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Chinese Grand Strategy:

How Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) Fits in China's Plan

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Abstract

The United States military views China's Anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) buildup as an imminent threat, but fails to realize the actual role it plays in Chinese grand strategy. China has a history of shaping the peace-time environment to achieve strategic goals without resorting to military power. China's A2/AD structure is one tool to be used in conjunction with other instruments of power to achieve a larger objective. A2/AD is not itself a grand strategy, nor is it even a military strategy. It is merely one aspect of a larger military strategy. The U.S. military sees only the face value of A2/AD, as a counter to their traditional model of power projection. By focusing only on this small aspect of A2/AD, the U.S. military fails to derive a strategy to counter China's anti-U.S. goals in the region. Subsequently, the U.S. also fails to shape perceptions in the Asia-Pacific. If this trend continues, the U.S. will be left with only one option in the face of Chinese aggression, full mobilization toward a third global conflict. With only such a drastic option open China will have accomplished its grand strategy by negating the U.S. power and influence in the region without ever coming into armed conflict. China's A2/AD will be seen for what it is, a tool to be used in support of shaping operations to achieve China's strategic objectives.

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Introduction

Chinese strategy sees anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) as one tool in a complex environment where their goal is to shape regional and global perceptions in order to gain power while avoiding military conflict. There is continual discussion at all military levels about how to combat A2/AD and how the U.S. can win a conflict against China. However, the discussion is focused on how the U.S. military knows how to fight. Power projection to achieve complete military victory is the comfort zone of U.S. military strategic thought. Recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have played to the U.S. military's conventional strength and thus reinforced this view. The U.S. has quickly and effectively projected power, destroyed any standing opposition, and declared victory. This model, reminiscent of the unconditional surrender model from America's rise to global power in WWII, is driving the strategy for future combat against China. Unfortunately, embracing a strategy that is effective against a significantly weaker military power in a location of relatively easy power projection is a recipe for failure or another world war when examined in today's Asia-Pacific.

Historically, China has taken both a much longer, and much less militant, view of strategy than the United States. China was first established as the middle kingdom more than three millennia ago. The weight of antiquity allows China's leaders to plan not in months, years, or even decades, but fifty years or more in the future. Additionally, the historical tradition seeks to shape events away from crisis prior to military engagement, whereas the U.S. often looks to the military as a reaction to crisis rather than one of many tools used to shape, or even prevent conflict. China is currently exploiting this weakness between U.S. grand strategy and military strategy by focusing specifically on deterring traditional U.S. military power projection from the region. A2/AD is only one small part of Chinese military strategy, which is in turn only a small

part of Chinese grand strategy. By allowing itself to focus solely against A2/AD, the U.S. fails to grasp the big picture and effectively prepare political and military strategy to combat Chinese objectives.

The typical view expressed in the moniker A2/AD can be broken down into several tiered problems. First, at the basic level, it sees A2/AD as primarily focused on the traditional domains of land, sea and air, with little to no involvement of the electromagnetic spectrum (EMS) domain, including space, cyber, and electronic warfare (EW). Second, it fails to see A2/AD as a small part of a much larger long-term political strategy and therefore does not link a political objective with a military capability. Military capabilities are only useful when they serve a political purpose. Lastly, at the level of grand strategy, it sees A2/AD and large scale combat in the commons as the end state, rather than merely a tool to be used to achieve China's long term goals. The capability to deny the commons and sink an aircraft carrier, while impressive, is only useful if it helps achieve a greater goal. Sinking a carrier is not in and of itself an end-state. If the U.S. is to plan successfully for the future the aperture must be opened and a broader picture of Chinese goals and methods must be evaluated.

Chinese A2/AD

Chinese culture for millennia has focused on bringing about strategic objectives prior to the outbreak of hostilities.[1] This is the first and most important point to keep in mind when considering Chinese A2/AD capabilities. While the military capabilities of Chinese A2/AD are primarily defensive in nature, the strategic implications of A2/AD in relation to strategy and the other instruments of national power are critically important to understand. The Chinese view of influence can be stated as, "acting on a situation as early as possible—and as far away from the

ultimate objective as possible—one achieves the desired result with least effort."[2] To begin, let us first investigate the specifics of Chinese A2/AD.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense, in its 2013 annual report to Congress, described China's military buildup, saying: "China's leaders in 2012 sustained investment in advanced short- and medium-range conventional ballistic missiles, land-attack and anti-ship cruise missiles, counter-space weapons, and military cyberspace capabilities that appear designed to enable anti-access / area-denial (A2/AD) missions (what PLA strategists refer to as "counter-intervention operations")."[3] Ashley Tellis, an analyst with the National Bureau of Asian Research, says, "China's current military modernization has thus been explicitly designed to keep the United States entirely out of its "near seas" by controlling access to their farther approaches through a variety of stand-off attacks that, if successful, would transform the western Pacific into a contained enclosure where Chinese dominance is assured because of China's ability to neutralize U.S. military power."[4] It is critical to understand that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) achieves these effects not just through a combination of kinetic effects, but also by countering critical U.S. enablers like space, cyber, and the electro-magnetic (EM) spectrum. Unfortunately, most U.S. analyses of Chinese A2/AD inadequately examines these dangerous non-kinetic methods.

The PLA's primary kinetic is directed toward ways to counter the U.S.' greatest power projection generator, the carrier battle group. There are five separate and unique components the PLA can bring to bear against a carrier strike group (which itself foreshadows the major Chinese strategic themes of combination and addition which will be explained later).[5] The first are medium- and short-range ballistic missiles accurate up to 10 meters with a range of 2500km. Second, supersonic cruise missiles capable of being launched from land, air, or sea with a range

of 300km. Third, the "Squall" rocket torpedo which travels 200 knots and has a range of 7,500 yards. Fourth, bottom-rising, rocket-propelled sea mines laid by submarines. And fifth, thousands of old fighter aircraft retrofitted as unmanned vehicles used both as delivery platforms and as weapons themselves.[6] The conclusion, China is "capable of destroying all the aircraft carrier battle groups that the US and its allies can muster."[7]

China's second focus of kinetic effects is against the U.S.' other preferred method of power projection, airpower operating from forward bases. The PLA utilizes a combination of medium range ballistic missiles (MRBM) and ground- and air- launched land attack cruise missiles (LACM) that hold at risk the U.S. forces operating at forward bases in Korea, Japan, and Okinawa.[8] The PLA is also working on systems to hold U.S. operations at Guam at risk as well.[9] Additionally, the PLA has developed one of the densest overlapping Surface to Air Missile (SAM) coverage areas anywhere in the world, with land and sea based launch platforms capable of targeting both high-value support aircraft and fighter aircraft to ranges greater than 200km.[10] China is also seeking to obtain the S-400 extremely long-range SAM with a range of 400km, greater than the combat radius of many U.S. fighters.[11] Compounding these formidable threats are the People's Liberation Army Air Forces' (PLAAF) 2,300 operational combat aircraft.[12] Dr. Andrew Erickson, a noted China military expert and Associate Professor in the Strategic Research Department at the U.S. Naval War College, in reference to the area around Taiwan, concludes "the PLA's acquisition of large amounts of sophisticated equipment in important categories is shifting the balance of military power to China, probably permanently."[13]

Chinese Strategy

If military buildup directly against power projection forces were the entirety of China's A2/AD construct it would still be formidable, but hardly the three headed dragon of military journals. The PLA has spent significant time and resources in developing their space, cyber, and electronic warfare technologies, demonstrating the Chinese strategy of attacking the enemy's network and communication structure.[14] Their formal strategy is "Integrated Network Electronic Warfare" (INEW) and includes computer network attack, computer network defense, electronic warfare, and intelligence gathering. The US-China Economic and Security Review Commission describes INEW saying, "strategy, which relies on a simultaneous application of electronic warfare and computer network operations against an adversary's command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) networks and other essential information systems, appears to be the foundation for Chinese offensive IW. Analysis of this strategy suggests that CNO [computer network operations] tools will be widely employed in the earliest phases of a conflict, and possibly preemptively against an enemy's information systems and C4ISR systems."[15] In spite of understanding their military structure, Chinese capability in the cyber domain is largely unknown. However, several sophisticated attacks against the U.S. government and U.S. defense contractors have been attributed to China since 2001.[16] China's current cyber capabilities are assessed to give them the capability to exfiltrate data on vulnerable computer networks, target logistics, communication, and commercial networks to slow adversary forces, and act as a force multiplier with kinetic operations.[17] Also, U.S. military forces are incredibly dependent on the EM spectrum, from intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), to positioning and targeting through GPS, to command and control through Link-16. As of 2012, China is assessed "to have designed specific

electronic warfare platforms to target all of the U.S. military's high-value assets."[18] China is also making significant strides in space. They currently have two satellite navigation and positioning constellations covering most of China and the greater Asia region.[19] They have also developed several counter-space technologies including jammers, directed energy weapons, and direct-ascent anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons.[20] Kevin Pollpeter, an expert on China national security issues, concludes "China will be able to pose a serious threat to the U.S. military's expeditionary nature, where the melding of space, cyber, and electronic warfare with ISR is critical to operation in an A2/AD environment."[21]

This brings us to the next step of examination, that of Chinese military strategy and how they plan to conduct military operations. Again, this examination is taken with the understanding that a larger strategic focus must ultimately be the aim of the discussion. In 2001, a Chinese military team led by Major General Yao Youzhi, Chief of the PLA's Department of Strategic Studies, published *The Science of Military Strategy*. It was then translated into English in 2005 and remains an excellent source of knowledge for Chinese military plans and strategy. One of the major themes is "High-Tech Local War and Strategic Guidance on It."[22] While the book writ large is meant as generic discussion on strategy for the PLA, there are several themes, including high-tech local war, that read as a PLA guide for combat with the U.S. military. The basis of the discussion centers on Desert Storm and NATO's operations in Kosovo. The focus is on advanced platforms, weapons, Command and Control, and speed of operations[23].

There are ten subpoints to China's proposed Strategy on future high-tech local war. Examining several of the more pertinent ones will help gain a better understanding of the purpose their A2/AD construct may play in future conflict. The first point is to fight in their own way while the enemy fights in his. This includes not being intimidated by a stronger force,

maintaining strategic initiative and finding the weak points inside the enemy's strength.[24] They describe this concept saying, "No matter how rapidly the technical conditions of war may change or how powerful the enemy is with its advanced equipment, there are always the weak points with the enemy."[25] Second, is always using the full power of the people's war. This primarily lies in making sure the population is on board, "besides the direct participation and cooperation with the army's operations in the region where war happens, the masses will support the war mainly by political, economic, technical, cultural and moral means."[26] Next, concentrating troops and weapons to achieve superiority in time and place. More important than the title says, is what is implied, the active dispersion of forces when not being concentrated. "This new feature requires the strategic conductors to take the relative dispersion or scattering of the forces as a normal practice and to take the concentration of war strength on certain occasion, in certain direction and in limited scope as a special case."[27] Next is targeting nodes to destroy the network. Specifically, it will likely be more effective to target the nervous system, especially where it would not easily be replaced.[28] Here again we see the Chinese strategy of INEW as a dominant theme throughout their strategic thinking. This is mirrored in a 2011 Rand study on Chinese doctrine which points out Chinese emphasis on integrating domains, particularly EW.[29] This includes the selection of targets exactly as is described in the Intermediate Developmental Education (IDE) schools for the U.S. military branches, using the terms center of gravity and operations targets, measuring "the degree of their influences upon the whole operational system and procedure."[30] Most of these ideas focus on how to fight, rather than the intent of conflict or when to initiate conflict.

The next several ideas drive directly toward when, or with what intent, China might take military action. The first, and the most potentially misleading idea is labeled "Conduct active

strategic counterattack on exterior lines to achieve the aim of strategic defense."[31] The idea of active or strategic defense is one that recurs throughout the text and is critical to understand. While described as a defensive action in the face of conflict, it is better understood as preemptive offensive action. This can be clearly seen in the closing paragraph: "Adhering to active strategic counterattack on exterior lines, we should do all we can to dominate the enemy by striking first."[32] Another precept describes three categories of situations where China might use force, preventive strategic action, controllable operation, or decisive operation. Preventive action, or deterrence action, while seemingly defensive in nature, specifically includes "small-scale joint operations."[33] The final two precepts are closely aligned, focusing on military action being subservient to political ends and shaping the environment pre-conflict to avoid war. They build a strong case for joint action between all the national instruments of power, calling for coordination between the military and political, economic, diplomatic, and cultural competitions.[34] They summarize these principles saying, "One of the treasures of the military science of the Chinese nation is the strategic guiding principle of paying equal attention to containing a war and winning a war and trying to win a victory without waging a war."[35] Before comparing these precepts with execution of A2/AD in a future conflict we will also examine the concepts brought forward in another primary Chinese strategy guide.

There are three tenants that are important to discuss concerning Qiao and Wang's enlightening book, *Unrestricted Warfare*. The first two warfare principles describe prominent strategic concepts for future conflict. The third describes the Chinese view of the U.S. military culture. The title of the book, *Unrestricted Warfare*, gives a fairly obvious clue as to the nature of the strategy they are advocating. The first principle begins by describing combinations in warfare.[36] Pairing the strengths of different units together in combination make them vastly

superior to numerically stronger forces without combination. From their early examples of pairing a soldier with a sword for attack and shield for defense they provide several examples from history. One of the best examples is that of King Gustav of Sweden who paired lancers with musketeers to great effect while he also alternated charging different types of troops through the smoke of artillery fire.[37] They go on to applaud the use of combination by the U.S. military in Desert Storm, combining all the vast variety of modern weapons with military deception to dominate Iraq's military in such a short time.[38] This art of combination is exactly what is demonstrated with the previous discussion of Chinese A2/AD kinetic buildup against carrier battle groups. This concept is also described in Chinese as "shashoujian," or "assassin's mace", combining multiple effects simultaneously against a potentially superior foe.[39] Up to this point the discussion likely seems elementary, like a blinding flash of the obvious. It is here where the true nature of the discussion becomes clear as it critiques current U.S. military thought, in that it has stopped combinations at purely military ways and means.

Qiao and Wang claim the U.S. has been so successful with military operations, and the U.S. military so clearly distinct from the other instruments of power, that it does not occur to use anything other than military might to achieve objectives. They describe this situation saying, "their combinations often remain on the level of weapons, deployment methods and the battlefield, and the drawn-up war prospects are also mostly only limited to the military domain and revel in it."[40] They further go on to say, "those who only understand an imposing array of troops on the battlefield and who think that war is just killing people and methods of operation are just methods to kill people and that there is nothing worth giving attention to other than this, have been unable to understand this point."[41] What they are advocating is nothing less than weaponizing the other instruments of national power to a level unachievable prior to the current

technological age. They describe this by saying, "it only requires broadening one's outlook a little and being uninhibited in thought to be able to avail oneself of the lever of the great volumes of new technology and new factors springing up from the age of integrated technology."[42] This point is most clearly emphasized by the scenario they offer in closing:

> Supposing a war broke out between two developed nations already possessing full information technology, and relying upon traditional methods of operation, the attacking side would generally employ the modes of great depth, wide front, high strength, and three-dimensionality to launch a campaign assault against the enemy. Their method does not go beyond satellite reconnaissance, electronic countermeasures, large-scale air attacks plus precision attacks, ground outflanking, amphibious landings, air drops behind enemy lines… the result is not that the enemy nation proclaims defeat, but rather one returns with one's own spears and feathers. However, by using the combination method, a completely different scenario and game can occur: if the attacking side secretly musters large amounts of capital without the enemy nation being awar of this at all and launches a sneak attack against its financial markets, then after causing a financial crisis, buries a computer virus and hacker detachment in the opponent's computer system in advance, while at the same time carrying out a network attack against the enemy so that the civilian electricity network, traffic dispatching network, financial transaction network, telephone communications network, and mass media network are completely paralyzed, this will cause the enemy nation to fall into social panic, street riots, and a political crisis.[43]

A chilling scene for anyone to envision, especially for members of the country to whom it is clearly directed. Even more chilling is noting that Qiao and Wang's concept is mirrored in the more conservative *The Science of Military Strategy* where it says, "It turns more difficult to conquer the opponent only by military strength and technological superiority."[44]

It is here where the typical argument against conflict with China usually appears, that there is too much interconnectedness for conflict, especially one centered on economics. This point will be further discussed later, but addressing the question briefly at this point leads to the final discussion of Chinese strategy. First, understand that China's non-democratic leaders have a much stronger bargaining position than the U.S. political leadership in regards to economics. U.S. leaders must answer to the constituents and, more importantly, the international businesses

that fund the election process and are increasingly involved in growing Chinese trade. Second, and in line with the combination China seeks, the economic impact would not have to be from a sell-off of U.S. debt, with an ensuing global depression. An electro-magnetic pulse (EMP) attack, from an ICBM, long range cruise missile, or satellite, detonated 400km over the U.S. could damage all electrical grids in the U.S. mainland in under a second.[45] That attack might end up with global financial collapse, but more likely, it would cause days of confusion while the U.S. restored order. The intent of this type of attack would not be destruction or long term damage, but instead just the disruption of force flow and support from the U.S. mainland. This would allow China a window of opportunity to achieve its goals while avoiding an economic disaster. At the very least it would provide a reasonable chance of success if China's other options were limited.

This brings us to final principle in *Unrestricted Warfare*, the view that the U.S. military is obsessed with zero casualties. China sees the willingness of the U.S. military to spend any amount on technology to overmatch their enemy and protect their soldiers as a critical weakness. They do not conceal their disdain for this cultural trend, "What you must know is that this is a nationality that has never been willing to pay the price of life and, moreover, has always vied for victory at all costs."[46] They go on to say, "Ever since the Vietnam War, both the military and American society have been sensitized to human casualties during military operations, almost to the point of morbidity. Reducing casualties and achieving war objectives have become the two equal weights on the American military scale. The common American soldiers who should be on the battlefield have now become the most costly security in war, like precious china bowls that people are afraid to break."[47] The reference to such a relatively recent war from a culture that measures its history in millennia may seem strange, however, even taking the longer view of

their critique, more Chinese soldiers died in World War II than the total number of American soldiers who have died in every conflict in U.S. history combined.[48] This supports the idea that Americans are not willing to sacrifice their soldiers, and that the U.S. military will not give up high-tech dependency, regardless of the fiscal burden.

Examining the details of China's A2/AD construct and their military strategy has been the easy part. Vastly more difficult is synthesizing that information with current Chinese actions to form a value added concept of what China might do, or more importantly, what they will do in the future. Again, the discussion must not fall victim to the trap of examining it in a military vacuum as so many before have done and as the Chinese strategy we just examined clearly does not support. However, it will serve as a starting point to investigate the military applications as a springboard for examining other uses and combinations. The most obvious answer to be reached is both the weapons and the strategy are uniquely designed to counter U.S. power projection. Without even using the hawkish boundary pushing strategy of Qiao and Wang it is not difficult to conceive an incredibly difficult situation for U.S. military forces in a conflict over Taiwan. In order to project power the U.S. would be forced to push carrier battle groups well inside the range of all the weapons previously discussed, as well as pushing both Air Force tankers and Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) inside the range of long range SAMs. Kinetic attack against these systems, as well as the relatively limited basing options would be difficult enough to deal with. Add in the idea of combination and picture a coordinated Chinese attack combining GPS satellite jamming, a compromised Joint Tactical Information Distribution System (JTIDS) flooded with false tracks, and a cyber-attack against the logistical network delaying reinforcements and munitions for multiple weeks. It is not inconceivable that the U.S.

might lose multiple carriers and a significant portion of forward deployed forces without even achieving moderate operational results in return.

While there are of course military counters for many of these systems which cannot be discussed here, countering all of them simultaneously would challenge a fully prepared military, and the U.S. is anything but fully prepared for major combat operations after ten plus years of counter-insurgency and irregular warfare. The important thing to consider moving forward in this discussion is not whether the U.S. could ultimately prevail. Instead it is admitting that it would be a bloody conflict not easily or cheaply won for a country that is casualty averse and war weary. It may not be easy to accept, but thankfully this realistic view is becoming more accepted every day. In this case, perception is reality, and the Chinese are building a strong perception that they could give the U.S. a run for its money, at least in their backyard. This is seen in reports and actions from third-party countries in the Asia-Pacific. A report for the New Dehli based Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses (IDSA) expresses concern over U.S. power projection capability inside China's A2/AD construct. Additionally, it describes several third-party countries' unilateral military buildups in response to what the report describes as the shift in power.[49] It is critically important at this point to again reiterate the question, "to what end?" It is this second critical point that is routinely missed by most analyses.

The U.S. Air Force misses both of these critical examination points in its A2/AD counter, Air-Sea Battle. An IDSA report describes it saying, "AirSea Battle calls on naval and air coordination to counter an adversary's potentially game-changing rise in prowess, in this case China's A2/AD capabilities. Airsea Battle is comprised of two interactive stages, the first focusing on repelling a preemptive Chinese strike and regaining the operational initiative, the second on creating options to resolve a prolonged conventional combat on favourable terms."[50]

First, it fails to understand the scope of Chinese strategy or place strategic value on domains other than air and sea. Second, it fails to evaluate to what end A2/AD might be used. Denying a country access to the commons is not in and of itself an end. That denial must be in support of some greater objective. In this we see clearly that the moniker A2/AD has limited the U.S. perception of the true scope of Chinese military and grand strategy. As stated previously, the examination must not be restricted to a force on force examination in absence of intent and ultimately, objectives. We must try to understand the why behind China's A2/AD buildup and how it could be used to influence or achieve objectives.

So far it has been clearly demonstrated that China's full A2/AD buildup can contest the U.S. military access to the commons in the Asia-Pacific region. Including the elements of Chinese military strategy reveals potential uses for China's military buildup. One potential use would be a full scale use of INEW and A2/AD in a preventive action against the U.S.. This might allow China to achieve control of territories in the Asia-Pacific region that will be discussed in the next section. Another action might be to blockade certain territories and force the U.S. to stay out of the situation in order to earn regional concessions. Both of these actions take the view that military action is the primary vehicle for achieving goals. Based on the strategy discussion above, it seems much more likely that military action is a part of a much larger strategy.

There is no open-source document containing the Chinese grand strategy for future, nor should it be expected. Even if there were a published grand strategy much time would be spent on the validity of such a document as it would likely be detrimental to any objectives it claimed to propose. The closest concept of grand strategy comes in the form of the "Three Warfares." The "Three Warfares" is "a People's Liberation Army (PLA) information warfare concept aimed

at preconditioning key areas of competition in its favor"[51] China's "Three Warfares" consists of Psychological, media, and legal warfare, and describes how China views strategic competition as beginning far prior to the first shot being fired.[52] The "Three Warfares" describes some of the ways China plans to operate, primarily during phase zero, there the U.S. traditionally is woefully unprepared.[53] It paints a picture of how China will integrate all the tools available to achieve success, by shaping the environment to gain objectives while avoiding conflict.

China's A2/AD buildup makes perfect sense when viewed as one tool in their grand strategy. Denying the commons to the U.S. puts into question the defensive shield that U.S. military power has used to promote stability in the Asia-Pacific region since 1948. While starting a conflict carries a potentially significant economic and international backlash, being seen as ready, willing, and capable of successfully starting a conflict carries great benefits without many of the negatives. The Chinese art of combining elements of power into a long-term national strategy suggests a plan of more elegance than simply building a military and combatting U.S. strength. In fact, China can gain much more ground by isolating regional actors and leveraging economic dependency for diplomatic gains. As China gains military credibility, regional actors have less and less confidence that the U.S. can or will maintain the aforementioned security umbrella.

The situation China is creating mirrors the situation seen between Russia, Ukraine, Crimea, and the United States. Russia is the sole regional power and is capable of moving in to take territory without opposition from NATO or western powers. Economic sanctions are the only retaliation, and those are not significant from many countries in the EU due to the dependence of those countries on natural gas and trade with Russia. In the same way, China gains economic and diplomatic leverage because of the international perception that it cannot be

countered militarily in the region. Even if the U.S. could triumph in a large scale conflict with China, the regional actors cannot be assured that the U.S. would be willing to spend their blood and treasure. Thus they seek to align themselves closer to China and further from the U.S.. With this strategy in mind we will examine what areas China is working to control and the countries most affected by China's growing influence.

Chinese Strategic Goals:

Understanding China's internal situation and its view of the current world order is critical to interpreting their statements and actions and ultimately achieving a reasonable prediction of their future plans and goals. Internally China is ruled by a single political party, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The single most important objective for the CCP is to maintain power in the country. They accomplish this through tight control over the population, including limiting relocation, family size, and information. In exchange for releasing the control to the government, the Chinese people expect successful rule. Currently, that is best translated to economic success and rising regional and global power. If the economy falters, or the CCP is unable to react to growing water and food shortages, the legitimacy to rule in the eyes of the people will quickly erode. This situation, and a conclusion about international economic dependency, is stated as follows: "Just as importantly, they have increased the potential for—potential costs of—social and political discontent if growth rates slow and citizens lose confidence in the Chinese Communist Party's ability to alleviate worsening social problems such as corruption and inequality. China and the party are more dependent on the continued viability of the global system than at any time in the past, and the clear trajectory is toward even greater dependence."[54] The conclusion here, that China is more dependent, is true in the traditional sense of finding a

solution within the bounds of the current economic structure. However, this conclusion is incomplete, and potentially dangerous, in that it ignores other options for the CCP to combat political discontent. The premise of the previous argument is that political unrest is rising from a flagging economy, already belying the preeminence of the vaunted economic interdependence model. Given the potential for China's economy to slow even given strong open economic ties there is every reason to believe that the party will look for solutions elsewhere.

Previously the point was made that China has no desire at this time to overthrow the current world order. Trouble comes when that line of thinking is followed through as it is in the previous quote that implies China has no cause to create ripples in the international order. An equally likely solution for the CCP when faced with growing social unrest would be to instigate a conflict. There is clear historical precedent for using conflict as a distraction from internal turmoil. This includes countries with far less potential benefit than China currently maintains, and far less chance of success. Starting a conflict, while potentially causing significant economic turmoil, would bring several significant benefits to the CCP. First, it leverages the growing Chinese nationalist spirit and provides an enemy for the CCP to blame for internal privation. Second, the population control policies combined with social views on children have combined to create in excess of 30 Million Chinese men under the age of twenty.[55] Traditionally young unemployed males are the driver for unrest and upheaval within countries. While a cold and calculating view, conflict for China could provide an outlet for at least a portion of that overage. Third, as will be discussed, there are several potentially economically beneficial areas in the Asia-Pacific region that are still contested territory. Lastly, any conflict, even regional, likely changes the dynamics of neighboring relationships. There are clearly too many variables to make a prediction; however, there is a reasonable chance that China could leverage conflict with the

U.S. to gain greater ties with Russia. Merging the interests of the two strongest regional actors via a common enemy could potentially benefit them both greatly while putting the U.S. in a strategically precarious position.

These points merely demonstrate that the possibility of conflict between China and its neighbors or the U.S. is still very real, and vastly more likely than many are willing to admit. In fact, because conflict would not be an entirely negative outcome for China, the CCP is able to leverage military conflict far easier than the U.S. This is exactly the reason the previous discussion is necessary: if conflict is ruled out in the analysis, then China's willingness to threaten conflict to gain advantage is overlooked. Additionally, the stronger China's military becomes regionally and the relatively weaker the U.S. and regional partners are, the more willing China will be to act confrontationally. One must therefore ask the question of whether fighting the U.S. through A2/AD is truly China's military strategy or yet another strategic use of information operations (IO). China marries IO with their buildup of capabilities to induce doubt about U.S. capabilities and willingness to leverage military force. That doubt in turn gains regional advantage for China against countries that previously depended on the U.S. for military protection.

We must understand the basic Chinese perspective relative to the U.S. military presence and regional players. Americans traditionally see U.S. power projection as the embodiment of freedom and justice in the world. We must be careful not to impose this view on other countries. One analysis of the Chinese perspective states: "As China appeared more threatening to the West and to Japan, its own media increasingly portrayed the PRC as menaced by an industrialized world bent on forcing its ideology on the rest of the planet, and on China in particular. In China's analysis, Washington, unable to cope with the idea of a powerful PRC, wants to dismember

China so that the United States can remain the hegemon of the international system."[56] With this foundation a better understanding of Chinese intentions can be achieved. However, establishing a defensive reason for military buildup specifically targeted to the U.S. does not mean that is the only use, or even the only reason for the buildup. In this case it is also important to establish the concept of defense with respect to China. Previously stated, Chinese strategy is to defend their sovereign territory, with pre-emptive attack if required. So what is meant by Chinese sovereign territory?

There are several areas of international disagreement over Chinese sovereign territory and China's territorial claims both in the East and South China Seas. The primary dispute is centered on China's claim of the island of Taiwan. While China routinely claims they seek a peaceful resolution to the dispute, they also continue to affirm that they can and will take military action if their sovereignty over Taiwan is threatened. A troubling claim considering Taiwan maintains an entirely independent democratic government recognized by several international organizations.[57] The U.S. has gone back and forth on the issue currently resting on an ambiguous "One China" policy that essentially accepts the duality of the claims as both being valid. For obvious reasons this has caused numerous tense situations over the years.

The second dispute centers on eight small islands in the East China Sea known as the Senkaku islands in Japan and the Diaoyu islands in China. They are located South-West of Japan's southernmost prefecture Okinawa and North-East of Taiwan. They are important for the proximity to sea lanes, the rich fishing areas and the potential oil and natural gas reserves. They are also strategically significant due to their prominent location in the Asia-Pacific region and the associated airspace and territorial water claims.[58]

The third dispute centers on the Spratly islands in the South China Sea. China claims a large portion of the South China Sea defined by what they have displayed to the UN as "the nine-dashed line"[59] that includes the Paracel and Spratly island chains as well as Scarborough Shoal. This is a highly contested area with six countries, including Taiwan, Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei all actively disputing some area of the South China Sea. There are several reasons for the intense competition as the area around the Spratly islands includes heavily traveled sea lanes, rich fishing, and most importantly, potentially vast reserves of oil and natural gas.[60]

These claims make it clear that China is looking to expand regional influence and gain any territory that it might have the loosest claim against. How then does A2/AD help China achieve goal of controlling this "sovereign territory?" Synthesizing China's military buildup, strategy, and actions demonstrates a coordinated grand strategy for gaining regional hegemony. China combines military buildup, strategic messaging, and economic pressure to achieve diplomatic concessions from countries throughout the Asia-Pacific. China's military buildup combined with the U.S. military reduction casts doubts about U.S. willingness to support and defend partners in the Asia-Pacific region. Continued Chinese propaganda about their sovereign territory and willingness to defend it convinces regional actors of China's resolve in the region. Finally, China leverages their trade surplus with neighboring countries to achieve bilateral concessions, each of which grow China's regional influence and make it more difficult for the next country to resist. Thus A2/AD is merely a small part of INEW, which is a small part of the "Three Warfares" which is a small part of Chinese grand strategy. In effect, China uses military power, combined with a created perception of willingness to use that power, in order to gain objectives without having to use military power.

U.S. Counters:

There are several items the U.S. must consider in light of China's strategy. First, it must prioritize the "asymmetric" domains of space and cyber. Second, it must be prepared to counter Chinese regional expansion without resorting to full scale war. Third, it must actively shape the environment towards a planned end-state, rather than reacting to the environment or attempting shaping operations without a clear goal. These three broad yet simple concepts will enable continued peace and prosperity to flourish in spite of confrontational regional actors.

First and foremost the U.S. military must acknowledge its overdependence on space and cyberspace and protect the vulnerability. The U.S. military is increasingly dependent on these two emerging domains to achieve its high-tech asymmetric advantage. However, as China continues to develop their INEW strategy these domains are rapidly transitioning from the permissive environment the U.S. is used to operating in into a highly contested domain. Without significant changes the U.S. will find itself on the opposite end of the spectrum, facing an enemy that has an overwhelming asymmetric advantage in domains they are not prepared to compete in.

There must be a twofold fix to this situation, much as has been seen in the development of airpower over the last century. Initially airpower brought intelligence to the battlefield in the way of balloons and reconnaissance flights. Then limited effects were managed from the air followed closely by the idea that those effects would be nearly unlimited in their strategic value and unstoppable by an opposing force. Defenses quickly sprang up that put to test the lie of easy victory through the air, however the value of contesting the air to gain a measure of strategic effects has proven itself over and over. The U.S. is showing signs of falling into the same trap as early airpower advocates, that space and cyber are the new asymmetric domains that "will always get through." The reality is that they provide unbelievable advantage in areas but must be

treated as a warfighting domain. The Chinese already recognize this fact and are preparing to use what they see as their asymmetric advantage.

Both space and cyber must be protected, but that protection must not be trusted completely, no matter how strong it appears. History has proved without fail that all defenses can and will be overcome. Whether through strength, guile, or politics, no defense is full-proof. For that reason, critical components must not only be thoroughly defended, but have redundancy. Network central nodes are the key point of attack in Chinese strategy. They are also the focus of U.S. military planners around the globe. Finding the one point upon which the rest of the system stands provides what Clausewitz refers to as a "center of gravity" and is an essential target. The U.S. is now dependent on access to the EMS as a center of gravity, without which it would be hard pressed to function at all. There are several decision points (DPs) that enable this COG, including the Global Positioning System (GPS) satellite constellation, JTIDS, and the Logistics network. In the U.S. mainland there is also a critical COG in the electrical power grid. These COGs and DPs are exactly the points China is already focused against. For this very reason the U.S. military must also maintain the capability to operate without one or more of these critical systems. Today's current training consists of simulating limited jamming of the GPS signal in a localized engagement. That is far too little effect in far too small a scope. Instead, the U.S. should think in terms of executing with no GPS signal whatsoever and see what capability remains.

On a strategic level the U.S. military must expand its notion of "winning" from total destruction of an enemy force, to the ability to achieve localized objectives. This is not to say that there should be no study or thought put into total defeat of an enemy where penetration of an A2/AD construct is necessary. Of course that should be considered in case that becomes the

political objective. However, evaluating the scenario faced in the Asian-Pacific one finds that full destruction of Chinese A2/AD is likely not the objective. Not only is it far more costly than the likely gains to be made, but the larger the scale of the conflict, the more likely either or both combatants decides to use nuclear weapons. Giving the politicians achievable options short of a full counter-invasion of China must be a goal. With that in mind, picture China's A2/AD construct and what they can achieve.

China can deny significant areas of the commons in the East China Sea for extended periods of time. While that is important it does not achieve any specific goals. In order to achieve territorial gain they must force capitulation or take the territory. The most likely target of this would be Taiwan. In order to overcome Taiwan they must not only deny the commons, but also force capitulation. This could potentially be achieved through a blockade or an invasion. China's capability to land troops is limited and requires maritime transport through the Taiwan Strait. Rather than viewing the problem as overcoming the entire A2/AD construct, instead, the U.S. military should look for the weakness in the plan and counter at that point. Reverse the A2/AD construct and use it to the U.S. advantage and deny the commons in return. The U.S. does not need to defeat the entire A2/AD construct for long periods of time. Instead they could deny the commons by targeting the blockading ships. Then project localized power to break through the blockade and deliver supplies.

As a second option, move the fight outside the range of Chinese A2/AD and blockade China's trade well outside of the Taiwan Strait. The U.S. must look to use other methods rather than fighting force against force. China is a net importer of oil and over 80 percent of China's oil imports flow through the Indian Ocean and through the Malacca Strait.[61] A blockade at the Eastern end of the Indian Ocean could have enough economic impact to force Chinese

capitulation. The key in this second strategy is identifying critical vulnerabilities that exist outside the protective umbrella or A2/AD. The U.S. should look to apply force to an area of weakness, not against the area of Chinese strength.

As China has proven with their A2/AD construct, denying the commons is significantly easier than controlling the commons. The U.S. could achieve this primarily with the use of strategically placed land-based anti-ship cruise missiles (ASMs). Using land-based ASMs would be beneficial for a myriad of reasons. They are a low cost option with a limited footprint relative to the other power projection forces involved in Air-Sea Battle. They are mobile and could be located, through host country coordination or through use of coalition assets, in numerous places forcing China to attempt to find, fix, and target multiple small targets over a huge range and azimuth. They could be used to strategic effect without escalating a conflict to a full-scale IADS takedown or land invasion of China. A 2013 RAND Corporation study discusses the use of Land-based ASMs in an Air-Land-Sea concept saying:

> The Navy and Air Force may currently possess the capacity to contest Chinese maritime freedom of action in Asia without land forces. However, doing so would require using expensive systems that would, if successfully targeted by Chinese forces, be difficult to replace. An inexpensive truck-mounted missile launcher in an Indonesian jungle is considerably more difficult to locate and attack than an expensive naval warship patrolling the approaches to the Strait of Malacca—and yet both could contribute to blockade objectives. Furthermore, the demand for naval assets to control the sea lines of communication to U.S. bases in the Western Pacific and perform other missions in times of conflict would be significant. Land-based ASMs could help relieve some of these demands on the Navy (and Air Force). Additionally, positioning many ASM systems throughout the first island chain would very significantly increase the PLA's targeting requirements, stressing its C2 systems and causing it to spread valuable intelligence, targeting, and attack assets over many possible firing positions across an arch of islands that is thousands of miles long rather than focusing on a few well-defined targets. Arguably, this would significantly decrease the effectiveness of PLA anti-access assets and increase the effectiveness of other U.S. and coalition efforts.[62]

Use of land-based ASMs also helps limit the dependency on a single enabler like GPS. Currently produced missiles include GPS, INS, active radar, passive radar, and datalink targeted variants. This is just one idea of reversing the A2/AD construct against China, both limiting their capability and raising their cost of attempting to act aggressively in the region.

The third area the U.S. must focus on is shaping the environment. As the U.S. draws down its military forces it must work diplomatically in the Asia-Pacific region to form closer regional ties. There is no single regional actor with the military or economic power to match China. However, if international organizations like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) maintain strong bonds with an understanding of Chinese methods and intentions they will be able to counter China's strength. China is strongest when leveraging strength against countries independently in bilateral agreements. This is why it tends to avoid multinational agreements where possible. Supporting multinational organizations and lending weight to counter-Chinese aggression policies is the most economically viable way of maintaining a regional counterbalance.

Conclusion:

China has a history of thinking through problems at the strategic level and in terms of decades. The U.S. has historically attacked problems as they arise, without shaping situations for future operations. This is highlighted in both Chinese and American studies: "Yu concluded that Western geostrategic thinking is an expansive "rivalry for superiority" with an emphasis on "technological might," while China's thinking values "balance" and stresses the importance of "strategy." The impact of China's traditional use of dialectical and relativistic thinking on matters of state is unmistakable in the writing of this PLA scholar."[63] The U.S. cannot afford

imbalance in strategic thought. Understanding how A2/AD plays only a minor role in greater Chinese strategy is the first critical step. Planning to combat A2/AD is an important effort, but must not take the place of also countering grand strategy.

The intentions of another country can never be certain. However there is enough evidence to suggest China's strategy and likely courses of action. If the U.S. does not change its reactionary mindset and develop a long-term strategy it will likely cede regional hegemony in the Asia-Pacific to China. The IADS rollback model of Desert Storm is no longer sufficient for military planners and strategists. The U.S. military must think not only of future conflict in the same manner it has engaged in before. Instead, the U.S. military must change its paradigm by developing and integrating emerging domains, as well as tailoring military force to the scenario, achieving limited objectives while countering enemy objectives. Only then the U.S. will be able to maintain peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region for many years to come.

All notes are in shortened form. For full source documentation please reference the bibliography.

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