

BECOMING PEERLESS IN A PEER-TO-PEER COMPETITION ENVIRONMENT

Strategic Multilayer Assessment
SOF Paradigm in Great Power Competition Series
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Dr. David Walton
National Defense University
david.c.walton.civ@msc.ndu.edu

*Views are presenter's not statements of official NDU, DOD or USG positions

Strategy or Ideology

- The United States is emerging from a period of strategic atrophy
- Our competitive military advantage has been eroding
- We face increased global disorder reflecting a decline in the long-standing rules-based international order
- Inter-state strategic competition, not terrorism, is the primary concern in U.S. national security



Thoughts for the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review

L. N. WELLS
CF: Amdy

- If you had been a security policy-maker in the world's greatest power in 1900, you would have been a Brit, looking warily at your age-old enemy, France.
- By 1910, you would be allied with France and your enemy would be Germany.
- By 1920, World War I would have been fought and won, and you'd be engaged in a naval arms race with your erstwhile allies, the U.S. and Japan.
- By 1930, naval arms limitation treaties were in effect, the Great Depression was underway, and the defense planning standard said "no war for ten years."
- Nine years later World War II had begun.
- By 1950, Britain no longer was the world's greatest power, the Cold War had dawned, and a "police action" was underway.
- Ten years later the political focus was on the "misadventure" in Vietnam, the paradigm was shifting from massive retaliation to flexible response, and people had heard of Vietnam.
- By 1970, the peak of our involvement in Vietnam was over, we were beginning détente with the Soviets, and we were a superpower and a protégé in the Gulf region.
- By 1980, the Soviets were in Afghanistan, Iran was in the news, there was talk of our "hollow forces" and a "wind of change" was blowing. The U.S. was the greatest creditor nation the world had ever known.
- By 1990, the Soviet Union was within a year of dissolution, American forces in the Desert were on the verge of showing they were anything but hollow, the U.S. had become the greatest debtor nation the world had ever known, and almost no one had heard of the internet.
- Ten years later, Warsaw was the capital of a NATO nation, asymmetric threats transcended geography, and the parallel revolutions of information, biotechnology, robotics, nanotechnology, and high density energy sources foreshadowed changes almost beyond forecasting.
- All of which is to say that I'm not sure what 2010 will look like, but I'm sure that it will be very little like we expect, so we should plan accordingly.


Certified As Unclassified
January 5, 2009
IAW EO 12958, as amended
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS

Lin Wells

"All of which is to say, that I'm not sure what 2010 will look like, but I'm sure that it will be very little like (what) we expect, so we should plan accordingly."

- In 1900, Great Britain was the world's greatest power and France was its greatest enemy.
- By 1910, Great Britain and France were allied against Germany.
- By 1920, World War I was over, Germany had been defeated, and the United States and Japan had emerged as global powers.
- By 1930, the Great Depression was under way and defense experts saw no wars on horizon.
- By 1940, the United States had gone deep in World War II. As history, the Nazis had emerged, the atomic age was under way. The United States against the Axis powers, biting their nails over the situation in Vietnam had come and gone and the United States was pursuing detente with the Soviet Union.
- By 1980, the Soviets were the "evil empire" and the United States was ramping up for a new nuclear age.
- By 1990, the Soviet Union was closing in on its demise, while the United States was struggling with recession and the warning signs of the first Gulf War.
- By 2000, the Internet Age had dawned and the United States was basking in the glow of the most prosperous era it had enjoyed in decades.



Strategic Assumptions

- We've been so busy doing our jobs that we may have forgotten how to do our jobs.
- There is more work to do than we have people to do it.
- Our peer competitors have not waited for us.
- The future is unknown and perhaps unknowable.



Great Power Competition is Back

- China is a dominant economic threat
- Russia is a dominant nuclear threat
- North Korea and Iran are unknown
- VEOs are unknowable



How Do We Compete

- Strategically predictable, operationally unpredictable.
- To achieve overmatch we have to know what we are matching.
- Learn to say no.
- Make 'them' spend more than 'us'.



To Do List

- Get smarter (avoid cognitive compromise).
- Focus on not being 'dumb'.
- Expand your competitive space.
- Understand risk better.



How to Achieve Cognitive Compromise

- Being outside your normal environment or changing your routines.
- Being in the presence of a group.
- Being in the presence of an expert or if you, yourself, are an expert.
- Doing any task that requires intense focus.
- Information overload.
- Physical or emotional stress, fatigue.
- Fixation on an outcome.



Focus On Not Being 'Dumb'

- Remember the obvious
- Invert the problem
- Play the game that the enemy doesn't want you to play



Understand Risk

- How to Identify it
- Where to accept it
- Where to apply it



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