



# The Greatest Challenge to Integration, is *Understanding*



1. **We're in an era of *influence*;**  
but we're still thinking in terms of *control*.

2. **Competition is peace.**  
We must focus on actions ***below the threshold of traditional deterrence***; not actions below armed conflict.

3. **"Great Power" in competition resides within the people.**  
The exploitable aspect of that power is a function of ***political grievance***.

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## Introduction

The United States is the preeminent status quo power.

- We think of revisionists as threats.
- We think about those threats in the context of war and war plans.
- This in turn causes us to think about peace as a prelude to war (that is as helpful as thinking about marriage as a prelude to divorce).

Intro to slide 2:

We possess tremendous knowledge about war

I believe that knowledge is both the pathway and the obstacle to understanding – and I believe that the greatest challenge to integration is understanding.

### 1. **We're in an era of influence; but we're still thinking in terms of control.**

What if the standard has changed? If the "ends" changes from control to influence, how does that affect the "ways" and "means"?

- Throughout recorded history, great power was all about control.
- But on our watch, power shifted, and the game has changed.
- The revisionists get it. AQ, ISIS, Russia, China, Iran, DPRK. It's all about influence.

In fact, control has become an expensive liability. And maintaining control of expensive liabilities beyond their expiration date is how great powers fail.

- But we "understand" these threats through our bias, through our lens.
- We think they want control, and it makes us miscalculate.

**2. Competition is peace. We must focus on actions below the threshold of traditional deterrence; not actions below armed conflict.**

What if competition is peace?

- We love violence as a metric, but it lends no strategic meaning. Violence is all character, no nature.
- This isn't "binary," this is reality. We must define war narrowly, but we must understand peace broadly.
- Never let the military define peace and war, or you'll always find yourself in some version of the latter.
- The challenge is not competition below armed conflict, the challenge is unwanted and problematic competition below the threshold of deterrence.

**3. "Great Power" in competition resides within the people. The exploitable aspect of that power is a function of political grievance.**

Finally, we need to stop thinking about great power like a weight class.

Power relevant to competition evolves over time.

- Once it was colonies and coaling stations.
- Then it was carriers and nuclear weapons.
- What is it now? Artificial Intelligence? Maybe.

But in competition, it is influence *with*, not *over*, the populations where our interests lie.

I'm not saying don't prepare for war. What I'm saying is, if that is all you do, the competition will come and go, and you will have lost, without ever getting into the game.

- Those who understand and shape political grievance best will rise; those who react, blame, suppress will decline.
- We are in competition with AQ; ISIS; China; Russia; Iran.
- We are also in competition with Canada, the EU and India to name but three.

Competition has been here all along; we've just been playing the wrong game.