, and upper-hand dictation of terms in land agreements.

China now has reached into the Middle East and Africa and has coercive control of Sri Lanka's strategic position in the Indian Ocean. This initiative is only the beginning, as China can now focus on militarizing the first island chain and influencing countries in the second island chain, which will radically cut off the U.S. Pacific forces' attempts to engage in any future Pacific conflict. China's use of government agencies to advance military power is unequalled. U.S. military leaders must acknowledge the Chinese model that has shifted assets from tactical to strategic with one purpose in mind: to advance the nation's global-power end state. China's military has a direct chain of command to China's center of gravity, the CCP. Not only does the PLA have obedience to serve the CCP, but the PLA



Seaman Alex Case uses high-powered binoculars to observe a Chinese navy vessel from the bridge of the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS *Sterett* (DDG 104) 21 September 2014 on deployment in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations in the Pacific Ocean. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Eric Coffey, U.S. Navy)

also handles domestic security as well, as evidenced during the 1989 Tiananmen Square unrest.

With the current whole-of-government approach, the Chinese have not only used all instruments of power to slowly diminish the U.S. influence in the Indo-Pacific, but they also have been able to accelerate weapons development, training, land reclamation on key ALOCS and SLOCS to create strategic leverage with U.S. partner countries to counter the free and open Indo-Pacific.²²

China's unchallenged "buying friends" debt-trap strategy seeks to strategically influence countries where they have no choice in future diplomatic and military partnerships. Controlling the Pacific is the key terrain in this conflict, where not only 70 percent of the world's population lives but where many of the world's largest economies also operate.

"Feeding the beast" is an excellent analogy in terms of how a nation builds a fighting force. China's economic ascendance has allowed the rapid rise of its military force. The PLA's military modernization is focused on gaining capability that would challenge any U.S. force. The Chinese government increased annual spending by 10 percent from 2000 to 2016.²³ The Chinese economy drives the military makeover by intellectual thievery, much of which is enabled by its intelligence apparatus. China's intelligence activities on the U.S. mainland should be alarming. The use of Chinese students at major research labs for intellectual property theft and for infiltration of companies that provide a fighting edge to U.S. forces means that the days of distinct U.S. technological advantage are gone. The United States will have to contend with a force



that is trying to penetrate all walks of U.S. life to the benefit of the Chinese government. The U.S. global responsiveness must reassess its forward posture to be in a position to challenge the PLA in any conflict.

China has learned never to allow the United States the opportunity to deploy to strategic countries and forces countries to acquiesce to China's demand. This fact was very evident with South Korea, one of the most ardent U.S. allies, when China organized a massive protest against South Korean companies in response to the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense deployment. If South Korea can be pressured, what would a partner nation that cannot withstand the Chinese economic blackmail do? The answer to that question is probably whatever China wants. China committed long ago to creating a military that would challenge the United States through global conflict and in the Pacific. When it comes to conflict in the Pacific, we are there now.

Deploying the Force

China's military influence is not limited to the Pacific region. China has deployed forces in support of noncombatant evacuations in Yemen and Libya and provided counterpiracy naval patrols off the coast of Somalia.²⁴ These were the first tests along its path toward global power. China intends to build military capability across the globe, and deploying the force serves many vital lines of effort. First, it demonstrates to other nations it has the capability. Second, it provides placement and access to sell made-in-China military hardware. And lastly, it displaces the U.S. military as the partner of choice. Americans must understand the depth of the new battlefield that is not tied to lockstep military phases or traditional lethal means of attack, and realize China's strategic deployments guide its global actions.

Sun Tzu provides a framework for understanding the Chinese view of warfare. China's comprehensive study of U.S. tactics, capabilities, and weakness are three of Sun Tzu's themes: (1) "know your enemy and know yourself, and in one hundred battles you will never be in peril"; (2) "to win one hundred wars is not the height of skill, to subdue the enemy without fighting is"; and (3) "avoid what is strong, attack what is weak."²⁵ These themes drive strategic thinking into a broad campaign to win in conflict, and China has been in conflict. Those who have opposed have been met with confrontation, such as the Philippines, as seen from 2012 South China Sea Navy

incident and recently in 2019 with multiple incidents of fishing in disputed territory and the use of maritime militia and the coast guard.²⁶

We should not misinterpret China's past military campaigns in Korea or Vietnam as failures. These tactical defeats were strategic wins. Yes, China suffered losses; however, both conflicts restored an insular border in North Korea and ensured Vietnam withdrew from southeast countries and restored borders between Laos, Cambodia, China, and Vietnam. We should avoid the pitfall of thinking tactically about past conflicts, as it inhibits our ability to think strategically about future conflicts.

The PLA is a purpose-built force intended to defeat the U.S. military that answers directly to the CCP. Its rapid pace of military development and testing of capabilities is distressing. China's development in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities, rocket technology, force projection of land and maritime forces, and fifth-generation fighters are all meant to defeat the United States. Winning quickly and decisively drives the Chinese military strategy. Regardless of the foe, it wants armed conflicts to end quickly and as bloodlessly as possible. Moreover, now it thinks it can do so. In this current state of conflict, the Chinese have set conditions early with hypervertical escalation to achieve strategic objectives and bring a quick victory.

The United States now finds itself in a conflict where the enemy has matched or will overmatch its capabilities by 2025. The Chinese are setting the conditions in diplomatic, economic, and informational areas where most countries will be reluctant to support U.S. force deployments to counter the PLA. China understands that defeating the conditions of U.S. support is vital in defeating the United States. Breaking apart alliances by using all elements of power sets the conditions for total U.S. defeat. In the conflict with China, understanding Chinese military intentions and force employment is critical in order to integrate a comprehensive campaign against China. We know what Chinese leadership is going to do because they have told us repeatedly. Therefore, the question before us now is a simple one: what are we going to do about it?

Gaining U.S. Positional Advantage in this Conflict

The United States and its military leaders must realize we are in an infinite conflict and, if actions are not taken

immediately, China will set conditions to obtain a permanent positional advantage in the Indo-Pacific. The Chinese are not without weaknesses. They have proven that their intentions in all domains are for the betterment of the CCP's rejuvenation. The CCP possesses several blind spots in the PLA transformation, all-domain objectives, and global partnerships, which the United States could exploit in order to counter China's dangerous ambitions.

First, in a country where the public lives in fear of the Chinese government, social casting and constant surveillance are true testaments of CCP control. However, they are also strategic weaknesses. The military is reflective of the values of the society and public it serves, and the PLA's most recent military victory is defeating its people in a public protest in Tiananmen Square. Moreover, current operations against the Muslim Uighurs only highlight the CCP's willingness to force its will to control the national narrative. Despite the Chinese government trying to erase this abhorrent abuse of human rights, the public finds the truth. The Chinese public recorded 131 million travelers in 2017. Most of this travel is to democratically elected countries with freedom of speech such as South Korea, Japan, the United States, Australia, and European countries.²⁷ As a result, though the CCP has total control, a population exposed to the truth will silently know the CCP narrative is false. This population fills the military ranks and, over time, with U.S. influence, this could be used to our advantage.

Second, the CCP has continually criticized the Chinese military for lacking strict adherence to communist doctrine. The CCP will never attain full adherence by the military, and that makes it vulnerable. The CCP does not fully comprehend the military agility required to accomplish operational and strategic tasks and often calls upon the PLA to do unreasonable or unattainable things.

Third, despite PLA transformation and military reforms, the PLA still requires a great amount of training and joint integration to become proficient as a fighting force. The PLA has recognized it is incapable of judging the battlefield situation, understanding senior leader intent, making operational decisions, deploying troops, and reacting to unexpected situations. Xi noted "two insufficient abilities" as being the inability to fight and command at all levels of modern warfare.²⁸ In contrast, the United States mastered joint synchronization in Operation Desert Storm and now conducts joint integration. True joint integration is the indicator of a professional military force.

The Way Forward

In order to prevail in the current and future conflict with China, the United States needs to move beyond our current joint integration and truly embrace joint multi-domain operations concepts that include all domains of warfare synchronized within the DIME. Conducting joint multi-domain operations war games against a peer competitor needs to be the standard for all exercises. To further capitalize on this disparity, the Army's training must include a more shared and technical understanding of peer capabilities. In multi-domain operations, the Army will have to conduct non-lethal and lethal effects against peer land, air, and sea targets as well as information, cyber, and space effects.

Furthermore, the military needs to include all non-lethal effects and the diplomatic, economic, and information winning in conflict and ensuring the United States maintains the positional advantage in this infinite conflict. The Army needs to have its forces deployed west of the International Dateline in East and South China Sea Areas to conduct preparation of the environment, indications and warning, and conduct intelligence support to non-lethal cyber, space and information effects before lethal considerations.

Additionally, our coalitions and alliances have never been more critical. Five of the seven mutual defense treaties are in the Indo-Pacific. The United States' ability to conduct multi-coalition exercises provides it with a distinct advantage. All Indo-Pacific nations need our support. The PLA's regional dominance land, air, sea, space, information and cyber space make the United States the only balancing force against China. The United States and our allies' ability to train, equip, and synchronize efforts is critical for all of our alliances and partners in Indo-Pacific and all other geographic and functional commands.

This conflict can and must be won. Having a positional advantage is required to set the conditions for defeat in this infinite conflict. Economic, information, and diplomatic coercion undergird Chinese transactional relationships with other nations, versus the U.S. message of a free and open Indo-Pacific. We must reassure our allies and partners that the United States is committed to countering the Chinese domestic and international narrative for the next one hundred years.

Despite the CCP's rewriting of history (in support of taking territory and building man-made features), it ignores important aspects of its own past. Chinese dynastic



periods were corrupt and morally deficient and conquered kingdoms with no regard for countries' borders or human rights. China has no international support for these claims and few allies willing to provide support. The United States must counter Chinese positional advantage by implementing a comprehensive counter-Chinese strategy that synchronizes a whole-of-government approach,

deploys forces to conduct preparation of the environment in the Indo-Pacific and other geographic commands, doubles our joint exercises that involved all domains, supports our allies and partners' militaries, and conducts informational targeting to counter Chinese narrative. Time is of the essence, and the United States can be the true leader in this conflict. ■

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