



SMA CENTCOM Panel Discussion

Black Swan Scenarios

From the SMA Study in Support of USCENTCOM:

*Assessment of Strategic Implications of Population Dynamics in the
Central Region*

**27 March 2020
1030-1200 ET**

Tab B Question 8

STRATEGIC MULTILAYER ASSESSMENT (SMA) OF
*STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF POPULATION DYNAMICS IN
THE CENTRAL REGION*

QUESTION B8: HOW WILL CHINESE AND RUSSIAN RELATIONSHIPS WITH KEY REGIONAL POWERS SUCH AS IRAN, SAUDI ARABIA, TURKEY, SYRIA, ISRAEL, EGYPT, AND PAKISTAN (REGIONALLY AND VIS-A-VIS INDIA) PLAY OUT OVER THE NEXT 5-25 YEARS?

TEAM

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27 MARCH 2020

LONG-TERM STRATEGIC QUESTIONS

- HOW TO KEEP THE MENA ALLIES "ON SIDE" WITH THE UNITED STATES?
- HOW TO MAINTAIN AMERICAN POWER AND PRE-EMPT RUSSIA AND CHINA FROM BUILDING THE CORE REGIONAL ALLIANCE, THUS FURTHER MAKING POWERS IN MENA SERVE THE INTERESTS OF MOSCOW AND BEIJING?



B8: How will Chinese and Russian relationships with key regional powers such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Israel, Egypt, and Pakistan (regionally and vis-a-vis India) play out over the next 5-25 years?

China and Russia:



Principal Findings – China in MENA:

- Remains politically neutral but pays close attention to the regional security environment.
- Continues to build economic and political relationships with regional Powers and MENA periphery.
- Chinese-Russian alliance possible but may still be pre-empted by US action with regional Powers and in MENA periphery.
- Opportunity for CENTCOM to conduct military confidence-building measures (CBMs) to enhance communication, deter anti-US popular sentiment/hostility, and blunt anti-US aggression.

Research Approach – Challenges and Opportunities:

- A comparative study employing careful qualitative analysis served as the project's foundation. Additionally, assessments used quantitative data to provide illustrative measurements of economic and military activities.
- **Mechanical prediction of Russian and Chinese strategic behavior in the CENTCOM AOR is impossible.** However, analysis based upon historical trends and rational foresight – extrapolated for possible future outcomes – facilitated analysis of how Chinese and Russian relationships may develop with key regional powers over the next 5-25 years.
- Assessments took cognizance of points of convergence in Russian-Chinese relations vis-à-vis the US and NATO, as well as areas where Moscow's and Beijing's interests diverge.
- Sources included the People's Bank of China, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the International Monetary Fund's databases, the World Bank's World Development Indicators, English- and German-language open-source media/research, secondary literature, *etc.*

Principal Findings – Russia in MENA:

- Direct support for Damascus and collaboration with Ankara and Teheran will likely continue to at least 2024.
- Collaboration with European “Trojan Horses” and fellow travelers should further reinforce Russia in MENA to at least 2024.
- Oil-price depression and COVID-19 effects, if prolonged, may make Russian military effort in MENA untenable.
- Russian-Chinese alliance in MENA and CENTCOM AOR periphery would indirectly assist continued Russian military activity in MENA.

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POWER TRANSITION (1)

SHORT TERM (2020 TO 2025):

- THEME OF THIS 5-YEAR PERIOD: FROM UNSTABLE *STATUS QUO* TO THE BEGINNING OF THE CHANGES

MEDIUM TERM (2025 TO 2035):

- THEME OF THIS 10-YEAR PERIOD: TRANSITION TO REALIGNMENT FROM US-CORE TO RUSSIA-CORE WITH CHINA'S ENGAGEMENT

LONG TERM (2035 TO 2045):

- THEME OF THIS 10-YEAR PERIOD: CONFRONTATION AND REBALANCING POWER STRUCTURE

POWER TRANSITION (2)

SHORT TERM (2020 TO 2025):

- A NEW SUPERPOWER RIVALRY INVOLVING CHINA AND RUSSIA VS. THE UNITED STATES WILL START TO EMERGE

MEDIUM TERM (2025 TO 2035):

- INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PARADIGM WILL MAKE WAY FOR A “COLDER-WAR” POLITICS

LONG TERM (2035 TO 2045):

- THE WORLD WILL SEE MORE AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES THAN DEMOCRATIC STATES IN GLOBAL POLITICS AND IN TRADE AND BUSINESS

POWER TRANSITION (3): CONSIDERATIONS

- ANY FURTHER DETERIORATION OF REGIONAL SECURITY POSES SERIOUS CHALLENGES FOR THE UNITED STATES, CHINA, AND RUSSIA.
- ALTHOUGH THERE EXISTS A GENERAL UNDERSTANDING THAT SECURITY AND STABILITY SHOULD BE MAINTAINED IN MENA, THE POWERS DISAGREE OVER HOW TO REALIZE THIS OBJECTIVE WHILE PRESERVING AND ENHANCING THEIR RESPECTIVE INTERESTS.
- DIFFERING, SOMETIMES OPPOSING, POSITIONS OF ALL MAJOR POWERS TOWARD DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MENA REGION – ESPECIALLY AMONG THE UNITED STATES, RUSSIA, AND CHINA – MUST BE VIEWED AMONG THE FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO INSTABILITY AND SECURITY DISORDER.

THE UNITED STATES

THE UNITED STATES “(P)ROMISED A FOREIGN POLICY THAT IS NATIONALIST AND TRANSACTIONAL, FOCUSED ON SECURING NARROW MATERIAL GAINS FOR THE UNITED STATES.” ITS FOREIGN POLICY IS GRADUALLY COMING TO BE SEEN AS COMPROMISING THE STABILITY OF THE ARAB COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY THE GCC COUNTRIES, EVEN AS THE US COMBATS EXTREMIST RELIGIOUS GROUPS AND IRAN’S HOSTILE POLICIES.

CHINA

WHILE IT WILL CONTINUE TO FOCUS ON ITS ECONOMIC INTERESTS IN THE REGION, BEIJING'S APPROACHES HAVE BEGUN TO CHANGE:

- BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE
- MORE ATTENTION TO THE SECURITY DIMENSION
- CHINA'S POLICES REMAIN LARGELY NEUTRAL, AT BOTH SECURITY AND POLITICAL LEVELS

RUSSIA AND CHINA

PERSISTENTLY URGE RETENTION OF THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR DEAL (JCPOA). THEREBY AGREE WITH THE “EU2 +1” STATES.

DISCOURAGE THE US POLICY OF SANCTIONS AND POLITICAL PRESSURE AGAINST IRAN.

UNDER THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE UNITED STATES LOSES ITS INFLUENCE AND RUSSIA AND CHINA EMERGE AS CLOSE ALLIES, THE POLITICAL AND SECURITY LANDSCAPE IN THE MENA REGION WILL BE DRAMATICALLY DIFFERENT IN THE FUTURE.

A COLDER WAR RIVALRY: US ALONE VS. CHINESE-RUSSIAN ALLIANCE (1)

- “ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT POTENTIAL THREATS FACING US FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY OVER THE NEXT DECADE IS THAT OF CLOSER COOPERATION BETWEEN RUSSIA AND CHINA,” WHO “WANT TO SHAPE A WORLD ANTITHETICAL TO U.S. VALUES AND INTERESTS” – EUGENE JOHN GREGORY AND THOMAS SHERLOCK
- FUTURE OF A RUSSIA-CHINA ALLIANCE IS “THE MOST DANGEROUS SCENARIO” – ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI

A COLDER WAR RIVALRY: US ALONE VS. CHINA AND RUSSIA **ALLIANCE (2)**

- “WHEN RUSSIAN OR CHINESE NATIONAL SECURITY LEADERS THINK ABOUT CURRENT THREATS, THE SPECTRE THEY SEE IS THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.” – GRAHAM ALLISON
- “CHINA AND RUSSIA NO LONGER SHARE A COMMON EXPANSIONIST IDEOLOGY, BUT REALPOLITIK CONSIDERATIONS ARE DRIVING THEM TOGETHER...” – MICHAEL O'HANLON AND ADAM TWARDOWSKI
- “CHINA AND RUSSIA CHALLENGE AMERICAN POWER, INFLUENCE, AND INTERESTS, ATTEMPTING TO ERODE AMERICAN SECURITY AND PROSPERITY...” – 2017 US NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

PERSEPECTIVES

1. IT IS WITHIN THIS SCOPE THAT RUSSIA AND CHINA PURSUE THEIR DESIRE TO WEAKEN US DOMINANCE IN THE MENA REGION AND MAY SEEK TO ACCOMMODATE A NEW ALLIANCE (WITH A RUSSIA-CHINA AXIS AS CORE).
2. THIS NEW ALLIANCE MAY POSSESS STRATEGIC CAPACITY TO REBALANCE THE POWER STRUCTURE IN THE AREA. IN DUE COURSE, PERIPHERAL POWERS – INDIA, TURKEY, EGYPT, SAUDI ARABIA, ISRAEL, IRAN AND PAKISTAN – HAVE TO INTRODUCE FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN THEIR DOMESTIC ECONOMIC AND FOREIGN POLICIES IN COMING DECADES.

IMPLICATIONS

- THE UNITED STATES CANNOT AFFORD TO DROP ITS GUARD IN DEFENDING ITS INTERESTS AND MAINTAINING ITS LONG-ESTABLISHED RELATIONS WITH COUNTRIES IN THE REGION.
- THE US POSSESSES THE ABILITY TO COUNTER CHINESE GLOBAL OUTREACH ACTIVITIES AND PREVENT REGIONAL RELIANCE ON TRADE WITH CHINA BY STRENGTHENING ITS OWN RELATIONSHIPS WITH THESE COUNTRIES AND USING CHINESE REGIONAL SHORTCOMINGS TO ITS ADVANTAGE.
- AMERICAN SOFT-POWER STRENGTH THROUGH CRITICAL IDEALS, UNIVERSAL VALUES, AND HUMANITARIAN EXPECTATIONS IS THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD SYSTEM THAT SECURES A RULE-BASED ORDER AND FREE MARKET DISCIPLINES.

WASHINGTON'S MENA "TO DO" LIST

- ✓ PRIORITIZE CIVILIAN AND MILITARY JOINT CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES (CBMS) IN THE PLANNING OF SPECIFIC PROCEDURES TO “PREVENT HOSTILITIES, TO AVERT ESCALATION, TO REDUCE MILITARY TENSION, AND TO BUILD MUTUAL TRUST BETWEEN COUNTRIES.”
- ✓ TAKE INCREMENTAL STEPS THAT SERVE TO EASE ANTI-US POPULAR SENTIMENTS, DETER ANTI-US AGGRESSION, AND ERADICATE ANTI-US HOSTILITY.
- ✓ KEEP THE FACT FIRMLY IN MIND THAT “THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RUSSIA AND CHINA IS NOT A GIVEN. IT WILL CONTINUE TO EVOLVE LARGELY AS A FUNCTION OF UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY.”

CONCLUSION

THE CHINA-RUSSIA CORE ALLIANCE WITH KEY PLAYERS IN THE MENA REGION AS THEIR PERIPHERY WILL BE A GEOSTRATEGIC CHALLENGE TO THE UNITED STATES. AN EFFECTIVE OVERARCHING STRATEGY IS A MUST TO GUIDE US-CHINA AND US-RUSSIA RELATIONS MOVING FORWARD.

“THE WORLD WE LIVE IN IS INCREASINGLY ONE IN WHICH... PAST RULES AND INSTITUTIONS ARE MORE, AND MORE RAPIDLY, IRRELEVANT AND ARGUABLY QUITE HARMFUL... THAT PRESENTS US WITH A BIGGER AND BIGGER PROBLEM-- AND OPPORTUNITY.” – JIM DATOR, FUTURIST AND AUTHOR OF “THE DAY ‘AMERICA’ CHANGED FOR THE WORLD.”

Tab B Questions 12-15



THE CENTER FOR ADVANCED RED TEAMING

UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY
State University of New York



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Question B14: (Revised) How might Great Power Competition and regional dynamics change following the targeted killing of Qassem Soleimani?

Gary Ackerman, Ph.D.
Douglas Clifford

SMA Black Swan Panel Discussion
March 27th, 2020

Question B14: (Revised)* How might Great Power Competition and regional dynamics change following the targeted killing of Qassem Soleimani?

Objective:

- Explore broader strategic dynamics in the CENTCOM AOR with respect to key competitors (RED): Iran, PRC and Russia following the “shock” of the targeted killing of Qassem Soleimani.
- **Primary Focus:** capturing a range of potential strategies employed by RED, along with risk perceptions and reactions to other actors
- **Secondary Focus:** distinguishing “path dependent” strategic dynamics based on systemic, structural forces from those which are more highly contingent on factors like leadership idiosyncrasies and particular moves by other players.

**Revised from original question B14: How might GPC and regional dynamics change if another 9-11 scenario occurred that emanated from the Central Region?*

Project Leaders

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Methodology

Strategic Dynamics Red Teaming (SDRT)

- Multiple red team simulations of the same scenario, varying the **RED** actors, but keeping other actors constant where possible.
- Allows for examination of the strategic and operational considerations and actions of all players over multiple rounds.

Application for SMA CENTCOM effort

- Four identical, four-hour simulations conducted over a two-day period from January 20th to January 21st, 2020.

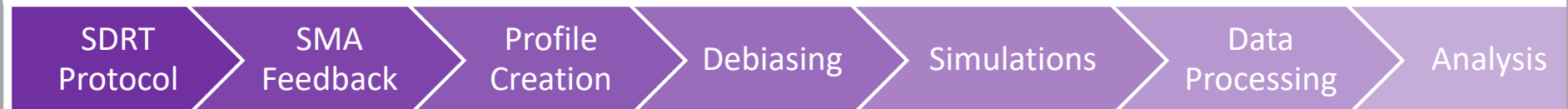
Actors



Participants

- 3 simulations: senior scholars with **GREEN** and **BLUE** constant
- 1 simulation: advanced students (provide alternate perspective)
 - Disciplines represented: some participants had AOR expertise, others drawn from a variety of disciplines (e.g., Economics, Public Policy, and International Relations)

Process



Structure: Course of Play



- Participants receive:
 - Customized background information on their specific nation/role, incl. leadership profile, recent activities in AOR, strategic orientation towards AOR/US
 - Primer on red teaming and minimizing biases during red teaming

- Exercise designed to acclimatize participants to their roles and limit mirror imaging bias
- Participants created baseline strategic memos outlining their baseline strategic objectives for CENTCOM AOR; strategic assumptions about other actors; baseline risk tolerance [shared with WHITE only]
- Receive scenario summarizing the targeted killing of Soleimani and subsequent events
- Updated strategic memos

- Participants formulated broad strategies and operational objectives according to interests
- Communicated with other actors
- Iteratively responded to the overt and covert actions taken by other players with their own actions

- Final actions of all players and achievement of operational and strategic objectives
- Changes in threat perceptions / objectives they attributed to other actors
- Key takeaways for CENTCOM

PRC – Strategic Objectives

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4 - Students
<p>Strategic Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish ourselves as a political and economic powerhouse, both internationally and in the region; • Secure vital energy and oil sources; • Undermine US dominance in the region through strategic partnerships and economic investments; • Convince regional actors to work with the PRC; • Limit regional risks--broadly construed--that might otherwise destabilize the PRC and its strategic aims; • Create local dependencies that align the interests of neighboring countries with those of the PRC; and • Expand into territories that are strategically (economically, militarily) valuable to the PRC. <p>Baseline Risk Tolerance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Push at the margins, not enough to warrant serious external intervention. <p>Assumptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is little international interest in direct confrontation, providing an opportunity for subtle maneuvers and manipulations that advance the overarching interests of the PRC. <p>POST-SOLEIMANI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In general, nothing has changed...however, on item #2, operationally, I would be thinking about additional ways in which I might (a) 	<p>Strategic Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become dominant power in Asia. • Secure belt and road initiative. • Prevent Middle Eastern chaos from affecting Chinese sphere of influence. <p>Baseline Risk Tolerance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willing to play it safe and focus on long-term, time is on our side. <p>Assumptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US wants to dominate Asia • US is incapable of maintaining any long-term strategy; Trump is transitory threat • Europe is imploding and incapable of maintaining long-term strategies in our sphere of influence • China's economic power is growing faster than rivals <p>POST-SOLEIMANI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases the importance of keeping Middle Eastern chaos out of our sphere of influence. 	<p>Strategic Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve Chinese Communist Party rule • Maintain economic growth at levels sufficient to achieve preservation of Chinese Communist Party rule • Diminish U.S. power globally, but especially near China's periphery • Revise global institutions to reflect China's new status • Prevent anti-China actors from using third-parties to gain strength • Prevent Taiwanese declaration of independence <p>Assumptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The U.S. seeks to deny China's proper place in the world, but is limited in the scope of its ability to do so by its deep interdependence with China, both economically but also in terms of needing China's help in certain troubled regions (especially North Korea but also Pakistan, Iran, etc.). • Iran seeks to preserve the Islamic Republic and protect and advance Shiite interests throughout the Muslim world. Iran seeks to avoid large-scale conflict, while using proxies to raise the costs of U.S. presence in the Middle East, seeking in the long-run to diminish American presence there. • Russia seeks to reassert itself as a global great power. It is more acceptant of conflict in the Middle East than other great powers because it benefits from spikes in global 	<p>Strategic Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce US influence in the region. • Securing energy projects and exports from the region. • Increasing arms sales to all parties in the region to increase influence. • Moderate Iranian aggression. • Due to the need for the region's energy, conflict must be avoided. However, if relations continue to deteriorate, China may need to deploy naval forces to region to demonstrate we cannot jeopardize our interests in the region as well as One Belt, One Road Initiative. • Limit but not stop growing Russian influence in the region. <p>Assumptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Saudi-led coalition is in a precarious situation, increasing its reliance on foreign aid, especially from the US and NATO. However, these states will greater establish diplomatic and trade relations with other nations to secure their regimes • Iran is a potential strategic competitor in the region, however, due to our mutual antipathy for the US, they are a potential ally of convenience • Although US-Iranian tensions threaten US influence in the region, destabilization in the region any further would be a threat to our economy • Both the US and Iran are acting erratically

Russia – Operational Objectives

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4 - Students
<p>Round 1 (2020)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissolve Iran's militias in Syria. • Begin exporting food and non-military technology to Central Asia and Saudi Arabia. • Increase the price of oil to mitigate the effect of sanctions on our economy. • Provide more aid to Iraq to stabilize the country as the U.S. withdraws. <p>Round 2 (2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed a trade deal with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan to export agricultural goods and import minerals. I am trying to develop a stronger economic alternative to China in partnerships in the region. This deal allows me to prop up a domestic industry that has strategic value while easing the problems created by Western Sanctions. • Developed a trade deal with Saudi Arabia of services for agricultural goods. • Sold anti-missile and anti-aircraft systems to Saudi Arabia as a defense against potential Iranian aggression. I am trying to develop partnerships in the region to continue to contain Iranian influence without direct confrontation. • Deploy additional troops to Armenia to increase presence. <p>Round 3 (2022)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted joint military exercises in Armenia with the U.S. as a deterrence toward 	<p>Round 1 (2020)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish/Expand as many diplomatic connections as possible. • Begin disinformation campaigns against U.S. or alternatively, in favor of Russia • Bolster military and economic aid to AOR region prior to U.S. being able to take similar action. • Ramp up International intelligence gathering activities <p>Round 2 (2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish/Expand as many diplomatic connections as possible. • Begin disinformation campaigns against U.S. or alternatively, in favor of Russia • Bolster military and economic aid to AOR region prior to U.S. being able to take similar action. • Ramp up International intelligence gathering activities • Increase proactivity <p>Round 3 (2022)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish/Expand as many diplomatic connections as possible. • Begin disinformation campaigns against U.S. or alternatively, in favor of Russia • Bolster military and economic aid to AOR region prior to U.S. being able to take similar action. • Ramp up International intelligence gathering activities • Increase proactivity 	<p>Round 1 (2020)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solidify strategic relationship with Syria's Assad regime and promote stability in Syria by: eliminating ISIS, stabilize the conflict along the Turkish border with NATO, and preventing Iran from launching proxy attacks against the U.S. in Syria • Develop stronger commercial and strategic partnerships with the governments in the Middle East and Central Asia • Discredit the U.S. political position within the Middle East and Central Asia and make it more expensive for the U.S. to maintain its strategic presence in the region • Prevent a war between Iran and the U.S., as that would create too much instability and increase the U.S.'s military presence <p>Round 2 (2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solidify strategic relationship with Syria's Assad regime and promote stability in Syria by: eliminating ISIS, stabilize the conflict along the Turkish border with NATO, and preventing Iran from launching proxy attacks against the U.S. in Syria • Develop stronger commercial and strategic partnerships with the governments in the Middle East and Central Asia • Discredit the U.S. political position within the Middle East and Central Asia and make it more expensive for the U.S. to maintain its strategic presence in the region • Prevent a war between Iran and the U.S., as that would create too much instability and increase the U.S.'s military presence 	<p>Round 1 (2020)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrading of the existing bases and establishment of new CSTO bases in the border areas, increased budget, increased attention to securing borders between -stan countries and Afghanistan and Iran • Establishing and leading peace-making committees and active diplomatic ties under the UN or another international institution • Rosneft will aggressively work on oil deals with local oil producers and regimes to induce favorable deals for energy development. <p>Round 2 (2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SCO extends a formal invitation for Iran to join. • Russia condemns Iran/NKorea trading, but emphasizes it should be seen as a regional issue and to be resolved between Iran, NKorea, and China with RUssia as a mediator. • Russia denounces the US military presence in Israel, asks for international opprobrium of the Western involvement in Asia. • Significant progress is made between China/Iran/Russia energy companies and they open negotiations with the OPEC as a single bloc. • Russia's financial subsidies to Iran are significantly extended. • Russia conducts secret negotiations with Iran's neighbors to extend their economic cooperation with Iran. • Russian and Iran scientific cooperation has extended into cyber security. Joint cyber attacks on the EU, the US infrastructure

KSA – Overt Actions

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4 - Students
<p>Round 1 (2020)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase defensive measures for priority sectors, emphasizes on cyber and air/missile – but also potential from terrorist attack: Government, Military, Energy - Aramco, Aramco Facilities, Aramco Networks down U.S. will to continue, not provoke massive confrontation. <p>Round 2 (2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase policing of dissidents - jailing several activists, but having Ministry of Interior communicate publicly about the crimes of the accused, and particularly some ties they have to Iranian intelligence • Purchase of foodstuffs and anti-missile/anti-aircraft weapons from Russia • Purchase of anti-missile/anti-aircraft weapons from China • KSA and China will attend a Counter-Extremism Conference hosted by Indonesia <p>Round 3 (2022)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Overt Actions. 	<p>Round 1 (2020)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach to several countries regarding the purchase of defensive weapons • Purchase anti-aircraft and anti-missile technologies from Russia, sell petrochemicals to Russia • Purchase anti-aircraft and anti-missile technologies from China, sell petrochemicals and energy finance/logistics to China • Increase defensive measures for priority sectors, emphasizes on cyber and air/missile – but also potential from terrorist attack: Government, Military, Energy - Aramco, Aramco Facilities, Aramco Networks down U.S. will to continue, not provoke massive confrontation. <p>Round 2 (2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KSA conducts outreach to Turkey, Indonesia, Pakistan, and numerous partners in Africa, as well as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to ensure a commitment to KSA’s continued openness to pilgrimage and stewardship of the holy sites. Outreach comes with promises of additional access and educational resources. • KSA increases bombing of Houthi positions in Yemen. Targeting is improved for reasons that are unclear, but there is a decrease in collateral damage. <p>Round 3 (2022)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with US on reaffirmed support for Saudi Arabia in the region 	<p>Round 1 (2020)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic and energy cooperation deal with China, including sale of petrochemicals and related consulting • Public statements showing support for US efforts around the Straits of Hormuz. • Purchase of anti-missile weapons systems and anti-aircraft weapons systems from Russia. • Diplomatic discussions in Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, and Turkey about Saudi educational and religious outreach – both around accessibility to KSA for pilgrims, but also supporting conservative Islamic practices in those countries. <p>Round 2 (2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach with GCC in attempt to create regional oil trade deal with numerous world and regional powers. Negotiations do not result in a deal. A diplomatic disappointment for the GCC. • Public statements about the horrible behavior and human rights violations of Houthi rebels in Yemen. <p>Round 3 (2022)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase 2 fast attack craft from US for our growing coast guard, with 2 more expected in the future. Agree to support increased US maritime presence in the Gulf. Announce new upcoming KSA/GCC maritime exercises in the Arabian Sea. 	<p>Round 1 (2020)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with KSA to discuss the killing of Jamal Khashoggi and insist that you had nothing to do with the killing. Try to resolve the issue by working to create understanding and offer financial support to the KSA and its economy. • Use oil wealth to help Yemen get out from under the Houthi control. There is no military control that can solve the issue. So building relations and discussing an end to the violence will be beneficial to both countries. <p>Round 2 (2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use oil wealth to help Yemen get out from under the Houthi control. We believe there is no military control that can solve the issue. So, building relations and discussing an end to the violence will be beneficial to both countries. <p>Round 3 (2022)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use oil wealth to help Yemen get out from under the Houthi control. We believe there is no military control that can solve the issue. So, building relations and discussing an end to the violence will be beneficial to both countries. • Work diplomatically to achieve a peaceful resolution to disputes with Iran and continue to support the JCPOA and EU efforts to resuscitate the agreement. • Work with the EU to develop alternative industries beyond oil to help the Saudi

Iran – Covert Actions

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4 - Students
<p>Round 1 (2020)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send money to brothers in Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and dissident movements in Saudi Arabia • Weapons to same, but not Saudi Arabia • Arrange oil-for-goods transfers in both military and non-military goods, and foodstuffs, that will evade international monetary controls • Some pressure must be kept on U.S. attempting to make them withdraw from the region, but it must not be so intense as, during an election year, to provoke a massive response designed to garner votes. For this reason, covert operations on U.S. soil must be avoided <p>Round 2 (2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Covert Actions. <p>Round 3 (2022)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch cyberattacks where possible. Investigate vulnerabilities of international settlements system, Federal Reserve, big international banks • Offer support to Iraqi Kurds vs. Russia, Turkey • Distribute funds to friendly political parties in Iraq. • Explore vulnerability of American forces in Zionist Entity 	<p>Round 1 (2020)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propaganda against foreign interference in AOR countries. <p>Round 2 (2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deploy submarines to Gulf of Oman and Strait. • Prepare minelayers for duty. • Prepare cyber-attacks against aging and vulnerable US air traffic control system. <p>Round 3 (2022)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited cyber-attack on air traffic control, goal is disruption and proof of concept. • Quietly recruit in Iraq, seek friendly politicians. 	<p>Round 1 (2020)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Covert Actions. <p>Round 2 (2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed to allow China to investigate cyber-attacks against Iran. • Agree to investigate Russian claims of suspicious activity by Iranians in Chechnya <p>Round 3 (2022)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iran has tried to open negotiations with Israel but has been rebuffed. 	<p>Round 1 (2020)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase funding to Hezbollah and the Houthis in Yemen but instruct them to stockpile resources for later operations. • Bomb pipelines which Iran uses to provide oil to china, frame it as the US trying to cut off Iran economically. <p>Round 2 (2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin supporting piracy on oil trade in the South China Sea and the Gulf of Aden, particularly targeting China or US bound vessels. <p>Round 3 (2022)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not attribute this to Iran, but make overt: Several Chinese military bases in Iran are attacked by extremist elements, causing many casualties, most of which were Iranian personnel working on base. Encourage the pirates we are supporting to attacks multiple Iranian vessels in Straights of Malacca.

Comparative Covert Action Analysis

		Military							Intelligence				Social		Communication		Economic		Total		
		Covert Arms Sales / Gift	Deploy Forces	Expand Military Presence	Other Military Collaboration	Naval Maneuvers	Strikes Against VNSAs	Small-Scale Kinetic Actions	Build Up Capabilities	Espionage (Collection)	Intelligence Sharing	Cyberattacks	Assassinations	Domestic Oppression	Foment Social Instability	Disinformation Against Rivals	Backchannel Demarches / Offers of Support / Negotiations	Illicit Resource Acquisition / Sanctions Busting		Trade Talks	Fund VNSAs / Political Groups
PRC	Session 1	1	1	1						1				1							5
	Session 2		2		1											1					4
	Session 3			1						2	1					1		1			6
	Session 4 (Students)	2				1										1	1				5
Russia	Session 1	1					1								1						3
	Session 2									2		1				2	1		1		7
	Session 3	1			1																2
	Session 4 (Students)	1		1	1							1			1		1		1		7
Iran	Session 1											1			1				1	2	5
	Session 2					1						1							1	1	4
	Session 3				1											1	1				2
	Session 4 (Students)							2												2	4
KSA	Session 1							1	2					1			1			2	7
	Session 2							1	2					1			1			2	7
	Session 3	2						2				2								1	7
	Session 4 (Students)																2				2
EU	Session 1								1	1							5				7
	Session 2								1	1							5				7
	Session 3								1	1							5				7
	Session 4 (Students)	1										1						1			3
Israel	Session 1					1 (with US/Russia)	1 (with US)						1				1				2
	Session 2												1		2						3
	Session 3	2										1	1								4
	Session 4 (Students)							1	1												2
US	Session 1											1				2	2				5
	Session 2											1 (with KSA/Israel); 2		1		5					9
	Session 3												1								2
	Session 4 (Students)			1					1										1		3
		11	3	4	4	2	2	4	5	14	8	12	4	3	5	13	27	1	4	10	131

Strategic Objectives Summary

- Across sessions and actors, the most common adversary strategic goal = diminish U.S. power and influence in the AOR
- In several sessions **PRC** & **Iran** sought military and/or economic dependencies with state and non-state actors in the region
- **Russia** and **PRC** both sought to expand their economic growth in the region, and both desired to increase their status as a regional diplomatic partner.
- **PRC** notably sought to secure vital energy resources, while (together with the **EU**) was the only actor that really wanted to prevent conflict in the region (especially between the **U.S.** and **Iran**).
- Stand-out objective for **Iran** was its pursuit of nuclear weapons, but somewhat surprisingly, only one participant had acquisition of nuclear weapons capability as an explicit strategic goal.

Operational Objectives Summary

- The most common operational objective across actors and simulations was to increase economic relationships in the AOR, diplomatically stabilize the region and prevent U.S.-Iranian conflict
- **PRC** generally attempted to reduce U.S. influence in the region and protect or expand their economic influence (through the Belt and Road Initiative)
- As perhaps expected, both **PRC** and **Russia** in at least one session sought to increase their military presence in the region, but perhaps more surprisingly, both the expert and student participants representing the **EU** decided to increase their naval activity in the Gulf
- **Russia** worked to marginalize **Iran** in Syria, and to undermine U.S. influence in the region, partially through covert disinformation campaigns
- **Russia** sought to solidify and deepen its influence in Central Asia but unlike many of the other actors sought an increase in the price of oil, which would benefit it economically; this made some regional instability beneficial for **Russia**
- **Iran** in a single session worked to acquire and then later to relinquish a nuclear weapons program, and also sought to hinder traffic in the Straits of Hormuz and to lessen the effects of sanctions.

Overt Actions Summary

- **168** overt actions across the four simulations.
- Only one case of major overt kinetic action – large missile strike by **Iran** against an American base in Oman.

Most Common Overt Actions

Engaging in trade negotiations (or concluding trade deals)

Diplomatic offers to act as a peace broker between competing sides (**EU** prominent)

Offers/actions for peaceful cooperation

Military aid and propaganda were also fairly common actions.

Covert Actions Summary

- **136** different covert actions across the four simulations.
- Prominent across multiple actors were espionage, cyberattacks, covert arms transfers, disinformation campaigns and funding sub-state proxies.
- Great Power Competitors (**U.S.**, **PRC** and **Russia**) all engaged in disinformation campaigns in at least one session.

RED actors tended to utilize military covert actions

GREEN and **BLUE** tended to engage in more intelligence-focused actions.

Strategic Outcomes

Extent to Which Participants Assessed Progress on Strategic Objectives by the End of the Simulated Period

Key	
---	= Severe strategic setback
--	= Substantial strategic setback
-	= Moderate strategic setback
/	= No strategic progress
+	= Moderate strategic gain
++	= Substantial strategic gain
+++	= High strategic gain

	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4 (Students)	Summary
PRC	+	+	/	++	China mostly achieved its (rather modest) regional goals by preserving or expanding influence slightly and preventing major war in most sessions.
Russia	+	+	+++	++	In two of the sessions, Russia made marginal, if any, progress towards its strategic goals (but did not go backwards); in the other two sessions, it made substantial strategic gains through expanded influence or sanctions relief.
Iran	++	+	-	--	In two of the sessions Iran made marginal, if any progress towards strategic goals; in one game essentially capitulated (but got sanctions relief) and in another suffered strategic setback.
KSA	+	/	+	/	Did not make major progress in any session, but ensured internal stability (main goal) and preserved strategic position.
EU	--	--	--	++	In three of the sessions, did not make progress on its strategic objectives (actually suffered varying degrees of setbacks); in one session where avoiding migration to EU was a key objective, it did achieve that, which represented strategic success on that front.
Israel	+	+++	+	+	Made some strategic gains (varied by game how much) in terms of Iranian influence diminishing and in some sessions, it achieved closer relationships with Russia and China while preserving the US relationship.
US	+	-	+++	+	Did not achieve its strategic goal of reducing military presence in region (more involved than intended) in 3/4 sessions. However, in one session, it forced the Iranians to give up its nuclear weapons (big strategic achievement) and in two sessions, collaborated with Russia. In one session, competition with China decreased a little and in others escalated.

Sample Novel/Unanticipated Developments

PRC

Sought to forward base Chinese naval assets in the AOR (e.g., in Djibouti and Gwadar) and, in several cases, to secure the right to build bases in the AOR.

Iran

Conducted a false flag attack against its own pipelines and accused the U.S. of trying to cut off Iran economically, securing international sympathy and support

Russia

Acted to forcibly dissolve Iran's militias in Syria, in coordination with the Assad regime

Stationed advanced tactical fighters and associated military personnel at bases in the north and south of Israel.

U.S.

Established its own version of the Quds force

KSA

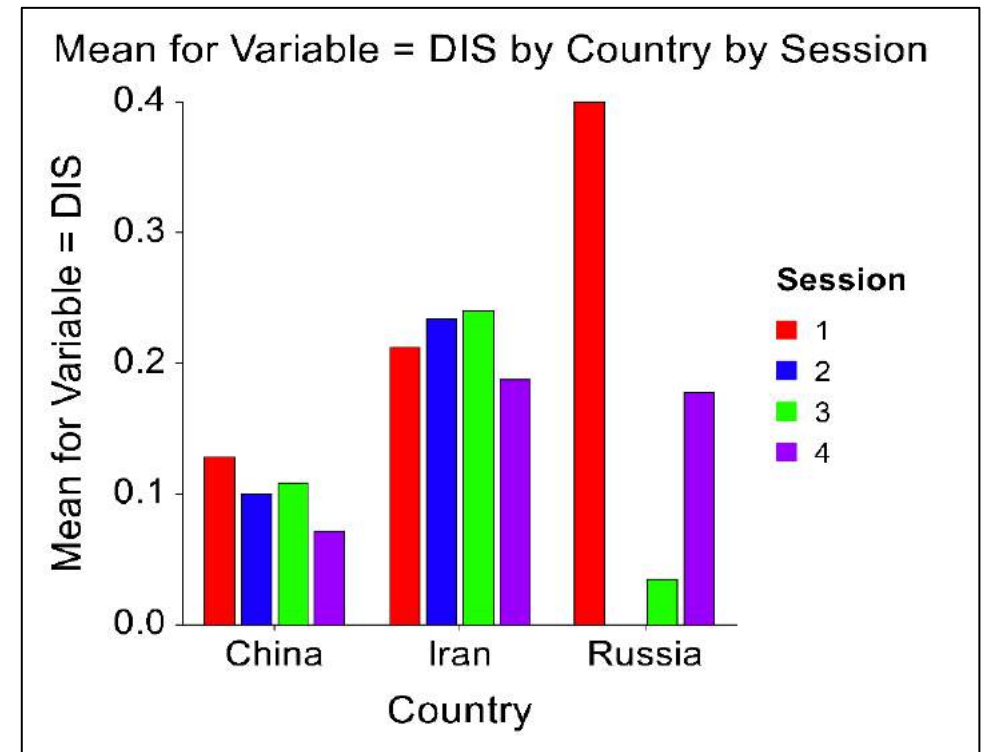
Deployed its own naval force in the Straits of Hormuz to protect EU shipping and commercial interests in the region.

EU

- Prototype natural language processing of the communications and other text-based outputs produced by the participants.
- Statistically identified different topic clusters through machine learning, using latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA)
- Used approaches like Operational Code Analysis, Motive Analysis, Conceptual Integrative Complexity to provide unobtrusive manipulation checks for players and uncover relationships between individual differences and exercise outcomes.

Levels of Distrust of Other Players:

Well-calibrated adversary players should evidence high levels of distrust of adversaries. An analysis of all communications from the players indicates that distrust levels were in general set for PRC and Iran players but not for the Russia players.





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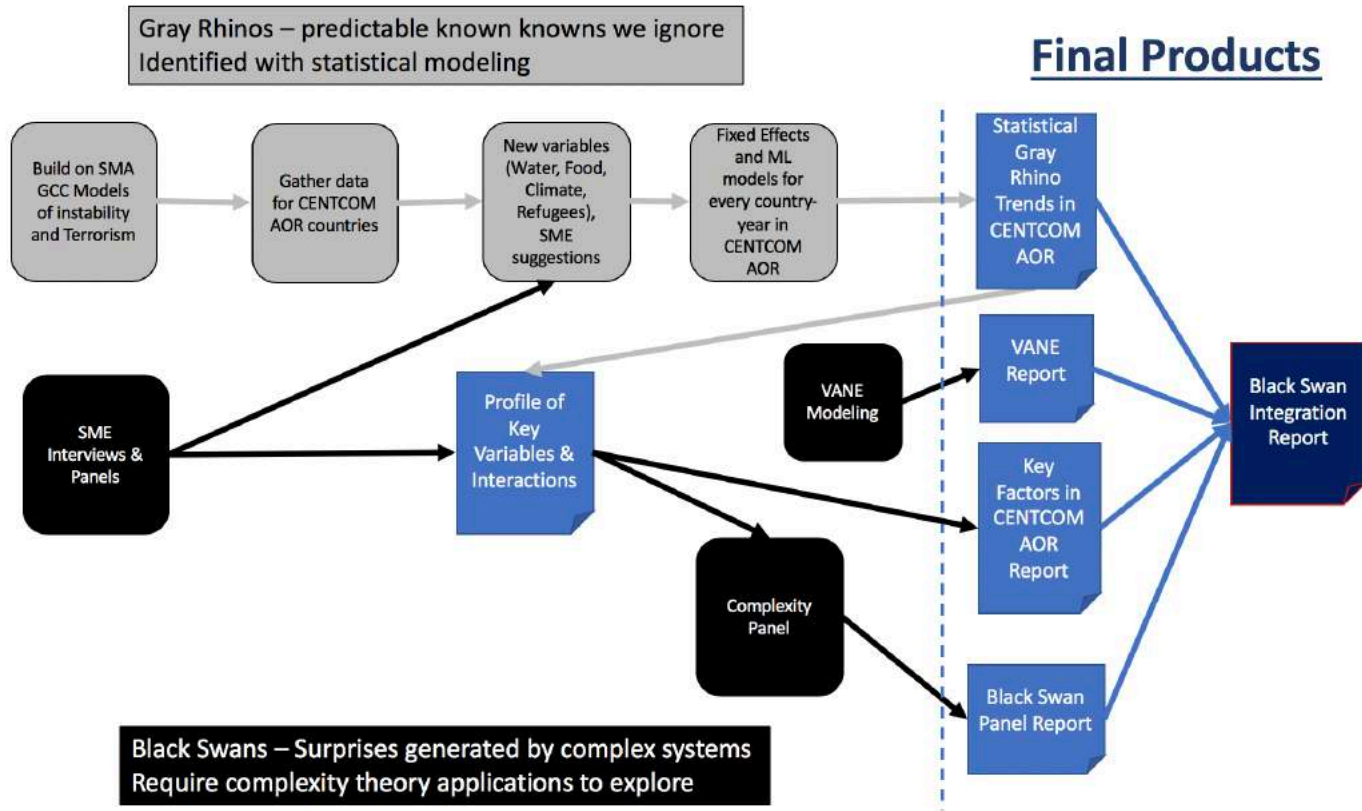
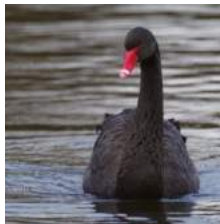
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Black Swan Gray Rhino Project Architecture



NSI Black Swan Final Reports

Kuznar, L.A. (March 2020) Integration Report: Black Swan Scenarios. NSI, Inc. Report

Jafri, A., Kuznar, L. A., & Day, J. (February 2020). VANE Modeling: Test & Findings. NSI, Inc. Report.

Kuznar, L. & Day, J. (March 2020). Hunting Gray Rhinos and Black Swans: Statistical and machine learning models of political stability and terrorism. NSI, Inc. Report.

Kuznar, L. A., & Kuznar, E. C. (March 2020). Key factors in the USCENTCOM AOR: SME elicitations and background research. NSI, Inc. Report.

Kuznar, L. A., & Peterson, N. (March 2020). SMA USCENTCOM panel discussion—Black Swans and Gray Rhinos in the USCENTCOM AOR: Vigilance against the unsuspected and keeping our eyes on the prize. NSI, Inc. Report.

Black Swans & Gray Rhinos: Theoretical Issues that Matter

- Nassim Taleb's (2007) **Black Swans** – Surprises that 1 – rare, 2 – have catastrophic impact, 3 – explained in hindsight as though predictable
 - Invokes the butterfly effect and therefore complexity theory
- Michele Wucker's (2010) **Gray Rhinos** – 1 – Probable, 2 – have great impact, 3 – ignored
 - Gray Rhinos have indicators and can be predicted, or better yet, anticipated
- What does **complexity** have to do with It?
 - Complex systems are deterministic non-linear systems – they appear random but are not; our ignorance is what makes them appear random and unpredictable
- What do we mean by **predictable**?
 - Seismology – The Big One that will hit San Francisco – we know where and how bad, but not when
 - Coronavirus Covid-19 – We know the conditions that make a chance encounter or mutation more likely
- Why these matter: Knowing what phenomena are Black Swans vs Gray Rhinos
 - Guides appropriate methods of analysis
 - Sets expectations for what forms of prediction we can expect

Lumbering Rhinos

- Predictable threats we ignore
- Classic Statistical Modeling



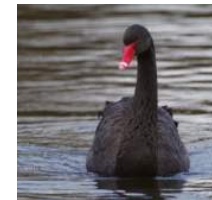
Sneaky Rhinos

- Probabilistic threats we can anticipate
- Rare Event Models & Machine Learning
 - Approaches: seismology



Black Swans?

- Surprises from ignorance of complex systems
- Computational Models
- Weather forecast Approach





Black Swans / Gray Rhinos in the CENTCOM AOR

Shift Black Swans to Gray Rhinos by decreasing ignorance; Use modeling & simulation for the rest

Lumbering Gray Rhinos

- Political Instability is driven by corruption, food insecurity, water vulnerability, and competition between elites
- Terrorism is primarily driven by state terror, and secondarily by youth bulges and unemployment
- Groundwater resources are dwindling
- Ethnic and religious sectarianism appear to be waning in light of dissatisfaction with ethnic governments

Sneaky Gray Rhinos

- Covid-19
 - Effects on Chinese economy & Belt & Road Initiative
 - Undermine Iranian regime legitimacy?
 - Undermine regional economy?
- Thresholds
 - Corruption levels, state terror, temperature & water
- Key variable interactions: political and economic instability, climate change

Analytical Black Swans

- Black Swans emerge from complex systems from non-linear interactions (butterfly effect), large number of factors and entities, thresholds, interdependence of variables