



Executive Summary



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DUFFER'S SHOAL: A STRATEGIC DREAM OF THE PACIFIC COMMAND AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY

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The Indo-Asia-Pacific region encompasses over half the world's population and global trade, the majority of its current and future mega cities, seven of the world's 10 largest armies, most of the world's nuclear powers, and three of its largest economies; the region also accounts for 80 percent of the world's natural disasters. As the United States increases its strategic focus on this vital region, it would be all too easy to become fixated on the burgeoning competition between great powers and overlook or misunderstand the myriad, interconnected complexities that enrich the region and are the real *force majeure*. Simplistic or ill-fitting policy options may be equally enticing.

Seeking to offer a pragmatic and readable strategic understanding of this vital region and overcome the tempting ease of traditional policy approaches, this monograph borrows a page from a well-referenced piece of imaginative military teaching – Major General Sir Ernest Dunlop Swinton's tactically focused *The Defense of Duffer's Drift*. Adapting Sir Swinton's framework to account for a more contemporary, strategic environment, our 21st century protagonist – Colonel Carlisle “Maestro” Prudence – embarks on a series of six distinct but interrelated instructional “dreams” aimed at highlighting the complex and often interconnected nature of key regional dynamics in the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) Area of Responsibility (AOR). This innovative structure aims

to challenge the reader to consider a multitude of probable factors, reflect on a range of intended (and unintended) consequences of U.S. action, and share in the many strategic reflections our protagonist makes during his hypothetical sleep-induced journey.

Beginning with the first dream focused on steady state security cooperation activities and proceeding through escalating narratives of instability and conflict intensity – piracy and human trafficking, terrorism, natural disaster, and full-scale war – our protagonist increasingly appreciates the criticality of seeking a comprehensive and dynamic understanding of the strategic environment and the urgent necessity of effective collaboration, coordination, and partnership. Notably, our protagonist questions the suitability of military solutions and customary tool sets in this vital AOR and challenges our conventional understanding of strategic “success.” The sixth and final dream endeavors to weave the preceding reflections and insights our protagonist has gained to highlight comprehensively the unique opportunities in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region for collective assurance borne through collaboration and understanding. The concluding dream seeks to inspire a better way.

To aid the reader, our protagonist outlines specific observations or “reflections” at the conclusion of each dream. Collectively, these reflections illuminate six distinct strategic insights for further consideration

by policymakers and strategists. These overarching strategic insights for the PACOM AOR include:

1. Understand the Environment.
2. The Cost of Collaboration is Lower than the Price of Failure.
3. Expect Unintended Effects.
4. Smart Power is Smart Strategy.
5. It Pays to be Prepared.
6. "Mistrust" Causes the Nightmare Scenario.

Significantly, the strategic reflections presented by our protagonist in the sixth and final dream suggest: (1) understanding the complexity of the PACOM AOR; (2) institutionalizing a culture of collaboration between agencies, organizations, and nations; (3) planning for second order and unintended effects; (4) building meaningful trust; and (5) employing smart power and civil military cooperation will best enable regional stability and equip Indo-Asia-Pacific nations to manage effectively emerging crises. True success will require a better way – regional security through collective assurance and understanding.

Similarly, while sovereign politics are undoubtedly a dominant influence in the PACOM AOR, human security is increasingly important and will become more so in the coming decades. The meaningful pursuit of smart power and collective assurance to address human security and mitigate human suffering is imperative. Arguably, for the majority of the world's population who reside in the

Indo-Asia-Pacific region, success will be measured by the stability and prosperity obtained under legitimate civil governance, not military victory.

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