



A Virtual Think Tank (ViTTa®) Report

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China's Perception of the Continuum of Conflict

Deeper Analyses
Clarifying Insights
Better Decisions

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What is ViTTa?

NSI's Virtual Think Tank (ViTTa) provides rapid response to critical information needs by pulsing a global network of subject matter experts (SMEs) to generate a wide range of expert insight. For the Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA) Future of Global Competition and Conflict project, ViTTa was used to address 12 key questions provided by the project's Joint Staff sponsors. The ViTTa team received written response submissions from 65 subject matter experts from academia, government, military, and industry. This report consists of:

1. A summary overview of the expert contributor response to the ViTTa question of focus.
2. The full corpus of expert contributor responses received for the ViTTa question of focus.
3. Biographies of expert contributors.

Cover image: Enterprise Talk (2019). <https://i2.wp.com/enterprisetalk.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/France-Takes-a-Firm-Stand-on-US-China-Trade-Conflict.jpg?w=1600&ssl=1>

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Question of Focus

[Q3] How does China perceive the continuum of conflict? How does China plan for, operate within, and manage risk within the competitive space? From the Chinese perspective, what constitutes legitimate or acceptable deterrence, compellence, and escalation management? What are the implications of those differences for senior political and military decision makers in the US?

Subject Matter Expert Contributors

Dean Cheng (Heritage Foundation), Michael Fabey (Jane's Fighting Ships), David C. Gompert (US Naval Academy), Dr. Edward N. Luttwak (CSIS), Dr. Sean McFate (National Defense University), Robert Morgus (New America), Dr. Jaganath Sankaran (University of Texas at Austin), Dr. Robert S. Spalding III (US Air Force), Yun Sun (Stimson Center), Dr. Michael D. Swaine (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), Dr. Philip Fei-Ling Wang (Georgia Institute of Technology), Ali Wyne (RAND Corporation), Lieutenant Colonel Maciej Zaborowski (US Central Command)

Summary Overview

This summary overview reflects on the insightful responses of thirteen Future of Global Competition and Conflict Virtual Think Tank (ViTTa) expert contributors. While this summary presents an overview of the key expert contributor insights, the summary alone cannot fully convey the fine detail of the expert contributor responses provided, each of which is worth reading in its entirety. For this report, the expert contributors consider how China perceives the continuum of conflict and how it plans for, operates within, and manages risk within the competitive space.

China's Perception of the Continuum of Conflict

China is engaging in competitive activities around the world. The way in which China has been able to compete with the United States has caused concern among decision makers in Washington and has resulted in calls for a re-evaluation of how the United States thinks about global conflict, both in theory and in application. There is great debate over how China perceives and manages international competition and conflict and what appropriate United States responses should look like. While there is not a consensus among the contributors, most concede that China and the United States view competition and conflict through different lenses.

Contributors generally agree that China has a more fluid concept of conflict than the United States. Dean Cheng of the Heritage Foundation explains that, to China, what constitutes an acceptable level of force or deterrence is based on the specific scenario in which it finds itself. China views non-traditional forms of conflict as useful tools to escalate a situation or push the boundaries of its adversaries in pursuit of incremental gains. Its fluidity in operating in competitive zones, sometimes escalating operations to the brink of conflict, allows China to exert pressure or levy retribution on a case-to-case basis. China's dexterity in this field has aided in creating an open

debate about China's actual motives and whether some of the tools (e.g., telecommunication investments, diplomacy) it uses to obtain its influence-based objectives can be considered combative. Some of the contributors believe that the United States' more conventional view of conflict and war, on the other hand, hinder its maneuverability and responsiveness to China's non-traditional tactics.¹ Ultimately, however, while Chinese activities in the competitive space complicate assessments of whether and in what way China might escalate confrontations in a non-war situation, China appears to have no interest in engaging in conventional military conflict or outright war under anything other than the most extreme threats to its vital interests (such as Taiwan), as such conflict poses great risk to its international interests.

Chinese Activity in the Competitive Space

Contributors highlight several key Chinese objectives that drive how it plans for, operates within, and manages risk within the competitive space. David Gompert of the US Naval Academy identifies China's ultimate strategic objective as taking back territory (land and sea) that it had previously lost and re-establishing itself as the preeminent power in the Asia Pacific. Dr. Michael Swaine of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace similarly identifies China's interest in protecting its territorial integrity and national sovereignty as "cardinal principles," which, as he astutely notes, are also closely associated with Chinese leaders' objectives of ensuring regime legitimacy and the survival of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Swaine, however, does not necessarily agree with the idea that such Chinese imperatives lead to a clear Chinese commitment to achieving regional hegemony, although this might become a reality over time. Nonetheless, for some contributors, this outlook on Chinese international involvement, and more importantly regional involvement, states that its interactions in global affairs are likely to threaten United States interests and global positioning due to China's supposed central focus on increasing its regional hegemony. Contributors generally agree, however, that China sees cooperative interaction with the United States as a more favorable outcome than outright war. Nonetheless, if China decides to expand its level of influence in the Asia Pacific to the point where it seeks to control the flow of resources from the region, then it will likely become the United States' largest geopolitical threat over the next decade.²

Other contributors identify China's short-term objectives as more intrusive, as it aims to reorder the immediate geopolitical landscape of its surrounding region. These contributors highlight China's use of economic, political, and social levers of power to operate across the competitive space between war and peace. Some contributors believe that China continually pushes the upper boundaries of this spectrum in pursuit of its interests, only to pull back before sparking open confrontation but not before ensuring it preserves the incremental objectives it has already achieved.³ This tactic, according to these contributors, enables China to achieve its objectives and expand its influence without triggering conventional military conflict. Some contributors also believe that China's perception of its prospective opponents as being weak or unable to respond further drives its pursuit of these kinds of competitive activities.⁴ Other contributors, however, believe that, while such factors might influence how far China will press other states, other factors also work to limit China's level of assertiveness, including how

¹ See contribution from Fabey.

² See contributions from McFate and Morgus.

³ See contributions from Gompert and McFate.

⁴ See contribution from Luttwak.

threatening it views the United States, and whether other states are seen to be betraying understandings reached with Beijing, for example.⁵

How China controls and manages competition and conflict, whether military, political, or economic in nature, is also unique to each scenario it finds itself in. Dr. Philip Fei-Ling Wang from Georgia Institute of Technology explains that China views conflict management on a symmetrical and parallel level, seeking to maintain the upper hand and demonstrate strength while not committing to full-scale military conflict. To this end, as Swaine notes, China will often declare its actions as being in reaction to others and in defense of Chinese sovereignty and interests. China's aversion to conventional conflict can be seen through its handling of Taiwan, which China considers part of its sovereign territory.⁶ Yet Beijing's level of aversion to a use of force against Taiwan is heavily dependent on whether it believes that Washington is determined to permanently separate the island from China.⁷ One contributor believes that there are conditions under which Beijing would employ force against Taiwan, such as the clear abrogation by the United States of the One China policy. More broadly, however, China's avoidance of outright military intervention, and preference instead for attempting to assert influence through economic and political levers, illustrates China's interest in avoiding the kind of conventional military confrontation that could drive Asian Pacific nations to "rally around the flag" in a united front of opposition to China.⁸

China has also demonstrated increasing interest in using competitive activities to increase its legitimacy and influence, at times in competition with the United States.⁹ Chinese economic investments, technology exports, telecommunication investments, legal challenges, activity in regulatory bodies, and participation in standards bodies have helped to expand China's global reach by providing new avenues of interaction to spread China's worldview and public policy, particularly into developing countries.¹⁰ As with all states, China also uses the Internet and social media platforms as vehicles for influence operations. China has been the perpetrator of cyber warfare and campaigns of information and disinformation targeting the United States and its Western allies.¹¹ China has also been frequently accused of stealing technological information and secrets from developed countries. China firmly denies these accusations, thus creating a state of diplomatic finger-pointing and plausible deniability.¹² Ultimately, these competitive activities are in line with China's overall national development strategy and its increasing competition with the United States while avoiding actions that would call for the commitment and use of conventional military means.

Implications for United States Policy Making

Contributors generally agree that the United States must rethink its perception of competition and conflict to effectively compete with China over the coming decades. As such, contributors offer several shifts to the United

⁵ See contribution from Swaine.

⁶ See contributions from Fabey and McFate.

⁷ See contribution from Swaine.

⁸ See contribution from McFate.

⁹ See contribution from Wyne.

¹⁰ See contributions from McFate and Morgus.

¹¹ See contribution from Fabey.

¹² See contribution from Sankaran.

States' current approach to competition and conflict that may better position the United States to compete going forward.

One contributor believes that separating the US and Chinese economies could serve United States interests (i.e., separation by weakening China's economy, as Chinese economic success has supposedly grown increasingly reliant on stable bilateral relations with the United States). If such a separation of interests were to slow down China's economic growth, the argument goes, US-China tensions would escalate, potentially to a level in which Chinese leaders would face domestic pressures to respond aggressively and beyond their level of comfort. Such a scenario would supposedly enable the United States to exploit China's aversion to escalation into the realm of conventional military conflict.¹³ The line that China would have to cross in order to incur conventional military retribution from the United States or its allies, however, is less clear. Swaine, however, strongly doubts that such a drastic policy approach of using what he describes as a very problematic decoupling to pressure China would produce the desired results.

Another possible shift in United States strategy to confront China's international influence could include supporting weak insurgencies, political rivals, and propaganda campaigns in developing countries of interest to China. However, while both China and the United States are driven by similar motives, fighting a shadow war in a gray zone environment would have to possess clearly defined interests and fluidity in its execution due to variances in tactics, tools, and physical applications of those tools available to China and the United States. Additionally, such a strategy would also require United States leaders to carefully consider how their Chinese counterparts would perceive and react to such activities and hostilities, as Chinese assessments of these challenges are likely to be different than those of the United States.¹⁴ Here again, however, Swaine finds such an approach to be problematic and doubts that it would produce the desired results.

While there is an emphasis on transitioning to less traditional forms of conflict, particularly using soft power tools, the importance of conventional military capabilities and activities to United States deterrence power should not be forgotten. Accordingly, contributors encourage the United States to take steps toward strengthening its conventional deterrence capabilities against China. Some of these ideas go to extreme lengths. For example, one contributor suggests that the United States could establish forward expeditionary bases in Taiwan and other countries in the region to act as an active and immediate deterrent to Chinese aggression.¹⁵ Swaine, however, strongly believes that such a move would increase rather than decrease the chances of a US-China conflict. Additionally, as China's economy and military continue to expand, some contributors believe that employing ground and naval forces in the region will not, on its own, be enough for the United States to sufficiently deter China. One proposed approach for overcoming this limitation is for the United States to invoke the threat of nuclear weapons through public statements and actions that deliberately increase the credibility of nuclear war. Here again, however, Swaine stresses that such an extreme approach will more likely destabilize the region by triggering an intense nuclear arms race. Another less extreme option could be for the United States to develop and implement more advanced deterrence-focused weapon systems (e.g., a system that combines long-range precision strike weapons with a regional C4ISR architecture) in the region.¹⁶

¹³ See contribution from Spalding III.

¹⁴ See contribution from Sun.

¹⁵ See contribution from Fabey.

¹⁶ See contribution from Spalding III.

Ultimately, whether it is through exploring new soft power tactics, considering asymmetric and unconventional approaches, or using conventional means of deterrence, contributors generally agree that the United States must rethink and advance its perception of the continuum of conflict and address the more complex and potentially dangerous potential for crisis instability that exists in Asia to successfully compete with China over the coming decades without provoking war. Some believe that China perceives itself as being in a perpetual, existential state of conflict against the United States.¹⁷ According to this view, it comfortably lives in a state of competition, constantly pushing the boundaries in order to make incremental gains while never committing to conventional military conflict. Instead, it perceives engaging in competition and conflict through non-kinetic competitive activities (e.g., foreign investments, exportation of its media, and infrastructure development projects in developing countries) as a better approach to pursuing its competitive interests and fighting to win the global fight for influence.¹⁸ While China does use conventional military capabilities and activities to posture and present itself as a strong and dominant force, it is, under most circumstances short of a clear and major threat to its vital interests (e.g., Taiwan), uninterested in escalating beyond the level of competition and into the realm of conventional military conflict and war.

This leaves contributors torn as to how the United States can best counter China in this space between peace and war. Some advocate for the United States to continue to flex its conventional military muscle in the Asia Pacific to keep China from further overstepping its bounds. Others believe that the United States must adopt similar strategies to that of China in order to compete for the resources of developing and emerging economies and the hearts and minds of the people that drive them. And still others believe that the latter strategies must be combined with a search for a stable balance in the Asia Pacific as the most likely path to long-term stability in that vital region. There is overwhelming agreement, however, that non-activity on behalf of the United States will result in the slow erosion of United States influence and power, not only in the Asia Pacific but across the globe.

¹⁷ See contribution from Fei-Ling Wang.

¹⁸ See contribution from Luttwak.

Subject Matter Expert Contributions

Dean Cheng

Senior Research Fellow, Asian Studies Center, Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy
(Heritage Foundation)
13 March 2019

Not sure what is meant by “acceptable”? China pursues deterrence, compellence, and seeks to control escalation and crises. Deterrence/compellence tools include a range of actions from mobilization activities (both concealed and publicized), nuclear force deployments, conventional force deployments, exercises, press conferences, to economic actions. (PLA writings discuss this range, including under the rubric of public opinion warfare, psychological warfare, and also deterrence/coercion actions.)

The Chinese continuum of conflict presumes that they are ALREADY in conflict/competition—but not war. There IS a line between the open use of (kinetic) force, which is war, and conflict which includes various measures short of war. But there is information collection, and also influence/shaping (including of public opinion, under public opinion warfare).

Chinese writings indicate that they are concerned with constraining war (intrawar deterrence) as well as limiting the likelihood of war emerging. However, Chinese calculations of risk are almost certainly different from those of the West. For example, they see the highest level of deterrence as often entailing the use of force/weapons against an adversary's capabilities. This is seen as ultimate signaling for deterrence purposes, but it would be indistinguishable from an actual first strike (other than in scale).

Conversely, there is reason to think that the Chinese would interpret efforts at crisis stability on the part of the West (e.g., withdrawal of forces) as concessions/surrender.

Michael Fabey

Americas Naval Reporter (Jane's Fighting Ships)
US Editor (Jane's Fighting Ships)
6 March 2019

I believe this to be the most important question you have asked, for I feel it gets to the core of the conflict between the US and China and why China has continued to be successful in achieving many of its goals.

Quite simply, China believes – and acts as if – it is at war with the United States, while the US fails to acknowledge the true state of affairs. Part of this chasm is due to the word “war” and what each country believes it means. For America, and other Western Democracies, war is that final stage in a state-to-state relationship when all else has failed. When negotiations, diplomacy and related actions have created a stalemate or a worse situation, then it's time for physical martial actions.

But, for the Chinese, war is just one more tool on its state-to-state relationship chest. It is not a final phase, or even a phase, it is an option that, indeed, may be considered at the very start of “negotiations” or “diplomatic” discussions. A traditional warlike action may be another tactical decision, given the circumstances.

For the Chinese, disinformation is warfare. Hassling ships or aircraft is warfare. The issue is the word itself. The US and other Western Democracies must come to grips with the different Chinese view of warfare. China believes itself to be in a ‘warm’ war with the US – not a Cold War akin to that between America and the Soviet Union or hot war like action seen in World War II or later in Korea or Vietnam. In that kind of warm war, every option is one of warfare, with the ultimate goal for the Chinese to drive the US out of the Western Pacific while diluting American influence there and finally dominating world trade and financial markets. In warm war warfare, the continuum is constantly shifting from kinetic to non-kinetic and back again, as the situation demands.

For the time-being, China has remained closer to the non-kinetic end of the scale. That is not because, as some have argued, Chinese officials lack confidence in their military forces, but because Chinese tactics have been working. China has extended its reach and control through the South China Sea and other key areas of the region. The country has strengthened its bi-lateral transactions in the region, while diluting trust in US intentions and capabilities there.

What the US needs to do is acknowledge not only that China is a peer competitor and a threat, but also acknowledge the state of war that exists between the two nations, as well the totally different definition of that war. By doing so, the US can go a wartime footing relevant to a warm war – with more aggressive FONOPS, cyber ops, disinformation campaigns, financial or security support throughout the region, and so on.

For example, the Pentagon should consider an option recommended by some in the US Marine Corps to set up Expeditionary Advance Bases in a place like Taiwan or on some of the disputed Filipino island features – or even conduct military exercises in such territories. Or, perhaps, sail a carrier strike group through the Taiwan Strait. While China would protest, loudly, the country would not take any physical action against US forces at this time and US allies and friends would be much more assured than they have as of late.

If the US refuses to acknowledge the difference and state of war between the two nations, then China will continue to wage its own special brand of warm warfare, winning by bits and pieces in the vacuum the US has created and extending its reach and power through the Pacific.

Also, at some point, China will see further US inaction as a weakness, and choose to take a more kinetic action believing Washington will be gutless or powerless to respond. In such a scenario, the chances for miscalculation are very high, as the US may not prove to be incapable or unwilling as the Chinese may have believed, in which case the Pentagon will be left with little choice but to react in a typical hot war manner.

David C. Gompert

Distinguished Visiting Professor (US Naval Academy)

Adjunct Professor (Virginia Union University)

Senior Fellow (RAND Corporation)

15 February 2019

The goals of Russia's leaders are driven by their political need for patriotism and laced with nostalgia: whipping up and riding waves of nationalism at home; responding to Russians' preference for central authority; taking back former-Soviet lands where ethnic Russians reside; sowing dissension within and among Western polities; and blaming the United States for disrespecting Russia and adding to its woes. Russia's current threats and actions harm U.S. interests, allies, and sovereignty in ways that need not be detailed here. But what stands out is that this behavior is vintage asymmetric strategy, reflecting Russia's economic and military limitations.¹⁹ In particular, Russia is:

- modernizing and brandishing nuclear forces to offset U.S. and NATO GPF superiority
- using para-military ("little green") units to extend Russian influence
- continuing to use pipe-lined natural gas to manipulate the policies of recipient states
- exploiting instability in the Middle East and to a lesser degree Latin America
- conducting cyber-war against Western networks and through social media

Even as it pursues these methods, Russia must and will do all it can to avoid armed conflict with the United States and its allies. This

¹⁹ Russia can sustain only one-tenth what the U.S. spends on defense (~\$700B), one-third what China spends (~\$200B), and one-third what non-U.S. NATO spends (~\$200B). Though its forces could seize a small patch of NATO territory (e.g., Northeastern Estonia), they would eventually be defeated by superior NATO forces.

presents the United States with a compound problem: countering Russia's asymmetric strategy while retaining conventional military preponderance. It can do so not only by maintaining superior forces but also by conducting enough nuclear and missile-defense modernization to cause Russia to shovel more and more scarce resources into nuclear forces; selling LNG to Russia's natural-gas customers; retaliating for cyber-attacks against networks of value to the Kremlin; healing NATO divisions and buttressing NATO deterrence. Through such U.S. responses, which are affordable, the disconnect between Russia's conduct and its resources will grow, leading Russia to draw back its strategy or fail.

China's strategic goals can be stated even more simply: to take back territory, including seas, that were stripped from China when it was weak; and to reestablish itself as East Asia's preeminent power. In contrast to Russia, China must and can follow a more traditional great-power strategy, mainly relying on conventional military forces to push U.S. forces far from Chinese shores – not by emulating U.S. capabilities but by developing means to find, target, and strike them.²⁰ It is important to note that trends in military technology favor A2AD over force-projection and presence, and that China spends at least as much as the U.S. does on capabilities and operations *in its region*. It is not clear that the U.S. has a winning counter-strategy, as of yet.

It is also notable that China finds cooperation with the U.S. and its partners to be more in its interest than confrontational on *global* issues (energy, climate, terrorism, finance, economic development). China's beef with the U.S. is mainly about *regional* disputes, encircling U.S. alliances, and the presence of U.S. strike power. By cooperating globally while competing regionally, China can “choose its fights” and allocate its resources selectively and strategically. Given China's stated interest and strategy, it is wrong to regard and react to it as a wannabe global contestant rather than as the daunting challenger it is in the world's most vital region.

In sum, Russia presents greater dangers to U.S. interests in the short term but, with a fundamentally poor economy, will find it difficult to support a belligerent external strategy, especially if and as the U.S. compels it to pay a high price for that strategy. China has a sustainable external strategy, which is focused mainly on recovering its losses and its preeminence in East Asia. Though its global aspirations are not necessarily problematic, the importance of the region make China the biggest great-power challenge over the next decade.

Dr. Edward N. Luttwak

Senior Associate (CSIS)

14 February 2019

Neither China nor Russia are normal countries. They are empires, and empires are different. Roughly 97% of the difficulties that the US has experienced since venturing abroad in 1898 are caused by the fact that it is a normal country that engages in imperial ventures (with the best of intentions) while its citizens lack the needed imperial mentality—namely: a powerful conviction that they are entitled to rule lesser nations, and to punish the disobedient who are not properly grateful for the imperial benevolence they receive.

The Russians are an imperial people. They listen to Putin's song:

- “others eat better, others dress more elegantly. But you Russians bravely hold the largest empire in the whole of human history, that our heroic ancestors conquered piece by piece over the centuries, by winning many wars, and by pacifying conquered nations and tribes... My foolish predecessor lost parts of our empire. I will not lose any more, and will try to retrieve what I can. So we spit on the sanctions –we will not give up for pasta and pizza or fancy shoes.”

The Chinese too are an imperial people. Even when they were abjectly poor (I was first there in 1976 when eating enough rice and cabbage was considered abundance) they were calmly confident in their superiority over the smelly nomads to the north, the backward Tibetans, the childish Americans, and the Japanese, Koreans and Vietnamese whose cultures were essentially Chinese, but for their local peasant folklore.

Once the Chinese embarked on economic growth from 1977, they worked very hard, saved 50% and not 5%, to invest in more growth,

²⁰ See War with China: Thinking Through the Unthinkable, Gompert et al, RAND Arroyo Center, 2016.

and said not a word about lost territories or any power ambitions.

But Chinese leaders misread the great recession in 2009, thought that the childish Americans had fallen by the wayside, dropped the "peaceful rise" mask & suddenly demanded --very loudly-- bits of Japan, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Vietnam and an entire province from India. During the Obama years they were very pleasantly surprised at the non-reaction to their destruction of vast coral reefs to build military bases, but misjudged their neighbors, who started coalescing and rearming, slowly but steadily. The Australians lead the way (2008) warning everyone that it was either resist or accept Chinese dominance. The Japanese joined in 2012, and the Americans in 2017 --the Vietnamese had been there all along.

With Xi Jinping a new element has been added, because he is autistic when it comes to that strange world, non-China. He is also an infant in the realm of strategy, as exemplified by his reduction of the army to greatly increase the Navy above all, as if China is not a land power, with many neighbors that could make trouble—if rewarded well enough.

Poor innocent XJP thinks that building ships to increase strength at sea automatically generates maritime power. But the latter derives not from having warships but from the ability to sustain good political relations with insular, peninsular, coastal nations and other maritime nations.

Such relations might feed back into sea-strength, by offering sheltering ports, shore supplies, repair facilities, airfield access, ground-based air and sea surveillance, and whatever else a friendly power can provide to visiting naval forces--which is a great deal. But sea-strength does not feed back into maritime power. On the contrary, to build a bigger navy can *reduce* maritime power, if the country doing it is viewed as threatening by the affected insular, peninsular and coastal powers, whose leaders will react by being watchful rather than welcoming—except to its maritime rivals.

All that is perfectly straightforward, yet apparently much too complicated for poor Xi Jinping and his minions, who fail to see the fatal contradiction between building up the Chinese navy, and loudly asserting inflated maritime claims against Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, the Sultanate of Brunei, Malaysia, and Vietnam. Naturally those countries have reacted by welcoming American and -- increasingly--Japanese naval visits, as well as anything that India and Australia send their way, while offering less and less access to Chinese forces.

As a result, the Chinese naval build-up *is reducing* Chinese maritime power which in turn reduces Chinese naval strength --yes, that is a bit confusing linguistically but fortunately it is very simple in practice:

- for example, because it has several times been attacked by the Chinese Navy and threatened yet more often, Vietnam invites Japanese as well as American and Indian naval forces into its own bases, and most importantly submarines from which they can very comfortably intercept Chinese submarines trying to get out discreetly from the major Yulin base in Hainan island, just down the road from Haiphong, just up the road from Cam Rahn Bay. That diminishes the operational value of Yulin-based submarines, just as US naval power out of the major San Diego base would be diminished if the Chinese navy could comfortably operate out of Ensenada bay in nearby Mexico.

The bottom line: the Chinese are naively expansionist. But the counter-China coalition they have created since 2008 better keep reacting, because nothing else will stop the Chinese drive to become number 1 in everything everywhere (thereby restoring the correct world order as they see it, after the tumble of the industrial revolution). Only the population decline now expected will slow the imperial drive.

The Russians are not naïve and much less expansionist. Aside from keeping their Mediterranean garden on the Levantine coast of Syria, all they want is to recover the historic Russian-ruled lands: Belarus, the Ukraine of course, and the northern tip of Kazakhstan, erroneously carved from Siberia by careless Bolshevik bureaucrats in the 1930s. (They do not want the Baltics...)

Only a large-scale European/US aid to the Ukraine & a big military build-up could dissuade the Russians from biting at Ukraine every day, till they follow the Georgians in electing a president properly respectful of Moscow.

Dr. Sean McFate²¹

Professor (National Defense University)

7 March 2019

In which regions should the US expect significant challenges to its interests over the coming decade? And what form will these challenges take in those regions?

Dr. McFate: We would benefit from developing a grand strategy that helps to define what our national interests are. I am not optimistic in this political environment that this is going to happen any time soon. One of the things that grand strategy should do clearly is outline perpetual national interests because America has no permanent allies or permanent enemies, it just has permanent national interests. Where those things are is a matter of discussion. I do not think the Middle East is as important as people think it is, and whether the threat of Iran is really an existential threat to the US is up for debate. US policy toward Africa has always been focused on African solutions for African problems, which is really code for containment.

If we think about China and how it is fighting, China has its Three Warfares strategy. The Three Warfares strategy focuses on influence, lawfare, and economic instruments. Notably, military is absent. The US needs to figure out how to fight this Three Warfare strategy. When it comes to influence, China has made significant strides. When was the last time you saw a Hollywood movie that had a Chinese villain? China has bought Hollywood and green-lights every movie, so we do not really see things like Chinese villains. China is also building its own version of Hollywood domestically. Ultimately, China is using information operations to write its own narrative around the world. China is using lawfare the same way. This is evident by its actions in the South China Sea, which is an area where the US has struggled to compete because the US is still focused on the old rules of war (i.e., kinetic force and deterrence). Deterrence does not work like it used to. The US can put carrier groups in the South China Sea, but it will not stop China. The way that China is winning in the South China Sea is by doing strategic aikido (i.e., using the enemy as a way to get to the enemy). China is playing up the US' paradigm of warfare where the US thinks of war and peace as being separate dichotomies. This is a false dichotomy—there is not war *or* peace, there is war *and* peace. What China does, therefore, is it goes right to the brink of war in the South China Sea, right to the point where the US might respond, and then stops but gets to keep what it has already captured or created. And this is how China is winning the South China Sea incrementally, one island at a time, and will eventually erode our alliance system there. So, China is basically operating in the space between war and peace in our paradigm of warfare and exploiting that paradigm against us. There are ways to combat China there, to push it out of the South China Sea, but they are not at all traditional.

That seems to get at the Chinese approach to non-kinetic activity in gray zone competition environments, below that level of armed conflict.

Dr. McFate: Yes, but I take issue with the whole idea of “gray zone.” We use “gray zone” as a placeholder. The problem, in my opinion, is that we have this idea of war or peace, and then we just say that the things that are in between those two things are “gray zone.” But a better model for this is the Cold War, which was really a competition. In my book (*The New Rules of War: Victory in the Age of Durable Disorder*), I discuss things that we have already done before and then update them for the 21st century. If we want to get China out of the South China Sea, the things that we should consider doing, which may not be acceptable, would not be deploying F-35s and carriers into the South China Sea, but rather things like supporting weaker insurgency in the western regions, passively supporting rivals to Xi Jinping to get him nervous as an autocrat, and trying to use information operations to depict Beijing as corrupt in its domestic political market and as an empire in international affairs. We should get allies on board early, particularly those who see what is happening and/or fear what may happen. We need to start doing these things now, but this is not a front of warfare that we have fought in decades, so we need to reinvigorate this type of strategic thinking.

If China's GDP starts decreasing and support for Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership within China starts decreasing as a result, might the Chinese government start consider pursuing increasingly adventurist activities (e.g., raising the flag over Taiwan) as a means of maintaining or regaining its domestic support? What would be the implications of this be for the US? Is a declining China a larger threat to the US than a growing China?

²¹ Dr. McFate's contribution consists of excerpts from a longer interview session. For access to the full interview session, please contact George Popp (gpopp@nsiteam.com).

Dr. McFate: First of all, people have been predicting, unreliably, the demise of China for 25 years. And let us also not forget that political scientists in the 1990s said that, "Well, if you liberalize the Chinese economy, you will liberalize the politics," but China has clearly showed us that you can have a Beijing-directed economy and become a very rich country.

Part of what I talk about in my book (*The New Rules of War: Victory in the Age of Durable Disorder*) is that we should wage "shadow wars." One shadow war could be to foment divisions between elites and everybody else in China. Part of modern warfare in a Sun Tzu-like way is manufacturing friction and fog of war that you can exploit and play from the margins. If the US did this to China by, for example, supporting the Uyghurs and doing other things, we could foment this division that could destabilize the Chinese regime. Autocracies are vulnerable because they are centralized elite—and if you can create insecurity and instability amongst that elite, then you can wedge it.

Now, if China decided it wanted to raise a flag over Taiwan, first, we should not assume that the Chinese military could cleanly do that. Second, we have a Westphalian alliance system, but our vision of diplomacy needs to evolve, and we need a State Department that can also make alliances with multinational corporations and non-state actors because that is who is on the world stage now. It is not just nation states anymore—there are all sorts of players on that world stage. And our alliance systems should encompass them around shared national interests. Third, we need to think about how we might be able to change their decision calculus. The truth is that Taiwan and China are pretty interconnected in terms of mutual investments. And, in this scenario, I think what we would need to do is remind them that, just like going to war with us, going to war with Taiwan is a mutual self-destruction path. So, ultimately, I think some of the "raise the flag on Taiwan" rhetoric is bluster, and if China actually were to invade Taiwan, it would be something that would rally the entire Pacific Rim. Whether it is Bismarck going to France or Putin going to Crimea, people rally around the flag in a national security emergency. I just think that if we can get our claws into China's domestic affairs as they have to us, we can steer that ship along with the elites—and it is that fight over the steering wheel that we should be having, and not the fight about putting a blockage in front of that ship. So, ultimately, I would advocate for creative and cunning solutions rather than Cold War or World War II blocks of power-type solutions.

The Westphalian paradigm is out of date. The world does not look like that anymore. The paradigm has shifted. Algeria and Morocco present a good example for this. Algeria and Morocco have a Cold War that has been going on for decades. The way that Algeria keeps Morocco at bay is by supporting the Western Sahara Sahrawi. Algeria keeps the Western Sahara Sahrawi in south Algeria and as long as they are there, it is really an intelligence operation. This really forces Morocco to use huge amounts of its national security resources to hold the Western Sahara. This type of activity is what the US needs to do to China to keep it from becoming increasingly belligerent or bellicose or adventurous (i.e., force China to shift its security focus to its internal borders). The US did this during the Cold War with the Soviet Union. The US supported republics on the Soviet Union's border, which threatened the Soviet Union and forced it to divert national security resources away from other interests. So, again, I think there is an indirect approach to this. And victory today is not like the USS Missouri—it is an infinite game. It is more of a business model than a World War II, Clausewitz-like model. So, I think we have to keep this all in mind as we game out these things because I think when you game out these things you have a garbage in, garbage out problem as well. We take our assumptions, we run them through the game, and that is maybe not how Beijing operates or how international relations operate.

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5 March 2019

Kinetic and Non-Kinetic Tactics of Near-Peer Competitors

In the context of great power competition over and through the internet, our near-peer competitors leverage a set of tools in a number of forums in pursuit their objectives. Importantly, in large part because of their systems of governance and economy, China and Russia are more able and adept at leveraging quasi- and non-governmental assets in pursuit of national goals than the U.S. and our friends. Despite some differences in motivation and approach, both China and Russia leverage diplomacy, cyber means, and trade in pursuit of their national goals.

China

A range of diplomatic, information, and trade activities emanating from China suggest a concerted effort on the part of the Chinese state to export its model for the digital space. While the activities of Chinese companies appear to comply with an overarching strategy of expanding Chinese digital influence, it is unclear how much of this compliance is driven by business or market incentives versus state pressure, noting that the two need not be mutually exclusive. The Chinese government's approach to global competition is characterized by the notion of expansion without conflict and shaping global institutions and rules.

Activities to watch:

- Regulatory exchanges,
- Participation in standards bodies,
- Technology exports,
- Telecommunications investments.

Diplomacy

In global forums, Chinese activities in the United Nations General Assembly around an information security code of conduct have received the most attention, other activities, particularly in technology standards bodies, are worthy of note. At the International Telecommunications Union, for instance, a Huawei executive chairs the study group tasked with developing standards for next generation (5G) telecommunications standards. Likewise, Chinese nationals and state employees are prominent in the only telecommunications standards body to actually publish a 5G standard to date, 3GPP. Similarly, at the Internet Engineering Task Force, the body that publishes standards particularly relevant to the internet protocols, China has gone from a near non-participant in the late 2000s to the second largest participant last year.²²

In addition to increased participation in key standards bodies, China has increased its bilateral engagement with crucial third-party countries. These bilateral engagements include traditional diplomatic outreach and attempts to secure trade and investment deals as part of the Belt and Road Initiative, but also more direct transfers of ideas and frameworks through training seminars for regulators, policymakers, and lawmakers in Africa and Southeast Asia.²³

Cyber

The Chinese government conducts public messaging campaigns in key markets to support economic and political objectives. These campaigns can come in the form of traditional advertisements willing consumers to buy Chinese products, but also take more opaque forms, as Beijing has invested in buying foreign media outlets and training foreign journalists to "tell China's story well, and properly disseminate China's voice."²⁴

In addition, Chinese entities engage in state, quasi-state, and non-state economic espionage pointed at the theft of high tech intellectual property.

Trade

Chinese telecommunications companies Huawei and ZTE are already major providers for internet technologies worldwide. Their comparatively cheap products give them an advantage in markets that are not able to prioritize cybersecurity over cost savings, as is the case in much of the developing world. More research is needed on to understand the relationship between telecommunications projects and investment and the spread of regulatory, legal, and normative frameworks.

²² <https://www.newamerica.org/cybersecurity-initiative/c2b/c2b-log/four-opportunities-for-states-new-cyber-bureau/>

²³ <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/freedom-net-2018/rise-digital-authoritarianism>

²⁴ <http://chinamediaproject.org/2017/09/29/the-fable-of-the-master-storyteller/>

Russia

The Russian government views international relations as a state of perpetual conflict occurring along a continuum. For the Kremlin, the current rules and institutions that underpin global order often clash with Russian interests and values. Thus, rather than reshaping the rules or coopting institutions, as is the Chinese approach, Russia seeks to undermine the legitimacy of institutions and rules.

Activities to watch:

- UN initiatives around cybersecurity and information security,
- Information operations,
- Surveillance exports.

Diplomacy

Russia's primary diplomatic objective is to reassert Russia's right to sovereignty over the digital space within its borders. For Russia, the global rules governing the internet have been carefully crafted by western powers. It is therefore a primary objective of the Russian state to not only assert it is therefore a primary objective of the Russian state to not only assert Russia's sovereignty over the network within its borders, but to also "make other countries, especially the United States, accept" this right.²⁵ National laws, like the recently proposed amendment to the Federal Law on Communications, provide Russia with national legitimacy to do so. However, the Kremlin still seeks to normalize strict information control at the international level through initiatives like their proposal at the 2018 UN General Assembly to create a treaty reasserting national sovereignty over the internet and various cybercrime initiatives.²⁶

Cyber

Through a combination of influence operations in key areas and persistent offensive cyber operations, Russia has successfully demonstrated the fragility of the global internet ecosystem, while also achieving other aims (like turning the power off in Eastern Ukraine in the dead of winter). This demonstrated fragility has increased policymakers' interest around the world in reasserting the role of governments in controlling the environment more tightly.

Trade

In comparison to China, Russia's trade reach is relatively modest. Nonetheless, Russia has successfully cultivated markets of its surveillance exports in its near abroad, parts of the Middle East, and Latin America. Russian companies like Prrotei and Peter-Service, for example, provide technology to help internet service providers in countries with legal and regulatory frameworks similar to Russia's SORM system comply with those regulations to monitor and filter traffic.²⁷

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8 March 2019

Unfortunately, it seems that answer to the question above is highly variable among U.S. researchers and Chinese scholars. For instance, there is hardly any overarching consensus on whether Chinese conventional and nuclear forces are commingled and collocated. Similarly, there is no concrete evidence on how concerns about escalation and compellence drive their operational/logistical decisions. All the publicly available sources are speculative and based on fuzzy data. Plus, it is certainly conceivable that Chinese leaders prefer to cultivate such ambiguity, thereby imposing an escalation concern on the U.S. leadership.

²⁵ Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan, *The Red Web*, p. 223

²⁶ https://nsiteam.com/social/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/AI-China-Russia-Global-WP_FINAL_forcopying_Edited-EDITED.pdf, p. 88.

²⁷ https://nsiteam.com/social/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/AI-China-Russia-Global-WP_FINAL_forcopying_Edited-EDITED.pdf, p. 89.

It is possible to cautiously state that as of now the Chinese believe in a minimal deterrence posture for strategic nuclear weapons and are risk-averse. However, given their intention to move to a triad and now speculation about developing an early-warning system, the commitment to a minimal nuclear deterrence may be under reconsideration within the Chinese decision-makers. On the other hand, in a regional contingency (concerning a limited conventional conflict), China seems more willing to adopt a first-strike posture if its core interest is at stake. Such a preference is evident in semi-official Chinese military publications debating a doctrine for their missile forces.

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24 February 2019

A better question for this may be to wonder what is the role of the military (the power to destroy and kill using powerful weapons) in a globalized Internet-powered world. The answer is that for the foreseeable future, until there is truly a consensus on what constitutes universal principles, the military's primary role is to deter war. In the case of China, they are already self-deterred for two primary reasons. 1) Military conflict and the associated damage to their reputation could precipitate a decoupling from Chinese society; and 2) The Chinese cannot be certain that a military conflict would be successful.

Therefore it is imperative to minimize the impact of China's use of the today-tomorrow battlefield to impact democratic society, while simultaneously creating the perception that the Chinese military is not yet ready to win a fight.

One method to minimize China's impact on the population would be to completely decouple. This could lead to a dramatic slowdown in China's economy due to how much they have used US capital and innovation to spur growth. If so, then it is imperative that US military might is sufficient to deter. Moreover, since the Chinese have used asymmetric means to develop a conventional force which is growing beyond the capacity of the US economy to match, it may be necessary to invoke the use of nuclear weapons. This would require public statements and actions taken to deliberately increase the credibility of nuclear war.

Another option would be to develop an asymmetric operating concept that relies on long range precision strike from air, land and sea based conventional cruise and ballistic missiles. This would have to be combined with a regional C4ISR architecture which minimizes the value of China's counter space forces. A resilient and redundant C4ISR architecture designed for the vast expanse of the Pacific combined with cheap long range strike weapons could provide the kind of deterrence which fixes China on the today-tomorrow battlefield where their undesirable social model becomes their main weakness. Of course, that is if the West joins the fight.

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11 March 2019

What constitute legitimate or acceptable deterrence, compellence and escalation management depends on several factors, including who the antagonist is, the source of tension (that warrants deterrence and/or compellence), the geographical distance of the action taken to China and the level of threat to China's national interests, material and reputational. For example, the same type/level of "transgression" from the US will be more legitimate/acceptable than that from India. In the event of escalation management, a US DAS DOD might be acceptable for the Chinese government for dialogues, while it will take a foreign secretary of India to satisfy the Chinese. In terms of the source of tension, a U.S. deterrence gesture will be less acceptable for China on Taiwan if the Chinese actions are prompted by a perceived provocation from Taiwan such as a referendum on Taiwan's status. Furthermore, the same "transgression", such as the deployment of a US aircraft carrier, will be perceived with different levels of legitimacy and acceptability when it is deployed to the Yellow Sea, East China Sea, near Taiwan and South China Sea.

There is no single perception of the continuum of conflict in China.

The question on how China plans for, operate within and manage risk within the competitive space is exceedingly board and defies a simple answer.

The implication for decisionmakers in the US is that China's rules of engagement and pattern of escalation is affected by some similar factors in the US, but some other factors carry different weight due to the different political system and strategic culture in China. The other important takeaway is that with China, it is difficult to draw one line on what China is or how China sees things. Multiple factors are in play.

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21 March 2019

The Chinese government considers deterrence as the use of military and non-military signals and activities to dissuade a potential adversary from threatening or attacking China. Legitimate forms of deterrence include clear statements of resolve, the mobilization, alerting and movement of forces, and various types of "brush-back" actions such as close-in interceptions and interdictions of an adversary's forces. Legitimate forms of compellence include deterrence actions plus more direct forms of pressure such as different types of economic coercion, etc.

The Chinese hold a generally defensive and cautious, incremental "tit-for-tat" view of escalation management, except when vital or core interests such as territorial sovereignty are at stake. Under those conditions, Chinese leaders might be more inclined to escalate several levels on the escalation ladder, to show superior resolve.

For Chinese leaders, the protection of territorial integrity and national sovereignty are treated as cardinal principles closely associated with regime legitimacy and leadership survival. China's political leaders also often invoke beliefs regarding "just" or moral behavior in inter-state relations, such as the principle that smaller or weaker nations have a right to be free from the "bullying" of larger, stronger powers.

Hence, crises that are closely connected with such concepts and are clearly recognized as such by the Chinese people can involve very high stakes for the Chinese leadership and thus increase the likelihood that unlimited or absolutist, "zero-sum" means and ends will be employed in a confrontation.

In the past, China has often emphasized the need to show resolve and to act decisively in a crisis, sometimes employing extreme pressure. These traits, when combined with both an absence of attempts to reassure the other side and confidence in the ability to control escalation (see below), can significantly reduce self-restraint and increase the proclivity to use force, even for limited political objectives.

For China, the need to show resolve and act decisively in past crises often seemed to derive from the belief that it was essential to convey a very strong commitment in order to:

- Deter further escalation by the adversary
- Strengthen support for the leadership domestically; and, in some cases
- Compensate for relative material weakness when confronting a more powerful adversary.

These traits could be particularly dangerous in a serious Sino-American crisis because they create the belief that effective deterrence requires very strong threats or even the application of force early on. Moreover, a strong emphasis on showing resolve and acting decisively is especially dangerous because neither Washington nor Beijing has been particularly attentive in some past crises to providing *credible* reassurances to an adversary that his most vital interests will be respected, or that one's own demands will remain moderate.

Without such reassurances, this type of behavior can easily lead to crisis instability and conflict. This danger is compounded by the presence of offensive military doctrines at the operational, campaign, and tactical levels, which imply expansive strategic goals, pre-emption, and a “winning” approach to a crisis. Such a stance might become even more likely if there is poor coordination between civilian and military leaders in the overall decision-making process.

Partly due to all the above traits, since 1949, China has adopted a decidedly mixed stance toward escalation in a crisis: at times displaying gradual, incremental, symmetrical escalation and at other times sudden, rapid, asymmetrical escalation. In the past, the Chinese most often employed asymmetrical (and rapid) escalations to counter situations their leadership perceived as major threats to regime survival (such as the Korean War), to defend “core” principles (such as territorial integrity), or to avoid a much larger conflict (administer a “lesson”). Such actions were at times undertaken despite overall military inferiority.

Moreover, in past crises, Chinese leaders apparently believed that such “shock” actions would not escalate to war if the core elements of the so-called *youli youli youijie* concept (“on just grounds, to our advantage, and with restraint”) were observed, including pauses and leaving the adversary a “way out.” This maxim implies a preference in a crises for symmetrical “tit-for-tat” responses to an adversary’s behavior, a sense of “knowing when to stop,” and the use of force only in response to an opponent’s use of force.

However, sometimes a response (i.e., second strike) to a provocation (i.e., first strike) can be flexibly implemented. For instance, some Chinese believe that if an adversary is contemplating, preparing for, or mobilizing for a first move, this constitutes a “first strike” which, in turn, justifies a Chinese response that is operationally a “first strike.”

Present-day Chinese observers insist that rapid, asymmetrical crisis escalation was more typical of the Mao and Deng eras, reflecting their more “militant” style, perhaps less risk averse behavior, and total dominance over the decision-making process. They insist that the post-Deng Xiaoping leadership of present-day China is extremely cautious and consensus-oriented and hence is unlikely to undertake provocative escalation or employ high levels of force unless absolutely vital national interests are at stake (i.e., regime survival), other non-coercive approaches are exhausted, and the Chinese government faces extreme provocation.

In contrast, some Western observers argue that present-day Chinese leaders might be compelled to take escalatory actions in a major crisis because they are more susceptible to growing popular nationalistic pressure and less able than previous powerful leaders to recover from charges that they failed to exhibit sufficient resolve in a crisis, particularly if the adversary is viewed as a superior “bullying” power.

Growing evidence suggests that the more vocal expression of nationalist and “hard-line” sentiments among China’s populace and elite—and increasing criticism of an interventionist, “bullying” US government—have influenced the crisis behavior of the Chinese government in recent years.

Leaders might create or aggravate popular nationalist sentiments for their own political purposes (although many Chinese observers insist that this rarely if ever occurs). Alternatively, strong public sentiments could pressure leaders to resolve a crisis quickly without further escalation, because of the fear that continued angry protest might eventually turn against the government. This could also compel them to tighten controls over the media and the public.

Regardless of how China’s leaders might manage this issue, in general, nationalist views and sentiments *greatly* reinforce their desire to avoid appearing weak, irresolute, intimidated, or not fully in control of events during a confrontation with a strong foreign power.

Finally, although senior Chinese civilian leaders must consider the views of their military counterparts during a crisis if relevant, military leaders cannot veto decisions made by civilian leaders. Chinese military inferiority could result in a very strong need to show great resolve early on, heightening the possibility of miscalculation. A stronger PLA might employ more “threatening” signals.

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22 February 2019

The leaders and ruling elites of China, the PRC (People's Republic of China), perceive the increasingly obvious and clearly profound conflict with the United States as a long, existential struggle for the PRC regime dominated by the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) – a regime that has always been at fundamental odds with the American way of life. It is also an inescapable mandate of history, as the CCP-PRC leader Xi Jinping puts it, to reorder the world in Chinese image – “to rejuvenate the great Chinese civilization” and “to construct a common community of human destiny.” The alternative, older names of such a “common destiny” are “World Communism” and Sino-centric world-empire of *tianxia yitong* (united rule of all under heaven). Such an open-ended, infinite goal “requires the persistent efforts of multi- to many dozens of generations under the absolute leadership of the CCP,” according to Xi. More truthfully, this grand “China Dream” is perhaps all but a sinister excuse to justify the selfish interest of an authoritarian–totalitarian regime that requires ever more power to hold on to a dictatorship, forever.

Therefore, the PRC has had since day one a remarkably consistent strategy seeking to resist, reduce, and replace the United States, whenever and wherever possible. This strategy has historically been adjusted and fine-tuned even well “hidden” and nicely disguised at times, depending on the pressing needs and the power-calculation Beijing has at the moment. It remains the key driving force behind Chinese foreign policy, until and unless the CCP-PRC regime changes politically and normatively, or the United States is no longer a meaningful contrast and opposite to the regime. It is tragic for Beijing to lock the great and rising Chinese nation into such an ostensibly life-and-death struggle with the United States indefinitely, because there is in fact very little real conflict of interest between the Chinese people and the American people. Economically and socio-culturally, the two peoples have benefited enormously from cooperative relations for more than a century, which has created deeply fond feelings towards each other, despite the CCP's seven-decade (sometimes more veiled) anti-America propaganda. The great number of immigrants and students from China in the United States, the result of “voting with one's feet,” serve as powerful testimony of how the Chinese people really think about America. The four-decade old U.S. engagement policy, often justified with the ideal of inducing peaceful political and normative changes in Beijing, has accomplished a great deal: the Chinese society, culture and mindset have all changed considerably. Americans and Chinese people have reaped enormous economic benefits; Many vested interests have also emerged on both side of the Pacific for continuing the engagement. But the engagement policy has failed to change the PRC political system; on the contrary, it seems to have saved and greatly enriched, empowered, and emboldened the PRC state by granting it market access, capital and especially technology.

Fundamentally power worshipping and inherently unscrupulous in nature, the leadership of the CCP-PRC traditionally observes very little legal or moral limits or rules in its effort of pursuing its goal of control and domination. Ends-justifies-means has been a key “secret” of the CCP's successes at home and abroad. Therefore, the insights of the academic literature on deterrence, compellence, and escalation management need a reality check and adjustment to be useful, even relevant to managing the PRC-USA strategic rivalry. Due to its disproportional extraction ability and its utter disregard of human rights even human life as well as ethical or legal concerns, the CCP-PRC is much mightier and abler in dealing with opponents than China's national power would entail. Highly selective, momentary, and expedient adherence to international agreements, contracts even alliance treaties has been a hallmark of the CCP-PRC strategic culture. Taking a long-term view, “leaving no stone unturned,” and “fighting it our way” disproportionately and holistically often describe Chinese plan for, operate within, and manage risk within the competitive space. Examples for that would include the much-hyped doctrines of “unlimited warfare” and “asymmetrical competition,” incremental trial-and-error measures dubbed “salami-slicing” or “boiling-frog” ploys, and numerous other ruses based on deception, bribery, and misinformation that can trace their roots back to the fabled *Art of War* by Sun Tzu. The many cases of Beijing's shrewd use of ethnic Chinese living in the West (FVEY nations, European Union and Japan etc.) to advance its objectives illegally and unethically, reflect the routine and common abuse of its people by the CCP government; they also demonstrate how that kind of regime gains an additional competitive edge against nations like the U.S. and its allies. The near-total control of information dissemination (at least at home) has given the CCP-PRC state great maneuverability and hence another considerable tactical if not strategic advantage over its opponents like the United States.

Senior political and military decision makers in the United States may, therefore, need to understand and appreciate fuller the comprehensive, momentous, and long-lasting nature of the rivalry with the PRC. Competition between China and the United States,

if it is fairly played and constructively based on shared values, would be fundamentally beneficial to the two peoples and the world, despite the periodic stress and nastiness commonly but naturally associated with any competition. The highly innovative and competitive Americans have no reason to shy away from that competition. The real problem is that the rising Chinese power under the unscrupulous CCP-PRC state, critically supported by American money and technology, is in an existential war for an openly self-professed dictatorship with different even opposing values. This regime is patiently and resourcefully seeking nothing less than its total victory in the world to, by definition, replace and extinguish systemically the American way of life.

To address that unusual challenge, some thinking-out-of-the-box and trying “to be in the Chinese shoes” are imperative. For instance, the United States could effectively and efficiently deploy its considerable assets and leverages to counter the rising CCP-PRC in an asymmetrical and choosy way to target not necessarily the exact Chinese moves but rather “other” vulnerable spots that are more meaningful to the CCP decision makers, even when those spots may not look related at all. While the United States clearly should never go as low as its enemies to hit below the belt all the time; carefully selected “irregular” but critical measures (there are plenty of them to choose from) will deliver the desired impact onto where it matters and will over time be much more ethical and economical overall. Facing an unscrupulous opponent, to self-impede the responses with the straitjacket of unilaterally enshrined assumptions of fairness and equality, legalistic exquisites and rigidity, moralistic delicacies, and unwarranted fear for confrontation will be unacceptably irresponsible to the safeguarding of the American people and their values, and ultimately detrimental to the whole world.

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8 March 2019

China's Long-Term Strategic Objectives

In his October 2017 address before the Chinese Communist Party's 19th Party Congress, President Xi expressed confidence that China would move “closer to center stage” this century—with good cause: in a feat that seemed inconceivable amid post-Cold War Western triumphalism, it has managed to attain the world's second-largest gross domestic product, become the largest trading country, and register numerous other economic accomplishments, all while growing further authoritarian.²⁹ In America's ongoing immersion in the Middle East's convulsions, the global financial crisis of 2008-09, and increasing political toxicity in Washington, meanwhile, it sees a superpower that is strategically adrift and internally divided.

As a great power's strength increases, so, too, it stands to reason, would its conviction that once distant hopes could prove to be reachable goals. Esteemed Sinologists, however, continue to debate the scale of those aspirations. Georgetown University's Oriana Skylar Mastro concludes that China aims to become the Asia-Pacific region's “unchallenged political, economic, and military hegemon.”³⁰ Princeton University's Aaron Friedberg goes further, concluding that China may undertake to “match, [perhaps even] overtake, the United States in terms of overall power and influence.”³¹ The Hudson Institute's Michael Pillsbury is even more unequivocal, assessing that China “seeks to remake the global hierarchy, with itself as leader.”³² The more strenuously China disavows the pretension to global preeminence, the more vigorously, and naturally, some U.S. observers counter that it does, in fact, maintain that objective—especially as its aggregate national power grows apace: why feel compelled to disclaim with growing vigor and frequency, after all, a supposition that is self-evidently unwarranted?

²⁸ The views expressed in this submission are solely those of Mr. Wyne; they do not reflect those of the RAND Corporation or any of its other employees.

²⁹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/10/19/move-over-america-china-now-presents-itself-as-the-model-blazing-a-new-trail-for-the-world/?utm_term=.84c8ad284247

³⁰ <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/china-plan-rule-asia>

³¹ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00396338.2018.1470755>

³² Michael Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower*, reprint ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2016): p. 236

Despite that reasonable skepticism, the evidence thus far does not suggest that China endeavors to replace the United States as the underwriter of a global order, though its objectives may grow more grandiose in due course. If its leaders assume that the passage of time will inexorably restore a Sinocentric hierarchy, and that they merely need to exhibit patience while weathering the fury of a declining superpower, they are likely to be disappointed. Growing external instability, a grim demographic outlook, a paucity of true partners and allies, deepening security cooperation between its neighbors, and intensifying efforts by the West to limit the reach of its technologies are just a few of the obstacles that are likely to constrain its trajectory. And then, of course, there is the growing velocity of contemporary geopolitics, which, while not obviating the importance of planning, cautions against wedding oneself too rigidly to the sorts of five-year plans in which China takes such pride.³³ It is important for the United States to appreciate that China's leaders are neither peerless strategic savants nor amateur tactical improvisers; they will likely stumble and adapt, as seen with their recalibration of the BRI's course. Washington stands to be more competitive over the long run if it invests anew in its unique competitive strengths than if it endeavors to replicate China's movements.³⁴

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Chinese ambitions of having a 'great power' status focus on surpassing the US and becoming the leading global power. China's 'Great Rejuvenation' is much more than just a plan to provide connectivity and improve the economy and wealth of the Chinese people. Rather, it should be considered as the largest ever, global, man-invented project which creates conditions to surpass potential adversaries in any possible domain, through mostly economic and political means (but who can guarantee that once having the economic dominance in place, future Chinese leadership would not consider use of military power to do thy bidding?). President Xi Jinping's ideas of restoration of Chinese greatness and re-making China into the 'Country of the Middle' should breed deep and multivector oriented thinking and concerns among the US and Western world.

In pursuit of global goals, China became one of the largest global investors (in some cases even the largest) and one of the largest importers of natural resources. What makes Chinese offers attractive, especially to smaller and weaker countries/economies, is the fact that China usually offers a lot, but asks for little in return initially.

While not preferring military confrontation and actually avoiding it at the moment, China chose diplomacy, economy and information as the main arenas of their actions. Chinese diplomatic successes could be highlighted by growing number of countries abandoning Chinese adversaries (i.e. diminished international support to Taiwan) and shifting to support Beijing's narratives. To secure its economic position and actions, China tries to create a new global financial system, as an alternative to the existing World Banking System. At the same time, China is more than eager to pursue with their debt trap scenarios, offering huge resources or investments to smaller and weaker states. The cost is a loss of sovereignty of territories important to Chinese global plans.

Unlike China, Russia has a different perception on what it means to be a great power. Russian ambitions do not aim at establishing a physical presence all around the globe. Instead, the Kremlin perceives its status of great power as a set of capacities/abilities to influence a situation, influence developments, or as an ability to make things happen or not happen, preferably wherever and whenever Moscow wills so. From this perspective, Russian hard power assets are meant to demonstrate overwhelming magnitude of military capabilities (regardless whether real or fake ones), establish A2AD and provide projection of power good enough to execute aggressive Russian actions.

Russia's policies and strategies are, therefore, focused on countering the US and NATO's presence and supremacy. Moscow's primary focus remains on Europe and Europe's neighborhood at the moment, and only to some extent in other places where Russian goals could be achieved with relatively little efforts and resources.

³³ For these reasons, among others, it is unclear that China will overtake the United States as the world's foremost power, even as the margin of the latter's preeminence will likely continue to decline; I elaborate in "Questioning the Presumption of a U.S.-China Power Transition," *Diplomat* (January 8, 2019).

³⁴ James Dobbins and I make this point in "The U.S. can't 'out-China' China," *Hill* (December 30, 2018).

However, new, potentially threatening developments from a US perspective have occurred over the last several years. Russia and China, traditionally opposed to each other (rifts between the two countries peaked in 1969, during war in Ussuria, and never truly settled since then), have seemingly entered into a 'honeymoon' relationship, or so called 'marriage of convenience' recently. China, benefiting throughout the decades from the US support and sponsorship, has silently but persistently worked hard on establishing broad economic capabilities, finally announcing the will to surpass the US by 2049. Chinese investments have spread around the globe rapidly, with an intent to establish new 'Silk Roads' across the land and sea and re-make China into the Country of the Middle. On the other hand, Russian leadership needs money and offers an abundance of natural energy resources, which pre-sets the stage for Russia-China relations. In this duo, China may offer the money, which is much needed in Moscow, and at the same time Russia may in return allow some more bold Chinese actions pushing the Belt and Road Initiative through areas contested in the past. Russia might even consider joining some of these Chinese projects. This relationship seems to continue deepening as China and Russia are being cornered by U.S. policies (e.g., sanctions, economic conflicts, military presence, etc.) and, therefore, share a common adversary – the US. Consequences of a merge of Russian resources and Chinese emerging economy and technology should be very attentively monitored, analyzed and assessed. Furthermore, strategies to counter Chinese grand long-term strategies, as well as Russian 'fait accompli' strategies, need to be searched for immediately.

Subject Matter Expert Biographies

Dean Cheng

Senior Research Fellow, Asian Studies Center, Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy
(Heritage Foundation)



Dean Cheng brings detailed knowledge of China's military and space capabilities to bear as The Heritage Foundation's research fellow on Chinese political and security affairs. He specializes in China's military and foreign policy, in particular its relationship with the rest of Asia and with the United States. Cheng has written extensively on China's military doctrine, technological implications of its space program and "dual use" issues associated with the communist nation's industrial and scientific infrastructure. He previously worked for 13 years as a senior analyst, first with Science Applications International Corp. (SAIC), the Fortune 500 specialist in defense and homeland security, and then with the China Studies division of the Center for Naval Analyses, the federally funded research institute. Before entering the private sector, Cheng studied China's defense-industrial complex for a congressional agency, the Office of Technology Assessment, as an analyst in the International Security and Space Program. Cheng has appeared on public affairs shows such as *John McLaughlin's One on One* and programs on National Public Radio, CNN International, BBC World Service and International Television News (ITN). He has been interviewed by or provided commentary for publications such as *Time* magazine, *The Washington Post*, *Financial Times*, *Bloomberg News*, *Jane's Defense Weekly*, South Korea's *Chosun Ilbo* and Hong Kong's *South China Morning Post*. Cheng has spoken at the National Space Symposium, National Defense University, the Air Force Academy, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Eisenhower Center for Space and Defense Studies. Cheng earned a bachelor's degree in politics from Princeton University in 1986 and studied for a doctorate at MIT. He and his wife reside in Vienna, Va.

Michael Fabey

Americas Naval Reporter (Jane's Fighting Ships)
US Editor (Jane's Fighting Ships)



Michael Fabey is an award-winning journalist who has more than three decades of experience writing for newspapers, magazines and online news sites. As author of *Crashback*, he gained unparalleled access to the Chinese naval command after 15 years covering the Pentagon. The result is the much-anticipated book about the U.S. and China power clash in the Pacific slated for publication by Scribner (a division of Simon & Schuster) in October 2017. Now the Americas Naval Reporter for *Jane's* and the US Editor for *Jane's Fighting Ships*, Fabey has reported on military matters throughout his career, writing for such publications as *Aviation Week*, *Defense News* and *Janes*. As a foreign correspondent, he worked in newsrooms around the globe for *The Economist Group*, *O. Estado de S. Paulo* and a variety of other publications.

David C. Gompert

Distinguished Visiting Professor (US Naval Academy)
Adjunct Professor (Virginia Union University)
Senior Fellow (RAND Corporation)



The Honorable David C. Gompert is currently Distinguished Visiting Professor at the U.S. Naval Academy, Adjunct Professor at Virginia Union University, and Senior Fellow at RAND. Mr. Gompert was Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence from 2009 to 2010. During 2010, he served as Acting Director of National Intelligence, in which capacity he oversaw the U.S. Intelligence Community and acted as the President's chief intelligence advisor. Prior to his most recent government service, Mr. Gompert was a Senior Fellow at the RAND Corporation, from 2004 to 2009. Before that he was Distinguished Research Professor at the Center for Technology and National Security Policy, National Defense University. From 2003 to 2004, Mr. Gompert served as the Senior Advisor for National Security and Defense, Coalition Provisional Authority, Iraq. He has taught at RAND Graduate School, U.S. Naval Academy, the National Defense University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Virginia Union University. Mr. Gompert served as President of RAND Europe from 2000 to 2003, during which period he was on the RAND Europe Executive Board and Chairman of RAND Europe-UK. He was Vice President of RAND and Director of the National Defense Research Institute from 1993 to 2000. From 1990 to 1993, Mr. Gompert was Special Assistant to President George H. W. Bush and Senior Director for Europe on the National Security Council staff. He has held numerous positions at the State Department, including Deputy to the Under Secretary for Political Affairs (1982-83), Deputy Assistant Secretary for Europe (1981-82), Deputy Director of the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (1977-81), and Special Assistant to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (1973-75). Mr. Gompert worked in the private sector from 1983-1990. At Unisys (1989-90), he was President of the Systems Management Group. At AT&T (1983-89), he was Vice President, Civil Sales and Programs, and Director of International Market Planning. Mr. Gompert has published on international affairs, national security and information technology. His books (authored or co-authored) include *War with China: Thinking through the Unthinkable*, *Blinders, Blunders, and Wars: What America and China Can Learn*; *Sea Power and American Interests in the Western Pacific*; *The Paradox of Power: Sino-American Strategic Restraint in an Age of Vulnerability*; *Underkill: Capabilities for Military Operations amid Populations*; *War by Other Means: Building Capabilities for Counterinsurgency*; *BattleWise: Achieving Time-Information Superiority in Networked Warfare*; *Nuclear Weapons and World Politics (ed.)*; *America and Europe: A Partnership for a new Era (ed.)*; *Right Makes Might: Freedom and Power in the Information Age*; *Mind the Gap: A Transatlantic Revolution in Military Affairs*. Mr. Gompert is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Advisory Board of the Naval Academy Center for Cyber Security Studies and chairman of the board of Bobcats Sports League. He has served on numerous for-profit and not-for-profit boards. Mr. Gompert holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Engineering from the U. S. Naval Academy and a Master of Public Affairs degree from the Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University. He and his wife Cynthia live in Virginia and New Hampshire.

Dr. Edward N. Luttwak

Senior Associate (CSIS)



Edward N. Luttwak is Senior Associate, Center for Strategic and International Studies of Washington DC., Chairman of AP Fleet, (aircraft leasing), Dublin, Ireland, and is active as a consultant to governments and international enterprises. He founded and heads a conservation ranch in the Amazon. Has served/serves as a consultant to the US National Security Council, the White House Chief of Staff, the US Department of Defense, US Department of State, US Army, US Air Force, and several allied governments. At present he is working as a contractor for the Office of the Secretary of Defense OSD/NA. Has taught at Johns Hopkins and Georgetown Has been an invited lecturer at universities and higher military schools in the US, UK, China, Israel, Japan the Russian Federation and other countries. His book *The Rise of China versus the Logic of Strategy* (Harvard University Press, 2012), reflects an engagement with Chinese affairs that dates back to an extensive visit in 1976. His previous books, which include *Strategy: the Logic of War and Peace* and *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* have also been published in 23 foreign languages, including Chinese, Japanese, Hebrew,

Korean and Russian. C.V. Born in Arad, Transylvania in 1942, attended schools in Sicily and England, then the London School of Economics (B.Sc.Econ) and Johns Hopkins University (Ph.D.). LLD Honoris Causa University of Bath (UK). Worked for some years in London and Jerusalem before moving to Washington DC. Speaks several languages.

Dr. Sean McFate

Professor (National Defense University)



Dr. Sean McFate is an author, novelist and foreign policy expert. He is a professor of strategy at the National Defense University and Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in Washington, DC. Additionally, he is an Advisor to Oxford University's Centre for Technology and Global Affairs. A specialist in national security strategy, McFate was a think tank scholar at the RAND Corporation, Atlantic Council, Bipartisan Policy Center, and New America Foundation. Recently, he was a visiting Scholar at Oxford University's Changing Character of War Program, where he conducted research on future war. McFate's career began as a paratrooper and officer in the U.S. Army's storied 82nd Airborne Division. He served under Stan McChrystal and David Petraeus, and graduated from elite training programs, such as Jungle Warfare School in Panama. He was also a Jump Master. McFate then became a private military contractor. Among his many experiences, he dealt with warlords, raised armies for U.S. interest, rode with armed groups in the Sahara, conducted strategic reconnaissance for oil companies, transacted arms deals in Eastern Europe, and helped prevent an impending genocide in the Rwanda region. In the world of international business, McFate was a Vice President at TD International, a boutique political risk consulting firm with offices in Washington, Houston, Singapore and Zurich. Additionally, he was a manager at DynCorp International, a consultant at BearingPoint (now Deloitte Consulting) and an associate at Booz Allen Hamilton. McFate's newest book is *The New Rules of War: Victory in the Age of Durable Disorder* (William Morrow). Admiral Jim Stavridis (retired), the former NATO Supreme Allied Commander, said: "Stunning. Sean McFate is a new Sun Tzu." McFate also authored *The Modern Mercenary: Private Armies and What They Mean for World Order* (Oxford University Press) which explains how the privatization of war is changing warfare. The Economist called it a "fascinating and disturbing book." McFate also write fiction based on his military experiences. He co-authored the novels *Shadow War* and *Deep Black* (William Morrow), part of the Tom Locke series. *New York Times* #1 bestselling author Mark Greaney said: "I was blown away.... simply one of the most entertaining and intriguing books I've read in quite some time." A coveted speaker, McFate has appeared before the British House of Commons, top universities and popular audience venues. He has written for the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *The Atlantic*, *The New Republic*, *Foreign Policy*, *Politico*, *Daily Beast*, *CNBC*, *Vice Magazine*, *Aeon*, *War on the Rocks*, *Military Review* and *African Affairs*. He has appeared on CNN's *Amanpour*, MSNBC's *Morning Joe*, *Fox and Friends*, NPR, BBC, *Economist*, Vice/HBO, The Discovery Channel, and American Heroes Channel. As a scholar, he has authored eight book chapters in edited academic volumes and published a monograph for the U.S. Army War College on how to raise foreign armies. McFate holds a BA from Brown University, MPP from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, and a Ph.D. in international relations from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). He lives in Washington, DC.

Robert Morgus

Senior Policy Analyst, Cyber Security Initiative and International Security Program (New America)



Robert Morgus is a senior policy analyst with New America's Cybersecurity Initiative and International Security program and the deputy director of the FIU-New America C2B Partnership. His current research focuses on mechanisms to counter the spread of offensive cyber capability, cybersecurity and international governance, and Russian internet doctrine. In the past, he has authored reports on international cybersecurity norms, internet governance, cybersecurity insurance, amongst others. Morgus has spoken about cybersecurity at a number of international forums including NATO's CyCon, the Global Conference on Cyberspace at The Hague, and Cy Fy 2015 in New Delhi, India. His research has been published and recognized by the *New York*

Times, Slate, the IEEE, peer-reviewed academic journals, and numerous other national and international media outlets. Morgus serves as a member of the Research Advisory Network for the Global Commission on Internet Governance, as well as the Global Forum on Cyber Expertise, and has served as an expert advisor for the World Economic Forum. Before joining New America, Morgus provided research and logistical assistance for a variety of organizations ranging from sustainable development firms to political action committees. Morgus received his BA with honors in diplomacy and world affairs from Occidental College in Los Angeles in 2013 where he focused on international security. While at Occidental, he was the recipient of the Young Fund Student Grant to conduct research on ethno-nationalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia. His capstone thesis "Economic Shocks as a Catalyst for Instability: Conditions and Transmission Channels" was one of six honored by the college. He hails from Idaho.

Dr. Jaganath Sankaran

Assistant Professor (University of Texas at Austin)



Dr. Sankaran works on problems that lie at the intersection of international security and science & technology. Sankaran spent the first four years of his career as a defense scientist with the Indian Missile R&D establishment. His work in weapons design and development led to his interests in matters such as the balance of military power, strategic stability, and arms control. Sankaran received his Ph.D. (in international security Policy) in 2012, writing his dissertation on the role of deterrence, dissuasion, denial and arms control in preserving peace and stability in outer space. The current focus of Sankaran's research is Asia-Pacific. Sankaran studies the growing military and nuclear weapons capabilities of China and the counter military balancing undertaken by the United States, Japan, India and other states. Sankaran has also worked on U.S.-Russia strategic stability and nuclear arms control. Sankaran has held fellowships at the Los Alamos National Laboratory, the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University and at RAND Corporation. Sankaran has published in *International Security*, *Contemporary Security Policy*, *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, *Arms Control Today*, *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* and other outlets. His research has also been published by the RAND Corporation and the Stimson Center.

Dr. Robert S. Spalding III

Brigadier General (ret) (US Air Force)



Dr. Rob Spalding is an accomplished innovator in government and a national security policy strategist. He has served in senior positions of strategy and diplomacy within the Defense and State Departments for more than 26 years. He was the chief architect of the framework for national competition in the Trump Administration's widely praised National Security Strategy (NSS), and the Senior Director for Strategy to the President. Dr. Spalding is globally recognized for his knowledge of Chinese economic competition, cyber warfare and political influence, as well as for his ability to forecast global trends and develop innovative solutions. Dr. Spalding's relationship with business leaders, fostered during his time as a Military Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, allowed him to recommend pragmatic solutions to complex foreign policy and national security issues, which are driving positive economic outcomes for the nation. Dr. Spalding's groundbreaking work on competition in Secure 5G has reset the global environment for the next phase of cyber security in the information age. Dr. Spalding is a skilled combat leader, promoter of technological advances to achieve improved unit performance, and a seasoned diplomat. Under Dr. Spalding's leadership, the 509th Operations Group—the nation's only B-2 Stealth Bomber unit—experienced unprecedented technological and operational advances. Dr. Spalding's demonstrated acumen for solving complex technological issues to achieve operational success, was demonstrated when he led a low-cost rapid-integration project for a secure global communications capability in the B-2, achieving tremendous results at almost no cost to the government. As commander, he led forces in the air and on the ground in Libya and Iraq. During the UUV Incident of 2016, Dr. Spalding averted a diplomatic crisis by negotiating with the Chinese PLA for the return of the UUV, without the aid of a translator. Dr. Spalding has written extensively on national security matters. He is currently working on a book concerning national competition in the

21st Century. His work has been published in *The Washington Post*, *The Washington Times*, *Foreign Affairs*, *The American Interest*, *War on the Rocks*, *FedTech Magazine*, *Defense One*, *The Diplomat*, and other edited volumes. His Air Power Journal article on *America's Two Air Forces* is frequently used in the West Point curriculum. Dr. Spalding is a Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute and a Life Member of the Council on Foreign Relations. He has lectured globally, including engagements at the Naval War College, National Defense University, Air War College, Columbia University, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory and other Professional Military Educational institutions. Dr. Spalding received his Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees in Agricultural Business from California State University, Fresno, and holds a doctorate in economics and mathematics from the University of Missouri, Kansas City. He was a distinguished graduate of the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, and is fluent in Chinese Mandarin.

Yun Sun

Co-Director, East Asia Program (Stimson Center)
Director, China Program (Stimson Center)



Yun Sun is co-Director of the East Asia Program and Director of the China Program at the Stimson Center. Her expertise is in Chinese foreign policy, U.S.-China relations and China's relations with neighboring countries and authoritarian regimes. From 2011 to early 2014, she was a Visiting Fellow at the Brookings Institution, jointly appointed by the Foreign Policy Program and the Global Development Program, where she focused on Chinese national security decision-making processes and China-Africa relations. From 2008 to 2011, Yun was the China Analyst for the International Crisis Group based in Beijing, specializing on China's foreign policy towards conflict countries and the developing world. Prior to ICG, she worked on U.S.-Asia relations in Washington, DC for five years. Yun earned her master's degree in international policy and practice from George Washington University, as well as an MA in Asia Pacific studies and a BA in international relations from Foreign Affairs College in Beijing.

Dr. Michael D. Swaine

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Michael Swaine is a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and one of the most prominent American analysts in Chinese security studies. Formerly a senior policy analyst at the RAND Corporation, Swaine is a specialist in Chinese defense and foreign policy, U.S.-China relations, and East Asian international relations. He has authored and edited more than a dozen books and monographs and many journal articles and book chapters in these areas, directs several security-related projects with Chinese partners, and advises the U.S. government on Asian security issues. He received his doctorate in government from Harvard University.

Dr. Philip Fei-Ling Wang

Professor, Sam Nunn School of International Affairs (Georgia Institute of Technology)



Philip Fei-Ling Wang, Ph.D. (University of Pennsylvania), Professor at Sam Nunn School of International Affairs, Georgia Institute of Technology. His research interests are comparative and international political economy, U.S.-East Asian relations, and East Asia and China studies. He has published seven books (two co-edited) in two languages including *Organization through Division and Exclusion: China's Hukou System* (Stanford University Press, 2005) and *The China Order: Centralia, World Empire, and the Nature of Chinese Power* (SUNY Press, 2017). He has also published dozens of book chapters and journal articles in four languages. He taught at the

U.S. Military Academy (West Point) and held visiting and adjunct/honorary positions in institutions like European University Institute, Sciences Po, National University of Singapore, National Taiwan University, Renmin University of China and Anhui Normal University in China, University of Tokyo in Japan, U.S. Air Force Academy, and Sungkyunkwan University and Yonsei University in Korea. He has appeared in many national and international news media such as Al Jazeera, AP, BBC, CNN, The Financial Times, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and the Xinhua News Agency. He has had numerous research grants including a Minerva Chair grant, a Fulbright Senior Scholar grant and a Hitachi Fellowship. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Ali Wyne

Policy Analyst (RAND Corporation)



Ali Wyne is a Washington, DC-based policy analyst at the RAND Corporation, a nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, and a nonresident fellow at the Modern War Institute. He serves as rapporteur for a U.S. National Intelligence Council working group that analyzes trends in world order. Wyne served as a junior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace from 2008 to 2009 and as a research assistant at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs from 2009 to 2012. From January to July 2013 he worked on a team that prepared Samantha Power for her confirmation hearing to be U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. From 2014 to 2015 he served on RAND's adjunct staff, working with the late Richard Solomon on RAND's *Strategic Rethink* series. Wyne received dual degrees in management science and political science from MIT (2008) and earned his Masters in Public Policy from the Harvard Kennedy School (2017). While at the Kennedy School he served on a Hillary for America working group on U.S. policy toward Asia. Wyne is a coauthor of *Lee Kuan Yew: The Grand Master's Insights on China, the United States, and the World* (2013) and a contributing author to *Power Relations in the Twenty-First Century: Mapping a Multipolar World?* (2017) and the *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy* (2008). Wyne is a term member of the Council on Foreign Relations, a David Rockefeller fellow with the Trilateral Commission, and a security fellow with the Truman National Security Project.

Lieutenant Colonel Maciej Zaborowski

Analyst, Combined Strategic Analysis Group, CCJ-5 (US Central Command)



Lt Col Maciej Zaborowski is a Polish Air Force officer, currently assigned at Combined Strategic Analysis Group (CSAG), CCJ-5, US Central Command. He serves there as analyst and a member of international sort of 'think tank' structure, unique to USCENTCOM. Lt Col Maciej Zaborowski entered military in 1993 (Military University of Technology, Warsaw; 5-year Master of Science in aviation course, commissioned officer in 1997). He began his professional carrier as a member of 36th Special Air Transportation Regiment (maintenance engineer positions, also JAK-40 and Tupolew 154M flying crew member). Prior to his current assignment, Lt Col Zaborowski served at number of positions in the Polish Ministry of National Defense and the General Command of the Polish Armed Forces as an analyst, defense planner and strategic planner. He also served at the NATO Supreme Allied Command Transformation Headquarters (Norfolk, Virginia, 2008-2011) as Curriculum Design Officer and Concept Developer, and in European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (Field Office Zugdidi, 2013-2014). He is a graduate of National Defense University postgraduate studies, with focus on leadership and negotiations. He is also a graduate of George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, Germany (Program of Advanced Security Studies). His current efforts focus on Great Power Competition, with highlight on Central Asia, Russia, Kazakhstan and China.

Author Biographies

Eric Kuznar

Analyst (NSI, Inc.)



Eric Kuznar is an analyst at NSI, Inc. where he began working at the company in 2019. Prior to becoming a full-time employee, Kuznar worked part time for NSI while completing his Master of Arts (MA) in Political Science at Ball State University. While at Ball State, he completed and presented research on the impact of prescription opioid abuse on Midwestern Counties and their socioeconomic performance. Before pursuing his MA in Political Science, he completed a Bachelor of Arts at Ball State with a dual major in Telecommunications and Journalism, where he covered stories throughout Central Indiana writing for TheCurrent, which owns a string of newspapers in Indianapolis, Indiana, as well as the Ball State Daily News.

George Popp

Senior Analyst (NSI, Inc.)



George Popp is a Senior Analyst at NSI, Inc. where he conducts research and analysis on a broad range of multidisciplinary analysis projects that focus on understanding the political, economic, and social dynamics of emerging conflict situations and environments throughout the world. The bulk of George's work has been in support of NSI's government initiatives, particularly leading and contributing to human behavior analytics efforts completed for the Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA) program on behalf of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and in support of direct requests from US Combatant Commanders to the Department of Defense. George has also supported NSI's commercial initiatives, conducting business intelligence analyses for clients in the video game industry. George's degree is in Economics from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.