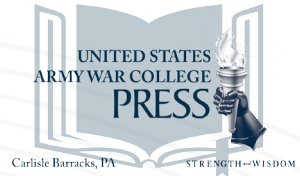




Executive Summary



Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press

U.S.-CHINA COMPETITION: ASIA-PACIFIC LAND FORCE IMPLICATIONS

A U.S. Army War College Integrated Research Project in Support of U.S. Army Pacific Command and Headquarters, Department of the Army, Directorate of Strategy and Policy (HQDA G-35)

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This research project is a Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA)-directed study, conducted by the Army War College and co-sponsored by the Commander, U.S. Army Pacific Command (USARPAC) and the Headquarters, Department of the Army, Directorate of Strategy and Policy (HQDA G-35). The report presents findings and recommendations derived from an 8-month, quick-turn, student-led research and analysis effort. The central theme of the research effort is U.S.-China competition and the development of relevant land force recommendations to compete effectively in the gray zone between peace and war.

THEORY AND ANALOGY

The report employs Power Transition Theory and a “go game” analogy to underpin and explain the

various assumptions and perspectives taken by the researchers regarding the state of U.S.-China relations and gray zone competition, respectively.

KEY FINDINGS

Findings include: (1) counter-intuitively, the Asia-Pacific is a land force centric, maritime theater; (2) the U.S.-China relationship emerges as the central “determinant dynamic” for the future of Asia-Pacific international relations; (3) a range of economic, diplomatic, and security relationships impact gray zone competition in the theater; and, (4) the U.S. Army requires a change in mindset to compete successfully in the gray zone, and senior defense and Joint Force leaders must understand the nature of this space to create a force capable of competing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The report offers nine specific recommendations and a two-tier implementation plan to integrate those recommendations into defense management processes.

The first category facilitates changes in both the mindset and the way that the U.S. approaches winning in gray zone competition. This first recommendation calls for an integrated campaigning concept to provide a new lexicon, new campaign design, and new principles to guide the conduct of cooperative and coercive theater campaigns.

The second recommendation category addresses access and readiness through partners and presence. The following four specific recommendations populate this category:

- Adjust Pacific Pathways to encourage direct engagement with China and promote regional partner leadership in cooperative defense;
- Expand the State Partnership Program to all Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) stakeholders, to develop long-term and reliable trust networks, as well as military-to-military and military-to-civilian relationships;
- Synchronize civic action activities to rationalize resource expenditures and improve linkages to combatant command prioritized initiatives and objectives; and,
- Establish cooperative security locations (CSL) in South China Sea periphery states.

These CSLs should be constructed and maintained through negotiated logistics cost sharing (LCS) agreements to establish ports, infrastructure, exercise sites, and “warm basing” facilities. Host nations would own these CSLs and U.S. forces would position logistics, engineering, medical, communications, intelligence, and other activity sets in these CSLs. The U.S. Joint Force and regional partner militaries would rotate forces into these CSLs to exercise and mature Joint Force reception, operations, and political interoperability procedures.

The third recommendation category proposes the development of a robust and mobile land-based cross-domain control capacity for collective regional defense. The following three specific recommendations populate this category:

- Air control;
- Sea control; and,
- Cyber and space control.

The purpose of this collective set of recommendations is to impose costs on challengers, thereby discouraging escalation from gray zone competition to war. Additionally, the collection of recommendations would expand the political space to conduct coercive military options in support of U.S. interests to enforce international order short of war. This recommendation addresses a regional capability gap. Therefore, it requires more than a U.S.-centric equipping solution. The long-term strategic options for filling this capability gap require long-term U.S. force development decisions and actions to facilitate U.S. force development, U.S.-facilitated Foreign Military Sales (FMS), and partner-fielded capability options.

In all cases, the U.S. Joint Force must lead development of land-based cross-domain control concepts, and pursue doctrine and Joint Capability Technology Demonstrations (JCTD) to re-mission existing capabilities, or incentivize partners and allies to pursue these gray zone competition centric capabilities.

The final ninth recommendation category—the creation of a land-force assured shallow-water maneuver capability—fills a tactical and operational need, which is critical to land forces operations in the Asia-Pacific. The capability involves performing mobile tactical tasks (including offensive operations such as a raids and interdiction; or enabling operations such as reconnaissance, security, or support to civil authorities) by land forces in a maritime environment. It requires fielding land forces meant to interdict transnational criminal organization supply chains, pirates at sea and supporting land bases, commercial fishing fleets presenting illegal incursions into disputed waters, and similar maritime-borne disorder activities. During coercive operations, this recommendation provides land force commanders “division cavalry-like” capabilities in a maritime environment. Cavalry-like operations include screening, reconnaissance, armed patrols, raids (on land bases), interdiction (land bases and sea platforms), envelopment or bypass maneuver, and route reconnaissance for freedom of navigation operations.

IMPLEMENTATION

The primary implementation objective is a rebalance of defense management processes and resource prioritization, from an exclusive combat readiness focus to an appreciation of the interrelationship between war fighting and winning the gray zone competition. The implementation plan recommendations

embrace a two-tiered (near-term, longer-term) approach. Near-term, “first-steps” include concept and doctrine development to allow for “functional area analysis” and “functional needs analysis” assessments to establish feasible requirements.

Long-term force management options include capabilities developed exclusively for use by U.S. forces, U.S.-developed capabilities for FMS, and regional partner-generated capabilities. Unless the threat profile in the region shifts significantly, U.S.-centric development of the full spectrum of recommended solutions may not be feasible. Therefore, it is imperative that the United States collaborate with regional partners to develop concepts and conduct JCTDs that will facilitate strategic force management options. No matter who fields this capability, the United States must provide leadership in the near-term to incentivize and mature the concept and capabilities. Regardless of the U.S. economy, defense budgets, or threat profile facing the United States in the next 20 years, the report recommends immediate action on “near-term” recommendations to make a future decision between strategic force development options possible.

CONCLUSION

Academic institutions and security policy analysts from various research institutions have independently arrived at recommendations similar to those proffered in this report, supporting the soundness and validity of this quick-turn research and analysis.

Future Research.

This report did not consider the extensive China-U.S. competition space associated with Indian Ocean periphery states, the Americas, Russia, or Africa. Each of these regions deserves a focused consideration. The report’s Asia-Pacific analysis is intertwined with Indian Ocean security issues; however, time constraints

prevented the synthesis of these Indian Ocean and Asia-Pacific issues. Considering the U.S.-China relationship through the lens of security issues involving India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar (Burma), Cambodia, and Thailand are critical to understanding the interdependent nature of the USARPAC’s Indo-Asia-Pacific challenge.

Finally, the context of the Asia-Pacific rivalry has evolved over the last 5 or 6 decades. The regional stakeholders’ political, economic, military, and cultural histories have also evolved. This suggests an urgent need to re-examine war plans for the region, starting with first-principle assumptions and creative assessments of potential strategies employed by rivals to advance their national interests.

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