

A Return to Principled Realism and the US Army's
Support to the Application of National Power in the
USINDOPACOM AOR

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

A Return to Principled Realism and the US Army's Support to the Application of National Power in the USINDOPACOM AOR, Major Joel A. Martinez, US Army, 48 pages.

This monograph is designed to provide operational planners a framework to link strategic guidance to operational operations. The NSS and NDS provide policy guidance that drives the employment of national power in pursuit of strategic aims. The linkage of military means to policy aims is a critical, if underappreciated, role of operational planners. Understanding the linkage between military operations and strategic guidance is crucial as the United States returns to an emphasis on great power competition.

If war is an extension of policy, operational planners must have a basic understanding of the "work of politics," and the methods politicians may use to influence the international system. International relations theory provides operational planners a framework to understand great power interaction within an international system devoid of formal hierarchy. This monograph addresses China's rise in the Indo-Pacific region from the views of both US and Chinese writers. Both views see the shift of power in the region through different lenses. Examining how these views shape policy will help planners connect means and ways to political ends.

Next, this monograph examines how Army operations may support a whole-of-government approach in the Indo-Pacific region. The Army is addressing the possibility of conflict in the region through the publication on multi-domain operations. This monograph provides additional focus on potential areas where operational planners can use take guidance from the National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy to focus operational efforts that will support a whole-of-government approach. The monograph focuses on Vietnam and India to assess regional tensions and identify areas for the Army to prepare for the likelihood of future conflict.

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Acronyms

A2AD	Anti-Access/Air-Denial
AOR	Area of Responsibility
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CCP	Communist Chinese Party
IR	International Relations
JCIC	Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning
JP	Joint Publication
MDO 2028	Multi-Domain Operations 2028
NDS	National Defense Strategy
NMS	National Military Strategy
NSS	National Security Strategy
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
PRC	People's Republic of China
TRADOC	Training and Doctrine Command
ULO	Unified Land Operations
US	United States
USINDOPACOM	US India-Pacific Command

Introduction

National power has many components, some tangible, like economic wealth, technical pre-eminence. Other components are intangible, such as moral force, or strong national will. Military forces, when they are strong and ready and modern, are a credible, and tangible, addition to a nation's power. When both the intangible national will and those forces are forged into one instrument, national power becomes effective.

— Caspar Weinberger, Remarks delivered to the National Press Club, November 28, 1984

The 2017 *National Security Strategy* (NSS) marks a shift in the security priorities for the United States of America. After spending the closer part of two decades focused on threats to national security from international terrorist organizations, the 2017 NSS identifies the reemergence of continuous strategic competition by great powers as the primary threat to US interests at home and abroad.¹ The 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) reflects this shift, and identifies the “reemergence of long-term, strategic competition by... revisionist powers” as the primary challenge to the nation's security.² Additionally, the Trump Administration recognizes that China wields a whole-of-government approach to its strategic competition efforts to undermine US interests while remaining under the threshold of open conflict.³

The recognition of a return to strategic competition is a significant reorientation from the focus on counterterrorism and stability operations executed by the US Joint Force for the past seventeen years. Adapting this fundamental shift to the US Army's operational environment requires the development and employment of a focused operational approach that supports all elements of national power.⁴ Additionally, this operational approach must account for the

¹ Donald J. Trump, *National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC.: The White House, 2017), 25-28.

² James Mattis, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2018), 2.

³ Michael Pence, “Remarks by Vice President Pence on the Administration's Policy Toward China.” White House Briefings & Statements, October 4, 2018, accessed October 8, 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-administrations-policy-toward-china/>.

⁴ Mattis, *Summary of the 2018 NDS*, 8

political factors that shape the national endstate and nest within an overarching national strategy to counter the threat of long-term strategic competition presented by China in the Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) area of responsibility (AOR).

What are the implications for the US Army as it reprioritizes to counter the People's Republic of China's (PRC) long-term strategic competition? How do shifts in the balance of power within the international system impact national security concerns? What are the implications regarding a return to great power competition, and do the PRC elites that drive China's national policy view this competition in the same light as the United States? Where can the Army focus its efforts to present China with multiple strategic dilemmas? Answers to these questions should influence the Army's approach to China in the Indo-Pacific region. As a critical component of the military element of national power, the army must develop and employ a region-specific strategy that applies appropriate ways and means to support the political endstate of countering Chinese strategic competition below the level of open conflict.

The monograph uses international relations (IR) theory as a lens to examine the Army's role in great power competition and assesses how the Army can support a whole-of-government approach to countering China's strategic competition in the INDOPACOM AOR. Understanding of the role of the NSS and the NDS in formulating and employing a strategy to match Chinese strategic competition while remaining below the level of open conflict is critical for operational planners tasked with generating options for commanders. The NSS and NDS both imply a return to constant competition between great powers and the Army is developing doctrine to counter the overt actions of revisionist powers. What is lacking is an assessment of how US Army actions may support a whole-of-government approach to meeting China's competition in the Indo-pacific region.

This monograph examines ways the Army can support the other levers of national power while setting conditions to prepare for open conflict. This support requires an acknowledgment that, in the 21st century, armed conflict between both nation-states and non-state actors remains a continuation of politics, as well as a baseline understanding of both the international system and the theories that provide a framework to examine great power politics.⁵ Additionally, an understanding of lenses that influence both US and Chinese thinking is key to interpreting ways to achieve the political objectives alluded to in the NSS and assess China's actions in the Indo-Pacific region. Finally, as the land component of the US military, Army operational planners should consider areas within the INDOPACOM AOR that support the diplomatic and information levers of national power while setting conditions to operate from a position of better relative advantage if or when competition turns to open conflict.

This monograph will consider three areas. The first is an examination of the policy documents that guide national strategy. The terminology used in the NSS, the NDS, and Army doctrine emphasize the return to competition between great power politics. The Army is over seventy years removed from open conflict against a great power and more than twenty-five years have passed since the US military validated the Air-Land-Battle doctrine in the first Gulf War. Apart from the initial ground invasion of Iraq in 2003, the United States has spent the better part of two decades fighting unconventional wars with limited means. As the United States returns its attention to great-power competition, how do nation-states interact within the international system, and what is the Army's role as part of the military lever of national power? Second, what are the implications of a rising China in the Indo-Pacific region and how do US and Chinese analysts view China's unprecedented growth, the expansion of its military capabilities, and

⁵ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 87, 89, 607.

actions in the South China Sea? Considering the cultural and philosophical differences that exist between the East and the West is an important step in evaluating China's actions. Third, what can operational planners do to give commanders options below the threshold of open conflict and where can the Army support the national endstate of countering China's revisionist foreign policy?

The monograph consists of five sections. Following the introduction, the second section, "Power in the International System," provides an examination of the international system and the role great powers play in it. This section uses international relations (IR) theory as a lens to view the Army's role in the international system as the United States returns to great power competition. The third section, titled "The United States and China: Competing Views," analyzes competing views of China's rise and its emerging role within the international system. The section examines the ideas of a Chinese strategy to supplant the United States and the idea that Chinese actions follow a culturally unique philosophy that provides a competing lens from which to view actions in the international system. The fourth section, "Analysis of China's Actions in the USINDOPACOM Operational Environment," examines China's expansionist actions in the Indo-Pacific region to determine where the Army can best support the diplomatic and informational levers of national power. An analysis of security tensions between China and its neighbors in the Indo-Pacific region is used to identify how and where the Army can accomplish its military aims while supporting a whole-of-government approach. This analysis is predicated on the idea that for the Army to successfully respond to China's long-term strategic competition, it must focus its efforts in areas best suited to the land component and supports the underlying fact that the "Army's contribution to unified action is unified land operations."⁶ The fifth section,

⁶ US Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADP) 3-0, Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), 7.

“Synthesis and Recommendations,” provides recommendations on how the Army can support US efforts to build partnership and security in the Indo-Pacific region. This monograph will focus on Vietnam and India as potential operational environments that will allow the Army to work in concert with other elements of national power to help provide stability in the region.

Power in the International System

The international system is maintained by power, and as the United States returns its focus back to strategic competition and great power politics, skillful employment of hard and soft power is required.⁷ The realist and liberal IR theories describe the desired outcomes of nation-states and how they attempt to achieve those ends. Political scientist and realist, John Mearsheimer, writes that within the international system states continually seek to increase their share of power, and this power expansion is done with the aim of becoming a hegemon, or “the only great power in the system.”⁸ Joseph Nye, political scientist and liberal theorist, believes that states use international institutions to co-opt instead of coerce. Nye argues that nation-states often employ the information and diplomatic elements of power to leverage soft power to convince states to desire the same outcomes without the use of hard (military or economic) power.⁹ The realist and liberal views seem to share the consensus that power is a critical component of a state’s ability to operate in the international system. The difference in Mearsheimer and Nye’s arguments stems from the realist and liberal perceptions of what drives a state to maneuver for power in the sphere of international relations, and how international institutions enforce international customs, norms, or law.

⁷ Trump, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, 2-3.

⁸ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 22. Kindle.

⁹ Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 5.

Both the NSS and the NDS identify China as a “revisionist power” seeking to challenge the United States across all elements of national power in its quest to become the regional hegemon in the India-Pacific region.¹⁰ The unclassified National Military Strategy (NMS) of 2015 recognized that China’s actions in the South China Sea run counter to established international law, and are inconsistent with the norms of the international community.¹¹ China’s actions in the USINDOPACOM AOR indicate an attempt to alter the regional balance of power as China attempts to reestablish itself as the regional hegemon in the Indo-Pacific region.¹² While these documents do not provide a national grand strategy that links means to ends, they serve as policy documents that offer a broad framework for the United States to counter threats to national security.¹³ B.H. Liddell Hart understood that a country’s ability to project military force is only one aspect of its national power and that a successful national strategy accounts for the application of means to political ends across a whole-of-government approach.¹⁴ The NSS provides broad guidance across diplomatic, informational, military, and economic elements of national power and identifies areas where China’s actions in the Indo-Pacific region threaten US national interests across all elements of national power.¹⁵

China’s claim that it “does not seek regional hegemony or a sphere of influence” is a direct challenge to traditional IR theories regarding the balance of power.¹⁶ The NMS recognizes

¹⁰ Nye, *Soft Power.*, 25.

¹¹ Martin Dempsey, *National Military Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2015), 2.

¹² Mattis, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy*, 2.

¹³ Eliot Cohen, *The Big Stick* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 3517. Kindle.

¹⁴ B.H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2nd rev. ed. (1967; repr., New York: Meridian, 1991), 319-322.

¹⁵ Trump, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, 8, 25, 27.

¹⁶ Denny Roy, *Return of the Dragon: Rising China and Regional Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 258.

the threat the rise of China poses to the regional balance of power due to the employment of “predatory economics to intimidate its neighbors while militarizing features in the South China Sea.”¹⁷ The NSS adopts a national strategy guided by “principled realism...[that] acknowledges the central role of power in international politics, affirms that sovereign states are the best hope for a peaceful world, and clearly defines our national interests” to counter China’s threats to US national interests.¹⁸

China’s intimidation of neighboring states and risk to trade routes is perhaps the most significant threat identified in the NSS. The NSS states that China “seeks to displace the United States in the Indo-Pacific region, expand the reaches of its state-driven economic model, and reorder the region in its favor.”¹⁹ The NDS concurs, and notes China’s whole-of-government strategy ultimately “seeks Indo-Pacific regional hegemony in the near-term and displacement of the United States to achieve global preeminence in the future.”²⁰ China does this through land reclamation efforts, diplomatic claims to the majority of the South China Sea, military modernization and basing on artificial islands, and complex anti-access/air-denial (A2AD) systems. China argues its robust A2AD is defensive, but the ranges overlap the economic exclusion zones of neighboring states, potentially threatening neighboring countries and could eventually disrupt critical international shipping lanes.²¹ These actions undermine “the international order from within the system by exploiting its benefits while simultaneously

¹⁷ Mattis, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy*, 1, 2.

¹⁸ Trump, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, 1, 55.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁰ Mattis, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy*, 2.

²¹ Dempsey, *National Military Strategy of the United States*, 2.; Trump, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, 46.

undercutting its principles and ‘rules of the road.’”²² China’s revisionist policies are a direct challenge to the order enforced by the United States since 1945.

Power is the ability to get others to do something they normally would not, and the state is the premier vehicle for harnessing and projecting power. From a military aspect, hard power is the threat or application of armed force by the state to reach predetermined goals.²³ However, even within this context, it is essential to understand that in the 21st century, power is “multi-layered.”²⁴ Power combines both the hard and soft aspects of a nation’s “political, psychological, moral, informational, economic, societal, military, police, and civil bureaucratic activities that can be brought to bear appropriately” to further a nation’s aims.²⁵ How then does the Army help reinforce the nation’s soft power while maintaining its ability to project hard power? How nations manage the levers of national power is a topic of importance to scholars and students of international relations, as well as students of military history. For the former, power is measured in a state’s ability to exert its will within the international community, sometimes through negotiations, often through coercion. For the latter, power is a tangible and deadly thing.

The ability of international institutions to enforce international law is neither “efficient [or] effective,” and relies mainly on mechanisms outside the institutions.²⁶ Ultimately, the effectiveness of international law within the international system relies on the willing participation of the actors that constitute the international community. This ineffectiveness is

²² Mattis, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy*, 2.

²³ Stephen J. Cimbala, *Military Persuasion in War and Policy: The Power of Soft* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 9.

²⁴ Max G. Manwaring, *U.S. Security Policy in the Western Hemisphere: Why Columbia, Why Now, and What is to be Done?* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2001), 18.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Charlotte Ku and Paul F. Diehl, “Operating and Normative Systems,” in *International Law: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, edited by Charlotte Ku and Paul F. Diehl, (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009), 9.

primarily due to the sovereign nature of states within the international system. States are reluctant to cede sovereign authority to supranational entities, such as the United Nations, when that action restricts an “actor’s behavior and even their sovereignty.”²⁷

Some international relations theorists argue the notion of sovereignty has become a “mythology of state grandeur and aggrandizement...a mythology that is often empty and sometimes destructive of human values.”²⁸ This view, however, discounts the significance of the friction presented by the dual nature of international relations, namely “the area of institutions of peace which are related to the adjustment of disputes and the area of power politics and war” and ignores the anarchic nature of the international system.²⁹

Realists see a lack of hierarchy between states as proof the international system is anarchic. This lack of authority can be seen then, not as a source of international conflict, but as an ordering principle in a system that has no overarching ruling body. Additionally, while realists hold a rather pessimistic view of world politics, cooperation between states can and often does, occur.³⁰ Realists maintain states are rational actors in the international arena who pursue survival through strategic aims within both the operative and normative systems of international law.³¹ Furthermore, this participation is voluntary, and the effectiveness of the system requires the involvement and self-imposition on the part of sovereign states. The challenge for both

²⁷ Kenneth Abbot and Duncan Snidal, “Hard and Soft Law in International Governance,” in *International Law: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Charlotte Ku and Paul F. Diehl, (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009), 22.

²⁸ Jeremy A. Rabkin, *Law Without Nations? Why Constitutional Government Requires Sovereign States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 463-475, Kindle

²⁹ Hans Morgenthau, J., *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 7th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), 17.

³⁰ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 1055-1074. Kindle.

³¹ John J. Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” *International Security* 19, no. 3 (1994): 12-13.

international law and the states and institutions that participate in the legal process will be to balance the effectiveness of international law with the security requirements of individual nations.

Because the international system is anarchic, it is a self-help system. Because states can never be certain of others intentions, realism indicated the ability to employ hard power is a driving force behind the motives of states within the realm of international relations.³² While the 20th century saw a cavalcade of events leading to the massive conflicts of the first half of the century, it was the underlying hard power of the state's military might that had the most to do with the commitment to war. It is essential to distinguish the hard power approach to international relations is favored by realists from the neo-conservative, unilateralist approach. While the unilateralist approach does, indeed, support the overwhelming application of military power, the realist approach does not favor war simply for war's sake. Instead, the same realists who decried the war in Vietnam would likely be opposed to the neo-conservative thinking that has led to the wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and would certainly balk at the idea of committing forces in the Indo-Pacific region before exhausting all other options.

Nye coined the term soft power in 1990 when he discussed how the nature of national power had changed from the rise of the modern state through the 20th century.³³ Describing this shift in power, Nye argues power "is...easier to experience than to define or measure, but no less real for that."³⁴ One can employ the mental imagery of carrots and sticks when examining the arguments referring to the military and economic ability of a state expressed as hard power. These terms serve Nye's argument well, especially when one

³² Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 695, 703. Kindle.

³³ Priscilla Roberts, "Introduction," in *Going Soft? The US and China Go Global*, ed. Priscilla Roberts, (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), xvi.

³⁴ Nye, *Soft Power*, 1.

thinks of a state exerting force through sanctions and the threat of military force. While these forms of power exertion appear to be effective methods, Nye believes there is another form of power to be wielded by the state.

According to Nye, a state derives its soft power through its culture, political values, and foreign policies, and is a formidable method of influencing others to achieve desired outcomes.³⁵ These soft power traits were evident in US efforts to reshape defeated countries following World War II. Soft power, in this instance, grew support for American ideas and policies and was evidenced in the adoption of cultural icons like Coca-Cola and metaphors like ‘The American Way of Life’ throughout the world.³⁶ Diplomatic prowess, economic strength, and military might each contribute to the growth of a state’s power. But power is not static. The uncontested power the United States enjoyed during the latter half of the 20th century has abated with the spread of liberal democracy, the rebuilding of West Germany and Japan and the rise of both economies following the Second World War, and now with China’s unprecedented growth and the spread of Chinese influence.

Understanding the implications of great power politics in the age of soft power is critical as the United States prepares to secure its interests at home and abroad in a new era of strategic competition. With the introduction of the 2017 NSS and 2018 NDS, journalists and pundits alike recognize the United States has returned to great power competition, and this has implications for the US military operating within the INDOPACOM AOR.³⁷

³⁵ Nye, *Soft Power*, 11.

³⁶ Jeremy Black, *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 180-181.

³⁷ Benn Steil, “How to Win a Great Power Competition,” *Foreign Affairs*, February 09, 2018, accessed October, 31, 2018. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2018-02-09/how-win-great-power-competition>.

Understanding the international relations framework that underpins great power competition is crucial to understanding the operating environment in which the Army now finds itself.

Clausewitz identified the symbiotic relationship between the politician and the Soldier in the early 19th century when he wrote:

war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means. What remains peculiar to war is just the peculiar nature of its means...The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose.³⁸

Clausewitz identified “the *armed forces*, the *country*, and the *enemy’s will*” as critical elements to consider when developing a national grand strategy.³⁹ These elements retain their importance in the 21st century, and control of them relies on the application of both hard and soft power.

Matching the strategic competition of a revisionist power requires the use of both hard and soft power, or “smart power,” to match ways and means to a political endstate.⁴⁰

Understanding the differences and similarities between the realist and liberal views of the international system enables analysis of the current strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific region. There is a natural shift in strategic approach that accompanies new Presidents and their administrations. Operational planners are often required to examine policy documents to determine the policy aims driving military planning and respond accordingly. President Obama’s pivot to Asia, combined with his strategy of leveraging diplomatic, informational, and economic elements of national power is a much different approach than President Trump is employing. The Trump administration’s use of tariffs to slow the Chinese economy while simultaneously identifying China as a strategic competitor posing a threat to American interests illustrates how

³⁸ Clausewitz, *On War*, 87.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁴⁰ Nye, *Soft Power*, 30; Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011), 194. Kindle.

important applying smart power will be when developing options for commanders to achieve political ends.

The realist and liberal theories are valuable tools that help describe how and why the international system works, and are extremely helpful for planners who must fill in the gaps between strategic policy guidance and operational requirements. A third view is also helpful when considering how China views the international system: constructivism. Constructivism is not a theory, but rather it describes the assumptions held by elites on how the world works.⁴¹ Constructivism argues ideas and beliefs shape the international system.⁴² The constructivist view challenges both the realist and liberal theories and creates constructivist alternatives to each.⁴³ Constructivism explains how Chinese ruling elites advance their views and provides another lens to examine their revisionist narratives.

The United States and China: Competing Views

How do the United States and China view China's historic rise? This section examines the US and Chinese views of China as a rising power. The opinions from the United States point of view vary, and this paper examines three. China's view of its rise and its place in the international system is also critical. Finally, China's actions in the Indo-Pacific region and the subsequent tension with its neighboring states pose a challenge to international norms and highlight the inadequacy of a self-enforcing international legal system. The United States' return to realism may be seen as realism with American characteristics, which refers to the idea that America employs a realist hard power approach to support a liberal international system that is in

⁴¹ Anne-Marie Slaughter, "International Relations, Principal Theories," *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law*, May 09, 2011, accessed 10 November, 2018, https://www.princeton.edu/~slaught/Articles/722_IntlRelPrincipalTheories_Slaughter_20110509zG.pdf.

⁴² Jack Snyder, "One World, Rival Theories," *Foreign Policy* Nov/Dec, (2004): 60.

⁴³ Slaughter, "International Relations, Principal Theories."

its interests.⁴⁴ This view helps to explain US policy since 1945 that has exhibited traits that fall between realism and liberal definitions. The United States' return to a realist foreign policy signifies a shift in how US policymakers view the world, and China's actions challenge the international order that the United States has enforced for seventy-nine years.

US policymakers have no shortage of assessments regarding the future of relations between the United States and China. One view supports the assessment that China is engaged in long-term strategic competition with the United States. This view, advanced by a longtime China expert and former Presidential advisor Michael Pillsbury, argues that China currently employs a calculated strategy to surpass the United States as a global superpower.⁴⁵ A second view, held by Army War College research professor David Lai, sees the potential for conflict during China's inevitable rise but argues it is not unavoidable, particularly if one understands how the Chinese approach diplomacy and war.⁴⁶ A third view is that the United States and China face a similar situation to that of Sparta and Athens during the Peloponnesian War (431-411 B.C.). This view, termed "the Thucydides Trap" by professor Graham Allison, sees similar conditions present in today's interactions between the United States and China.⁴⁷

Chinese policymakers and elites must also contend with a distinct view of the United States and its actions in a globally interconnected world. Western views of the international system are just that, western. Chinese policymakers and academics share a distinctly different

⁴⁴ The phrase "realism with American characteristics" came up in a conversation between the author and Dr. Phil Hulquist when comparing US and Chinese policymakers' views on the international system.

⁴⁵ Michael Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower* (New York: Henry Holt, 2016), 247. Kindle.

⁴⁶ David Lai, *Learning from the Stones: A Go Approach to Mastering China's Strategic Concept, Shi* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2004), 6.

⁴⁷ Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017), 167. Kindle

view of the international system and their place within it. Yan Xuetong, a distinguished professor and the Dean of the Institute of International Relations, Tsinghua University, recognizes that the international order is seen through the lens of realism and liberal IR theories but believes Chinese realism differs in the importance placed on moral leadership.⁴⁸ Chinese political scientist Zhang Weiwei, professor of international relations at Fudan University and a senior research fellow at the Chunqiu Institute, underscores the differences between the rise of western nations and the “[amalgamation] of the world’s longest continuous civilization with a huge modern state.”⁴⁹ “Socialism with Chinese characteristics” is the phrase used by Chinese elites to describe the political system employed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the CCP, states that socialism with Chinese characteristics is the “path, theory, and system” that the Chinese employ to “guide new practices and [incorporate] effective principles and policies into [the communist] Party and national systems.”⁵⁰ These views challenge American assessment of China’s rise and are vital to understanding the strategic context of great power competition between the two countries.

Since 1979 China has experienced unprecedented growth, increasing its share of both hard and soft power.⁵¹ China’s status in the Indo-Pacific region rose with its return to great power status. Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms, and the pivot towards state-run markets, set conditions for China to emerge as the regional hegemon. While the United States and China have each benefited from China’s self-proclaimed “peaceful rise,” the prospect of continued peaceful

⁴⁸ Xuetong Yan, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, ed. Daniel A. Bell and Sun Zhe, and trans. Edmund Ryden (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 2,4. Kindle.

⁴⁹ Weiwei Zhang, *The China Wave: Rise of a Civilizational State* (Hackensack, NJ: World Century, 2012), 2. Kindle.

⁵⁰ Jinping Xi, *The Governance of China*, Second ed., vol. I (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2018), 9.

⁵¹ Robert Haddick, *Fire on the Water: China, America, and the Future of the Pacific* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2014), 228-238. Kindle.

relations in the region is far from guaranteed.⁵² It is this potential for future conflict that has prompted a national refocusing of strategy back to great power competition.

One view of Chinese long-term strategic competition is that China employs a calculated strategy to place itself at the head of the international order. This view, presented by Michael Pillsbury in *The Hundred-Year Marathon*, argues that China aims to surpass the United States in economic, diplomatic, and military power, and supplant the United States as the world superpower. China, Pillsbury argues, employs a grand strategy based on the use of *shi* to assess an opponent's relative position and act either directly or indirectly.⁵³ According to Pillsbury, China's unprecedented economic growth, and gains in military and informational developments that accompanied this growth, all point to China positioning itself to surpass the United States as the world's superpower in the year 2049.⁵⁴ This date marks the hundredth anniversary of the CCP's assumption of leadership in China, a date that marked the end of the Century of Shame imposed on China by other great powers.

Pillsbury's central argument is that Chinese nationalist elites, called *ying pai*, or hawks, drive the strategy and have successfully persuaded the Chinese leadership to view America as a dangerous hegemon that it must replace.⁵⁵ According to Pillsbury, these policy elites view the United States as an overbearing state that has sought to suppress Chinese development for 170 years and "destroy China's rightful place in the world."⁵⁶ This perceived oppression from the United States fuels the hawks' desire to develop the means to counter the United States' power

⁵² Zhang, *The China Wave: Rise of a Civilizational State*, 280, 383, 394. Kindle.

⁵³ Pillsbury identifies nine elements of Chinese strategy that stem from the Warring States period. For further study see Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon*, 659-688. Kindle.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 233-248. Kindle.

⁵⁵ Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon*, 65, 1861-1862. Kindle.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 1886-1891. Kindle.

while devoting significant resources “to enhance China’s relative power through the acquisition of high technology [that] extend beyond the pursuit of high-tech weapons systems.”⁵⁷

Pillsbury’s argument contains echoes of Sun Tzu’s maxim that deception is a complex element of war.⁵⁸ He claims that “hawks assess that China can only succeed in this project through deception, or at least by denial of any frightening plans.”⁵⁹ Additionally, the hawks and their view of China as the rightful hegemon shape the Chinese sponsored narrative of America within China. This narrative teaches the majority of the Chinese people that American presidents, to include Abraham Lincoln, worked to weaken China, and view Sino-American cooperative efforts as “just a passing phase in America’s enduring crusade to destroy China’s rightful place in the world.”⁶⁰

Pillsbury’s alarmist view of China’s actions certainly resonates with a realist perspective of competing states in the international system, but it is not the only explanation for potential friction between the United States and China. The development of Chinese thought and strategy has evolved over a markedly different path than the great western powers.⁶¹ As early as 2002, the China Security Review Commission informed the US Congress that “Chinese thinking draws heavily on ancient Chinese military lore and history, as well as Chinese Communist revolutionary

⁵⁷ Ibid., 2615-2616. Kindle.

⁵⁸ Roger Ames, *Sun Tzu: The Art of Warfare* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 1549, Kindle; Samuel B. Griffith, *The Art of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 106.

⁵⁹ Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon*, 252-253. Kindle.

⁶⁰ Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon*, 1890. Kindle.

⁶¹ This can be seen in the Ancient Chinese belief that China held a unique place in the universe as the center of “all under heaven.” Contrast that with the ancient belief that the world was carried on a plate on the back of a tortoise who was standing on the backs of “turtles all the way down,” and the revolutionary view from the Ancient Greeks that the earth was not only round, but not the center of the universe. For more information see Yan, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, 22, Kindle; Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time: The Updated and Expanded Tenth Anniversary Edition* (New York: Random House, 2011), 30-51, Kindle

history, and emphasizes nontraditional and asymmetrical techniques designed to enable an inferior power to defeat a superior one.⁶² The report recognizes the likelihood of China employing deception tactics, the potential for preemptive strikes, and the need for China to develop technology that compensates for the asymmetry between the two powers.⁶³ To understand how the Chinese will employ this strategy requires a further look at the concept of *shi* (pronounced ‘sure’). For that, we turn to the game of *go*.

Shi is an integral concept in Chinese culture, and it drives diplomatic and military efforts of the CCP. The fifth book of Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War* centers around the idea of *shi*. In his translation of the work, Samuel Griffith, retired Marine Brigadier General, translated *shi* as energy, and described it as “‘force,’ ‘influence,’ ‘authority, [and] ‘energy.’”⁶⁴ The US Secretary of Defense’s report to Congress in 2002 recognized the complexity of describing *shi*. The report states:

There is no Western equivalent to the concept of “*shi*.” Chinese linguists explain it as “the alignment of forces,” the “propensity of things,” or the “potential born of disposition,” that only a skilled strategist can exploit to ensure victory over a superior force. Similarly, only a sophisticated assessment by an adversary can recognize the potential exploitation of “*shi*.”⁶⁵

David Lai, security expert and Chinese scholar, notes that the concept of *shi* runs throughout Sun Tzu’s text. Lai notes that recognizing and understanding the importance of *shi* in the areas like

⁶² China Security Review Commission, *Report to the Congress of the United States: The National Security Implications of the Economic Relationship Between the United States and China* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2002), 15.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶⁴ Griffith, *Sun Tzu: The Art of War*, 90.

⁶⁵ Donald Rumsfeld, *Annual Report to the Congress on the Military Power of the People’s Republic of China* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2002), 6.

deception, strategy, and intelligence are critical during peacetime, as leaders will have no time to learn about these concepts once a conflict has begun.⁶⁶

Lai uses the ancient Chinese game of *go* to illustrate how the Chinese view and employ *shi*. In *go*, “The basic objective of the game is to secure more space on the board (or more territory). The players do so by encircling more space on the board. The competition for more territory thus leads to invasion, engagement, confrontation, and war fighting.”⁶⁷ Pillsbury also addresses the importance of *shi* to Chinese strategic thought and underscores one of many differences in Eastern and Western thinking. According to Pillsbury, “[the] very idea of *shi* gets to the heart of a distinctly Chinese view of the world because it conveys an almost mystical fatalism about the role of human actors in the universe. Humans and nations can interact with each other and change events, but those events have an independent momentum all their own.”⁶⁸ Pillsbury adopts a realist worldview of the Chinese employment of *shi* and sees hostility in the actions of the Chinese. Indeed, the inability of the international community to prevent an determined attack, coupled with a realist uncertainty of a state’s true intentions, should prompt US strategists and planners to pay close attention to the actions of the Chinese.⁶⁹ Lai argues that an understanding of *go* will enable political and military leaders to better understand the nuances of Chinese strategic culture and its emphasis on *shi*, particularly when comparing it to American strategic culture and the American way of war.⁷⁰ Ultimately, an awareness of how the Chinese

⁶⁶ David Lai, *Learning From the Stones: A Go Approach to Mastering China’s Strategic Concept, Shi* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2004), 2.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁶⁸ Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon*, 822-824. Kindle.

⁶⁹ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 237. Kindle.; Roy, *Return of the Dragon*, 2.

⁷⁰ Lai, *Learning From the Stones*, 27.

apply strategic thought and how Chinese political thinkers view the world will help avoid the trap of conflict that seems inevitable in great power politics.

Harvard professor Graham Allison believes that the United States and China are inching closer to a conflict in the Indo-Pacific as the regional balance of power in Indo-Pacific shifts towards China. Allison argues that the underlying causes of the Peloponnesian War—fear, honor, and interest—continue to influence great power politics, particularly in the realm of international relations.⁷¹ According to Allison, the Thucydides trap “refers to the natural, inevitable discomobulation that occurs when a rising power threatens to displace a ruling power.”⁷² Allison notes that over 500 years there have been sixteen cases of a rising power challenging the entrenched power. In all but four instances, this balance of power shift resulted in war.⁷³

According to Allison, a war between the United States and China “is not just possible, but much more likely than currently recognized. Indeed, on the historical record, war is more likely than not,” but, not inevitable.⁷⁴ Avoiding the Thucydides trap will require both an operational approach recognizing China’s growth, and ultimately its influence, is inevitable. As Allison points out, China’s economy is likely to continue to increase at an exponential rate, and as efficiency increases, Chinese productivity could easily outpace the United States.⁷⁵ If this occurs, and if the policy makers and strategists continue to see actions taken by China as part of a long-term strategy, then the likelihood of conflict will increase.

⁷¹ Allison, *Destined for War*, 806, Kindle; Robert B. Strassler, *The Landmark Thucydides* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), 43.

⁷² Allison, *Destined for War*, 171. Kindle.

⁷³ Allison, *Destined for War*, 187. Kindle.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 314. Kindle.

How then does the United States continue to secure its interests in the Indo-Pacific region while avoiding the Thucydides trap? One argument put forward by Allison is that the United States should avoid rushing to implement a new China strategy. Instead, Allison notes that developing a “more robust” strategy to prevent the Thucydides trap, will likely be too little, too late.⁷⁶ Instead, any effective strategy that seeks to counter China’s long-term plan effectively must be a “multi-year, [and] multiminded effort,” similar in audacity, scale, and scope with the US Cold War strategy.⁷⁷ However, as previously stated, the NSS does not provide operational artists or planners this level of granularity. In the absence of such guidance, planners should consider how China views power, the international system, and its role within that system.

There is little doubt that policymakers and planners in both the United States and China see their respective positions through drastically different lenses. Recognizing these differences should help planners to provide options when working to integrate Army operations into efforts to secure national interests. Understanding what shapes Chinese policymaker’s and academic’s views of the international system and national power is a first step towards countering China’s long-term strategic competition.

Yan Xuetong, a political scientist and Chinese realist, argues that ancient Chinese culture, specifically the pre-Qin writings of philosophers such as Laozi and Confucius, provides a framework to understand the current Chinese view of China’s rise and of its emerging role in the international system.⁷⁸ Yan notes that the pre-Qin thinkers had robust views on the nature of international relations, balance of power shifts, and the role of the hegemon, and these views will

⁷⁶ Allison, *Destined for War*, 3700. Kindle.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 3714. Kindle.

⁷⁸ Mark Leonard, *What Does China Think* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2008), 90-91; Yan, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, 21. Kindle.

help us understand current Chinese views on international relations theory today.⁷⁹ Yan argues that the thoughts of ancient Chinese thinkers continue to influence Chinese ideas regarding “philosophical concepts, [the] cause of war, path to peace, role of morality, the nature of all under heaven, the basis for the right to leadership among states, unbalanced development, and transfer of hegemonic power.”⁸⁰

Central to Yan’s views of how the pre-Qin thinkers influence Chinese thinking today is the idea that “political leadership is the key to national power and that morality is an essential part of political leadership. Economic and military might matter as components of national power, but they are secondary to political leaders who act (at least partly) in accordance with moral norms.”⁸¹ The morality of the leader is a critical component to leading in interstate affairs, particularly as elements of classical realism are evident in ancient Chinese thought. Strong states, guided by morally upright leaders, must use force to establish or reinforce claims. Once a country has risen to hegemon status, a lesser state must heed its demands. This view echoes that of Thucydides’ on the relationship between the strong and the weak.⁸²

Yan notes that pre-Qin thinkers do not find that it is immoral to use violence to uphold order. Indeed, while morality is an essential requirement for leaders, the failure to punish a state that disrupts the order of the international system is itself immoral.⁸³ Yan believes that the idea of peaceful Chinese rise is misleading because the nature of the international system is such that no

⁷⁹ Yan, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, 21, 51, 65-66. Kindle.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 21. Kindle.

⁸¹ Daniel Bell, “Introduction,” in *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, ed. Daniel A. Bell and Sun Zhe, and trans. Edmund Ryden (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 2. Kindle.

⁸² Yan, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, 38. Kindle.; Strassler, *The Landmark Thucydides* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), 43.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 41. Kindle.

great power has ever risen in peace.⁸⁴ The conflict between immorality of not punishing a disruptive state and the peaceful rise of China is apparent in Yan's views that China is required to attack Taiwan if Beijing continues to call for reunification and Taiwan continues its claims of independence.⁸⁵

According to Yan, China must establish itself as a moral leader in the eyes of the international community if it genuinely wishes to become the regional hegemon in the Indo-Pacific.⁸⁶ A strong military underpins hegemonic authority, and as China returns to its political roots in the writings of Confucius, the planners who balance military ways against political ends should recognize that ancient Chinese thought holds that "hegemonic authority has the ability to determine the norms of the world."⁸⁷ Yan, a self-described realist, recognizes the challenge that lies before a rising China as it seeks to assert itself as a hegemon.⁸⁸ He argues that for China to surpass the United States, China must convince the international community that it is more responsible than the United States or risk following "in the dust of 1980s Japan, unable to replace the United States as the leading state in the world."⁸⁹

Chinese political scientist and professor Zhang Weiwei describes China as a civilization state.⁹⁰ According to Zhang, China's transition to a modern nation-state began in the mid 20th century, and marks China's emergence from the Western-imposed century of humiliation . Zhang's view of the rise of China as a civilization state underscores the unique path it has taken

⁸⁴ Leonard, *What Does China Think*, 90.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁸⁶ Yan, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, 65-66. Kindle.

⁸⁷ Confucius, quoted in Yan, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, 50-51. Kindle.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 240. Kindle.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 65-66. Kindle.

⁹⁰ Weiwei Zhang, *The China Wave: Rise of a Civilizational State* (Hackensack: World Century, 2012), 47, Kindle;

to achieve its success. Zhang displays frustration with what he sees as a western view of China's rise. Zhang believes that the Western analysts attribute the rapid growth of the Chinese economy as little more than that of "an ordinary country that has carried out reforms in accordance with the Western theory of the market economy" and is likely to "accept more and more Western ideas and institutional arrangements and eventually become part of the Western world."⁹¹ This assessment of the Western view of China seems to correspond with US policymakers and strategists who "believed that American aid to a fragile China whose leaders thought like us would help China become a democratic and peaceful power without ambitions of regional or even global dominance."⁹² However, as Zhang is quick to point out, China's rise is unique because it has not followed the Western model.

Zhang believes that China's success is "inseparable from the organic combination of the three factors: Chinese cultural heritages, socialist traditions [and the adoption of] useful elements from the West and other civilizations."⁹³ Zhang argues that the socialist market economy employed by China is a viable model for use by other nations, and believes that that the whole-of-government command of fiscal and monetary policies give China much greater leveraging power than that of Western governments.⁹⁴ Zhang believes that political discourse between China and the West, particularly the United States, is essential for viewing China's rise as a win-win scenario, and not a zero-sum game. He notes that the political, economic, and social conditions

⁹¹ Zhang, *The China Wave*, 47, Kindle

⁹² Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower*, 137-139. Kindle.

⁹³ Weiwei Zhang, *The China Horizon: Glory and Dream of a Civilizational State* (Hackensack, NJ: World Century, 2014), 144. Kindle.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 139. Kindle.

created by China's growth will drive discourse and help construct a new narrative regarding China's role in the international system.⁹⁵

Zhang's view of the Chinese model acknowledges the importance of cultural influences while painting a unique view of life dominated by socialism with Chinese characteristics. Zhang believes that a critical distinguishing factor between the rise of China as a civilization state and the evolution of the modern nation-state in the West is in the backgrounds of the creators of those states. Zhang argues that rich and powerful elites founded the Western countries and that the Chinese revolution and the People's Republic was created by the poor and humble.⁹⁶ The concept of *minben*, "the belief that 'the people are the foundation of the state, and when the foundation is stable, the country is peaceful'" underpins China's socialist tradition and reinforces the Chinese view of good governance.⁹⁷ According to Zhang, the *minben* ideal of prioritizing the needs of the people is not only an integral part of the Chinese political tradition, but it is also what will enable the Chinese to overtake the West and draw developing nations to adopt the Chinese model.⁹⁸ The idea that the CCP is propped up by the people and works toward the betterment of Chinese people is central to Xi Jinping's Chinese Dream, and the two Centenary Goals of the CCP.

Xi Jinping has promoted the Chinese Dream since his ascension to the head of the CCP in 2012. The Chinese Dream has audacious goals, notably the doubling of China's GDP and per capita income of both urban and rural citizens over a 10-year period, development of a strong

⁹⁵ Didi Kirsten Tatlow, "Q and A: Zhang Weiwei on Why China Will Succeed Under the Communist Party," *New York Times*, June 12, 2015, accessed 28 December, 2018, <https://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/06/12/q-and-a-zhang-weiwei-on-why-china-will-succeed-under-the-communist-party/>.

⁹⁶ Zhang, *The China Horizon*, 140. Kindle.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 144. Kindle.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 145. Kindle.

military, and the creation of a “moderately prosperous society” by the year 2020.⁹⁹ Since 2005 the Chinese narrative has been that of a peaceful rise, one that does not seek to use force to pursue hegemonic status.¹⁰⁰ Part of Xi’s agenda is a return to China’s cultural roots, particularly those of Confucius, and the purging of corrupt officials within the party. Xi publicly reaffirms the Chinese desire for a peaceful rise, but his actions give cause for concern.

Xi’s consolidation of power is reminiscent of Mao Zedong’s sole control of the CCP. Xi is the first general secretary that was not selected by Deng Xiaoping, the “transformative leader” who led China “out of the turmoil of [Mao’s] cultural revolution.”¹⁰¹ Deng, who assumed control of the CCP from Mao and led the party from 1979-1991, believed that the Cultural Revolution was responsible for the near destruction of the party, and the loss of China’s international credibility.¹⁰² Xi’s plan to move China towards his vision of a reemergent great power follows a path laid down by Deng during the “second revolution.”¹⁰³ A strong market economy is critical to realizing the Chinese Dream, but Xi’s moves to consolidate power in one man runs contrary to Deng’s view that power is best employed by distributing it throughout the party.¹⁰⁴ While Xi has accumulated institutional power within the CCP, he is not all powerful. The structure of the CCP requires him to build a power base and promote or emplace officials loyal to him, and these efforts are apparent in Xi’s reform of the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA).¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ Xi, *The Governance of China*, vol. 1, 61.

¹⁰⁰ Bijian Zheng “China’s ‘Peaceful Rise’ to Great-Power Status,” *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 5 (2005), 22, 25.

¹⁰¹ Elizabeth C. Economy, *The Third Revolution: Xi Jinping and the New Chinese State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018) 4-5. Kindle.

¹⁰² Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 3057. Kindle.

¹⁰³ Economy, *The Third Revolution*, 9. Kindle.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 9, 13, 32. Kindle.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 32. Kindle.

As head of the Chinese military, Xi drives military priorities. Indeed, a military “capable of fighting and winning wars” is critical to Xi’s achievement of the Chinese Dream.¹⁰⁶ Retired PLA Colonel, Liu Mingfu, argues that the achievement of Xi’s Chinese Dream requires a strong military element of national power. Liu’s view supports Pillsbury’s argument, and Liu sees the conflict between China and the United States as imminent.¹⁰⁷ Because of the inevitability of conflict between great powers during balance of power shifts, Liu maintains that China must uphold its image as a “military power that can safeguard national security and world peace, and a powerful military power that can maintain and achieve national reunification.”¹⁰⁸ Ultimately, China must build and maintain a military force capable of securing its place as a great power.

Xi’s realization of the Chinese Dream is likely to hasten conflict between China and the United States. China’s activities in the South China Sea threaten US interests and infringe upon the sovereignty of US allies in the Indo-Pacific region.¹⁰⁹ The United States, in its return to realism, must consider the possibility that China’s long-term strategic competition results in escalation to open conflict in the Indo-Pacific region. China’s stated goal of a peaceful rise rings hollow as it challenges customary norms in the Indo-Pacific region through the creation of islands and emplacement of military systems.¹¹⁰ China’s claims to ancient territorial rights and its actions inside the so-called nine-dash line are in opposition to accepted international law but are viewed

¹⁰⁶ Economy, *The Third Revolution*, 5. Kindle.

¹⁰⁷ Mingfu Liu, *The China Dream: Great Power Thinking and Strategic Posture in the Post-American Era* (New York: CN Times Books, 2015), 4099. Kindle.

¹⁰⁸ Liu, *The China Dream*, 4292. Kindle.

¹⁰⁹ Jane Perlez, “Tribunal Rejects Beijing’s Claims in South China Sea,” *New York Times*, July 13, 2016, accessed January 7, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/13/world/asia/south-china-sea-hague-ruling-philippines.html>.

¹¹⁰ Peter Navarro, *Crouching Tiger: What China’s Militarism Means for the World* (Amherst, MA: Prometheus Books, 2015), 2113-2117. Kindle.

by China as defensive protection of national interests.¹¹¹ While China's most recent military strategy, published in 2015, states that China will follow a "path of peaceful development," "oppose hegemonism and power politics in all forms," and "never seek hegemony or expansion," its actions in the South China Sea, and Indo-Pacific region, provide cause for alarm.¹¹² China's development of manmade islands within the nine-dash line, its emplacement of surface-to-air missiles, and increased harassment by PLA Naval (PLAN) vessels threaten the security of the sea and global trade.¹¹³

China's territorial claims in the South China Sea were unanimously rejected in 2016 by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.¹¹⁴ Although the tribunal found that any historical claims China had to the disputed islands "were extinguished" with the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, China refuses to relinquish its claims.¹¹⁵ China's unwillingness to cede power to international institutions, combined with the view that its such actions are justified, could provide a spark that escalates regional tension from competition to open conflict.

China's strategic competition is a political problem, but, as mentioned earlier, war is often an answer to political problems. Political theorists and analysts in both the United States and China view the competition between the two powers from distinctly different points of view. For operational planners, developing a strategy that allows the Army to support other elements of national power requires an understanding of the political factors that drive the interactions

¹¹¹ Robert D. Kaplan, *Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea and the End of a Stable Pacific*, (New York: Random House, 2015) 782, 787. Kindle.

¹¹² Ministry of National Defense, *China's Military Strategy* (Beijing: The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 2015), 3.

¹¹³ Haddick, *Fire on the Water*, 3801-3807. Kindle.

¹¹⁴ Navarro, *Crouching Tiger*, 2152-2153. Kindle.

¹¹⁵ Perlez, "Tribunal Rejects Beijing's Claims in South China Sea."

between states within the international system. Examining China's actions through the lenses of international relations theory provides an understanding of how nation-states interact within the international system and how China's actions impact said system. Comparing the competing views of American and Chinese authors provides insight into China's strategy while providing context based on the cultural and philosophical factors fueling the Chinese Dream. Finally, considering the political issues posed by China's rise will allow planners to develop options for Army commanders that supports the guidance in the NMS to facilitate a whole-of-government approach to counter China's strategic competition, while simultaneously setting conditions for projecting power in the region should the situation call for it. The following section will examine where the Army can focus its efforts to present China multiple strategic dilemmas while supporting a whole-of-government efforts in the region.

Analysis of China's Actions in the USINDOPACOM Operational Environment

China's actions in pursuit of Xi's Chinese Dream have caused significant tension in the region. For the United States, China's rise creates uncertainty of her efforts, and China's actions in the Indo-Pacific region warrant increased focus as part the United States' return to a realist approach to actions in the international system. This section will briefly discuss the Army's Multi-Domain Operations 2028 (MDO 2028) concept to set the stage for examining how the Army can support other elements of national power in the Indo- Pacific region. The section will then examine the work of politics and the need for planners to recognize the political factors that ultimately require politicians to call for a military solution.¹¹⁶ Successfully negotiation the civilian-military relationship is critical, as the options planners generate for their commanders

¹¹⁶ The phrase "the work of politics" is used by Dr. G. Stephen Lauer to describe the relationship between the military and the politician. See G. Stephen Lauer, "Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks: Politics, Policy, and the Military Operational Artist," *The Strategy Bridge*, February 20, 2018, accessed November

must support the work of politics while simultaneously meeting the Army's mission requirements. Next, this section will examine the political environment in the Indo-Pacific region to identify sources of tension between China and her neighbors, Vietnam and India. Both countries have a long and storied history with China, and as the Army builds capabilities under the MDO 2028 concept, its actions and activities in the region will affect other elements of national power.

Joint doctrine identifies unified action as the framework that “synchronizes, coordinates, and/or integrates joint, single-Service, and multinational operations with the operations of other USG departments and agencies, NGOs, IGOs..., and the private sector to achieve unity of effort.”¹¹⁷ The Army supports the Joint Force Commander through unified land operations (ULO). Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet (Pam) 525-3-1, *The Army in Multi-Domain Operations* lays the groundwork for how the Army is preparing for conflict in contested domains. The document is nested with the NDS and recognizes that in emerging operational environments (OE) adversaries, like China, blur “the distinctions between actions ‘below armed conflict’ and ‘conflict,’ enabling the achievement of strategic objectives short of what the U.S. traditionally considers ‘war.’”¹¹⁸ The Army's MDO 2028 concept does not describe how the Army will fight in the Indo-Pacific region today, but ten years from now. It reinforces many of the ideas posited in the NSS and NDS, namely the return to strategic competition, and the actions of competitors that fall below the threshold of armed conflict. The Army's MDO

1, 2018, <https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2018/2/20/blue-whales-and-tiger-sharks-politics-policy-and-the-military-operational-artist>.

¹¹⁷ US Department of Defense, Joint Staff. *Joint Publication (JP) 1-0, Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), II-7.

¹¹⁸ US Department of the Army, *Training and Doctrine Command Pamphlet (TRADOC Pam) 525-3-1, The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2018), 7.

concept nests with Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations*, which states the US military must be prepared to respond to threats to the United States and her allies' interests along a conflict continuum that spans from peacetime to open conflict.¹¹⁹ JP 3-0 also recognizes the US military prepares to fight and win the nation's wars "through military operations to defend the homeland, build security globally, and project power and win decisively."¹²⁰ With this in mind, how does the US Military, and the Army specifically, counter strategic competition below the threshold of open conflict? The first step is recognizing the complexities of the competition continuum.

The Department of Defense Joint Staff's *Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning* (JCIC) recognizes that the United States is engaged in global competition with both emerging and resurgent powers.¹²¹ The JCIC "provides an intellectual framework for the Joint Force to better achieve and sustain acceptable strategic outcomes in concert with the other instruments of national power."¹²² The JCIC introduces the idea of the competition continuum to the Joint Force lexicon to enhance the civil-military dialogue and describes the cycle of cooperation, competition below armed conflict, and armed conflict.¹²³ This framework offers an important distinction for operational planners by identifying a need for the military to consider ways to support other US Departments and intergovernmental organizations to reinforce the United States' whole-of-government approach to counter long-term strategic competition.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, *Joint Publication 3-0, Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), V-1.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, I-1.

¹²¹ US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, *Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2018), v.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 1.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, vi.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

For operational planners to meet the broad guidelines laid out in the NDS, a basic understanding of the political aspect of military operations is required. The interaction between civilian and military leaders is the work of politics and cannot be separated from war. , Clausewitz writes it is “policy [that] converts the overwhelmingly destructive element of war into a mere instrument.”¹²⁵ The work of politics underpins the civilian-military relationship between the politician and the military commander. In this dynamic relationship, it is the commander who “holds the fundamental responsibility for the accomplishment of the military aim in accordance with an overall policy objective, while recognizing that political oversight and guidance does not end with the order initiating military action.”¹²⁶ Operational planners must be mindful of the policy objectives as they develop options for their commander. Finally, operational planners should consider their operational environment as a complex system. While the primary mission of the Army involves conducting unified land operations in support of national objectives, its actions in any setting will have tertiary effects that may support or disrupt other lines of effort along the whole-of-government approach. China’s actions in the Indo-Pacific region and the friction created with her neighbors provide opportunities to support other elements of national power for planners to consider when generating options for their commanders.

Chinese rivalries and tensions in the Indo-Pacific Region illustrate the need for operational planners to understand the implied connection between geopolitics and geostrategy to better assess how the Army’s presence and actions in the region could influence the international system. Professor Jakub Grygiel notes that geopolitics is concerned with resources, lines of communication, and strategic importance of physical locations while geostrategy is how a state

¹²⁵ Clausewitz, *On War*, 605-606.

¹²⁶ Lauer, “Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks.”

directs diplomatic and military efforts within a particular region to further its political aims.¹²⁷ Grygiel contends that geostrategy is not always motivated by geopolitics or geography, and instead, either hard or soft power projection may be the result of party ideology, perceived benefits from political leaders, or ultimately “at the whim” of a nation’s leader.¹²⁸ Operational planners should recognize how political considerations influence the feasibility or acceptability of the plans they develop, and seek to provide flexibility for their commanders with military options that support a whole-of-government approach in the region. The Army may use tensions between China and its neighbors to contribute to a strategic dilemma for China. As China expands its influence to the south, India seeks to expand to the east and west.¹²⁹ Vietnam, standing in the face of China’s expansionist policies provides a potential ally to help achieve the political ends of securing freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.¹³⁰ The histories and current regional issues of both India and Vietnam offer operational planners the potential to support the diplomatic and informational elements of national power.

China’s relations with both India and Vietnam span millennia. India is the birthplace of both Hinduism and Buddhism, the latter which spread to China and then to the rest of Asia over 2000 years ago. India’s population represents a culture deeply tied to ancient religious ideology in the form of Hinduism. Hinduism, believed by many scholars to be at least 3500 years old, is practiced by over 900 million Indians today. While many Indians are not deeply religious and many are not Hindu, Hinduism serves a similar role in Indian society as Confucianism in China

¹²⁷ Jakub Grygiel, *Great Powers and Geopolitical Change* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 22.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Robert D. Kaplan, *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power* (New York: Random House, 2010), 198-200. Kindle.

¹³⁰ Hannah Beech, “U.S. Aircraft Carrier Arrives in Vietnam, With a Message for China,” *The New York Times*, March 4, 2018, accessed December 30, 2018, <https://nyti.ms/2FSixZQ?smid=nytcore-ios-share>.

by providing values and societal norms for Hindus at an early age.¹³¹ India, like China, has a sizeable Muslim population and struggles to protect the rights of Muslim Indians in a caste society and manage sectarian tensions between the groups.¹³²

Xi's pursuit of the Chinese Dream causes tension in India, as China adopts a "string of pearls" strategy in the Indian Ocean by establishing ports in friendly countries that border India.¹³³ China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) will complete the encirclement as China establishes interconnected trade routes to connect China with Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. Indian military planners believe this approach is part of a broader Chinese strategy to surround and contain India through forward basing, and efforts to secure sea lines of communication.¹³⁴ For Indian planners, China's increased activity and basing overtures with Pakistan, India's neighbor and rival, give reason for additional concern. India and China share a contested border. The McMahon Line, a 2500-mile border in the Himalayas has been a source of contention for both sides. In 1962, the PLA conducted a surprise attack, soundly defeating the Indian border forces, and then calling a ceasefire and withdrawing.¹³⁵ China's economic aid to Pakistan via OBOR, border tensions, and increased naval activity in the Indian Ocean all drive tensions between the two nations up and provide opportunities for the Army to assist other the diplomatic and informational elements of national power.

¹³¹ Anja Manuel, *This Brave New World: India, China, and the United States* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016), 16-17. Kindle.

¹³² In 2002 58 Hindi pilgrims were murdered while on a return trip from Ayodha. This sparked riots that left thousands dead or injured, and many missing. See *Ibid.*, 18-19. Kindle.

¹³³ Robert D. Kaplan, "Center Stage for the Twenty-First Century: Power Plays in the Indian Ocean," *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 2 (2009): 22.

¹³⁴ Manuel, *This Brave New World*, 251, Kindle

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 248-250. Kindle.

Vietnam also shares cultural similarities with China. Over 3000 years, the two countries have fluctuated in an asymmetric relationship in which Vietnam has resisted domination from her larger, and more powerful, neighbor.¹³⁶ Both countries share cultural similarities through societal norms grounded in Confucianism and Buddhism. In latter half of the 20th century, both countries shared a similar narrative as communist allies reclaiming their role as the legitimate government in a post-colonial world, and have also been bitter enemies as China exerted its power and influence on its smaller Communist neighbor.¹³⁷ Although the two countries once shared similar communist ideology, Vietnam is now “a capitalist dynamo seeking closer military ties to the United States, in order to balance against China.”¹³⁸ China’s territorial claims inside the nine-dash-line impact Vietnam, who occupy twenty-one islands within the Spratly Island chain.¹³⁹ Vietnam remains at an asymmetric disadvantage militarily and economically, and this skewed status quo assumes Vietnam will be unable to challenge China’s power directly and China will respect Vietnam’s sovereignty.¹⁴⁰ Sino-Vietnamese relations have fluctuated between competition and conflict, and the uncertainty of China’s actions provides the catalyst for forging relationships to counter regional strategic competition from China.

Vietnam’s historic asymmetric relationship requires the smaller country to manage its relationship with China carefully. The PLA’s last combat experience was during the 1979 Sino-

¹³⁶ Brantley Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1. Kindle.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 63. Kindle.

¹³⁸ Kaplan, *Asia’s Cauldron*, 220. Kindle.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 293. Kindle.

¹⁴⁰ Womack, *China and Vietnam*, 369. Kindle.

Vietnam War, initiated by China in response to Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia.¹⁴¹ China punished its former ally and historic tributary for actions that challenged its cultural prestige and honor.¹⁴² Since this brief war, Vietnam has employed "creative (and risky) diplomacy to counter Beijing's acts of unilateral dominance in the South China Sea."¹⁴³ Vietnam seeks to impose a legally binding mechanism in an update to the 2002 ASEAN Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. However, other member nations have failed to ratify the agreement primarily due to the risk of confrontation with China over the language.¹⁴⁴ This leaves Vietnam in a position where a strategic partnership with the United States may help it solve a complex security dilemma.

Synthesis and Recommendations

China's rise and expansionist approach in the Indo-Pacific challenge the international norms and the post-1945 international order. It is clear US national policy calls for a whole-of-government approach, and Joint doctrine identifies the need for all services to support an integrated approach as the United States reprioritizes its efforts towards great power competition. The Army's MDO 2028 concept is the Army's plan to prepare for future great power conflict, but there is more the Army can do to support the levers of national power in its efforts to counter

¹⁴¹Hunter Marston, "Why Tensions Are Rising Between Vietnam and China: Hanoi Resists Beijing's South China Sea Agenda," *Foreign Affairs*, August 15, 2017, accessed February 13, 2019, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2017-08-15/why-tensions-are-rising-between-vietnam-and-china>.

¹⁴² Mott and Kim argue that Vietnam's actions in Cambodia challenged China's global perception. They further assert that China's military culture and *shi* strategy required a response. For further study see William H. Mott and Jae Chang Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture: Shih Vs. Li* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 195-197.

¹⁴³ Marston, "Why Tensions Are Rising Between Vietnam and China."

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

China. India and Vietnam are two countries in the INDOPACOM AOR that offer opportunities for military efforts that support an interagency approach to achieve national policy aims.

The Army Strategy, co-written in 2018 by the Chief of Staff of the Secretary of the Army, recognizes the Army's mission and purpose "remains constant: *To deploy, fight, and win our Nation's wars by providing ready, prompt, and sustained land dominance by Army forces across the full spectrum of conflict as part of the Joint Force*" (emphasis in the original).¹⁴⁵ A return to principled realism impacts the Joint Force and the Army at all echelons. At the operational level, planners must recognize that war remains a continuation of politics and the political aims that drive military objectives in the region hold vital importance as the US military reorients towards great power competition. Operational planners, the target audience of this monograph, can use international relations theory as a lens to assess their current operational environment and develop options that nest with the policy statements laid out in the NSS, NDS, and comments made by the Administration.

China's long-term strategic competition is a systems problem. Planners can frame the complex, interconnected, elements of the region through operational design. Operational design supports the employment of operational art, the "the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose," by framing the interconnected aspects of a system, and assessing how actions in an OE affect both the system and the actor.¹⁴⁶ Operational planners must recognize "actors both shape and are shaped by the system," particularly when employing systems thinking to describe how "interacting, interrelated,

¹⁴⁵ Mark A. Milley and Mark T. Esper, *The Army Strategy* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2018), 1.

¹⁴⁶US Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), 2-1, Adobe PDF eBook.

and interdependent components or subsystems...form a complex and unified whole.”¹⁴⁷ Systems thinking recognizes that actions within a system often have unintended or wide-ranging ripple effects that may require reframing.¹⁴⁸ One way to understand the reaction of a system is through Peter Senge’s “compensating feedback” which describes how “well-intentioned interventions call forth responses from the system that offset the benefits of the intervention.”¹⁴⁹ Operational planners must consider how the system will push back as the Army begins to support the levers of national power within the region.

The Army’s mission has not changed and countering China requires an acknowledgment that in addition to the strategic risks associated with a land war, the Indo-Pacific region is not best suited for the United States Land Force.¹⁵⁰ Planners tasked with generating options in the region to set conditions required for the Army to provide “ready, prompt, and sustained land dominance” should consider how cooperation with the Indian and Vietnamese Armies might indirectly support diplomatic and information levers of power as it continues to further national aims in the region. Army planners can and should consider policy statements and interagency goals when framing the operational environment and developing operational approaches in the INDOPACOM AOR. Lines of Effort can and should nest with the planning efforts of the Department of State and other government agencies within the OE.

¹⁴⁷ Robert Jervis, “Thinking Systematically About Geopolitics,” *Geopolitics* 15, no. 1 (12 February, 2010): 170; US Department of the Army, *Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 5-0.1, Army Design Methodology* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2015), 1-7.

¹⁴⁸ Robert Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 9.

¹⁴⁹ Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, rev ed. (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2006), 1094-1095. Kindle.

¹⁵⁰ John J. Mearsheimer, “The Rise of China and the Decline of the U.S. Army,” in *American Grand Strategy and the Future of Landpower*, ed. Hugh Leibert Joseph Da Silva, Isaiah Wilson III, (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2014), 37, 39-40, 42; Vizzini the Sicilian referred to this as “one of the classic blunders” of all time. See *The Princess Bride*, directed by Rob Reiner, featuring Cary Elwes and Shawn Wallace (20th Century Fox, 1987), DVD (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Entertainment, 2016).

The US Army should increase joint military partnership with both the Indian and Vietnamese armies to support diplomatic and informational levers of power. As China's expanse challenges regional security, joint training, and a commitment to increased military partnership, is a shaping effort that meets the intent spelled out in the NSS and NDS. The most direct way to achieve this is through a planned partnership with both countries during US Army Pacific's (USARPAC) bi-annual Pacific Pathways exercise. Pacific Pathways, which began in 2014 following the US pivot to Asia, matches US Army troops with partner nations in the INDOPACOM AOR. However, over the three iterations of the exercise, US forces have yet to partner with either India or Vietnam.¹⁵¹ The Army does conduct regular training exercises with the Indian Army. Yudh Abhyas, a joint exercise whose names mean Training for War in Hindi, is held biannually with the US and India alternating hosting responsibilities.¹⁵² In 2018 the exercise paired approximately 350 US Soldiers with a similar number of their Indian counterparts in a variety of training scenarios that span conventional and unconventional warfare, hybrid threats, humanitarian assistance, and disaster response. The 2018 exercise also witnessed the implementation of a combined Division-level command post exercise.¹⁵³ The inclusion of a

¹⁵¹ In 2014 the Army conducted exercises with Mongolia, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Australia, and Indonesia. 2016 saw I Corps host Canada, Singapore and Japan in exercises in Alaska and Hawaii. See Michelle Tan, "3-Star: Army Grows Pacific Pathways, Ties With Asian Armies," *Army Times*, October, 24, 2015, accessed 22 February, 2019, <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2015/10/24/3-star-army-grows-pacific-pathways-ties-with-asian-armies/>; Todd C. Lopez, "I Corps Pacific Pathways Brings Partner Nations Stateside to Enhance Readiness," PACOM Media, April 20, 2016, accessed February 22, 2019, <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/Article/738996/i-corps-pacific-pathways-brings-partner-nations-stateside-to-enhance-readiness/>.

¹⁵² Samuel Northrup, "U.S. And Indian Armies Complete Exercise Yudh Abhyas 18," PACOM Media, October 1, 2018, accessed February 22, 2019, <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/1650736/us-and-indian-armies-complete-exercise-yudh-abhyas-18/>.

¹⁵³ Samuel Northrup, "Bayonet Soldiers Begin Bilateral Training Exercise in India," Defense Visual Information Distribution Service News, September 16, 2018, accessed February 22, 2019, <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/292998/bayonet-soldiers-begin-bilateral-training-exercise-india>.

Division headquarters and joint command post exercise illustrates that Yudh Abhyas has gained strategic importance to Army planners.

With President Trump's signaling that US forces will likely be out of Afghanistan before 2020 and an increase in Chinese partnership with Pakistan, increased military to military partnership with India makes sense. In India, the Army will build relationships and set conditions to support India's counterterrorism operations should international terrorist organizations begin to spread following the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan. The Indian Army will receive value from increased training opportunities that can help check China's westward expansion. Such a relationship supports both the diplomatic and information levers of national power. For the informational lever, support to the world's largest democracy sends a powerful message to expansionist powers that the United States supports democracy over authoritarianism. Joint military efforts between the two armies may also help check China's strategic ambitions without escalating above the threshold of open warfare. As China seeks to keep India "bogged down" with external security concerns in the form of border clashes with Pakistan, US Army efforts can provide critical diplomatic support to a country that may provide future basing or staging if regional conflict breaks out.¹⁵⁴ While the threat of nuclear war will likely prevent open conflict between China and India or the United States, increased partnership between the US and Indian Armies can help foster alliances and build diplomatic rapport between the two nations.¹⁵⁵

Increasing military relations between the US Army and their Vietnamese counterparts is another area where Army planners should focus their efforts. The most straightforward and most

¹⁵⁴ Jeff M. Smith, "Sino-Indian Relations a Troubled History, an Uncertain Future," *Harvard International Review* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 113.

¹⁵⁵ Xuetong Yan, "The Age of Uneasy Peace: Chinese Power in a Divided World," *Foreign Affairs* 98, no. 1 (January / February 2019): 45.

direct route is to work with the People’s Army of Vietnam to include them in future exercises, with bilateral training, most likely via Pacific Pathways, as a mid-term objective. As Vietnam continues to stand up to China’s expansion, US Army efforts can support the strengthening of diplomatic ties with the Vietnamese government and its people. The Army does not yet conduct large-scale bilateral training for the Vietnamese Army but should seek ways to increase training opportunities between the two nation’s forces. The Army does engage in some limited training with the Vietnamese Army. In 2016, US Army Pacific (USARPAC) began collaboration with the Vietnam National Mine Action Center (VNMAC) to assist with humanitarian mine-clearing training. The training, which is scheduled to occur annually through 2020, certifies Vietnamese explosive ordnance technicians and medical personnel following international standards. This training enables the Vietnamese soldiers to return to their home country and serve as instructors, building an internal capability that supports the information lever of power.¹⁵⁶

Army medical personnel assigned to INDOPACOM have helped the Vietnamese to increase expeditionary medical capabilities through participation in INDOPACOM’s annual PACANGEL exercise. The exercise, which began in 2007, partners US military personnel with Vietnamese counterparts to provide medical and dental care to rural Vietnamese citizens.¹⁵⁷ These efforts should be expanded moving forward. In 2018, the Vietnamese army deployed a field hospital unit to South Sudan to participate in United Nations humanitarian efforts, a historic

¹⁵⁶ Taresha Hill, “USARPAC and Vietnam Bolster Military Partnership Through Humanitarian Demining Capabilities,” Army News, November 2, 2016, accessed February 22, 2019, https://www.army.mil/article/177715/usarpac_and_vietnam_bolster_military_partnership_through_humanitarian_demining_capabilities.

¹⁵⁷ Javier Alvarez, “PACANGEL Vietnam 18-2 Kicks Off,” Defense Visual Information Distribution Service News, September 10, 2018, accessed February 22, 2019, <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/292131/pacangel-vietnam-18-2-kicks-off>.

step for Vietnam, giving it experience in a multi-national environment.¹⁵⁸ While the Army's interaction with the Vietnamese Army remains limited, these efforts build relationships and should be used to reinforce the US military's efforts in the to ensure free and open navigation in the region.

Conclusion

The United States' shifting focus from the limited scope of counterterrorism towards great power competition requires operational planners to make a similar shift in how they understand the world. The NSS and NDS, and to a lesser extent current Army doctrine, all stress the return of strategic competition between nation-state actors. This monograph discussed how China's rise in the Indo-Pacific region challenges international norms and the established international system.

Great power politics has implications for operational planners and the US Army. International relations theory provides a lens to examine the conflict between nations and identify factors that lead states to war. The theory of realism, which the United States now espouses, emphasizes the need for countries to secure their interests regardless of the motivations of others in the interconnected international system. Liberalism, advanced by the United States and other Western democracies, sees value in the institutions and order imposed and enforced by the United States. While these two views may appear to be at odds with each other, they shape how the United States views other actors, and how the United States manages its interests in a complex system where it has provided structure and order.

¹⁵⁸ Hahn My, "Vietnam Ready to Undertake Humanitarian Mission in South Sudan," *People's Army Newspaper*, Hanoi, October 2, 2018, accessed February 22, 2019, <http://en.qdnd.vn/military/intl-relations-and-cooperation/vietnam-ready-to-undertake-humanitarian-mission-in-south-sudan-497469>.

The United States and China see China's historic rise, and its recent actions in the region, in vastly different lights. The United States' view, shaped by its return to realism, sees cause for concern as China expands towards regional hegemony. China argues its actions are benign and consistent with its civilization-state worldview. China's realists also see no need for China to be beholden to international norms counter to its own cultural and historical norms and argue China's customs and borders both precede and supersede customary international law.

China's apparent willingness to pick and choose when they will share the norms of the international system leads to tensions in the Indo-Pacific region. This monograph focused on tensions between China, India and Vietnam. Both India and Vietnam have a shared history with China that spans millennia. However, both nations share a history of conflict with China since the establishment of the CCP. China has invaded both India and Vietnam, and its current actions provide a reason for both nations to distrust China's claim it desires a peaceful expansion and does not seek hegemony. India and Vietnam both contest China's development and provide operational planners two potential areas where focusing military efforts can support a whole-of-government approach to checking China's strategic competition.

The best option for Army planners to support diplomatic and informational levers of national power is through an increased military partnership with both India and Vietnam. The Army currently engages in bilateral exercises with India but has not yet included India in the Pacific Pathways exercise. The 2018 shift in focus to the INDOPACOM AOR, this is a logical step. Army efforts in Vietnam should be increased to include the Vietnamese Army as the United States looks to counter China's regional expansion below the level of open conflict.

This monograph recommends ways Army planners can develop operational approaches supporting all levers of national power to counter China's revisionist expansion. It acknowledges the MDO 2028 concept is the Army's primary focus to prepare for potential conflict with China

in the Indo-Pacific region. However, Army planners must consider the factors that drive states to act inside the framework of great power politics. Shaping and supporting efforts that enable other elements of national power should be developed to set conditions for Army leaders to meet the guidance spelled out in the NSS, NDS, and Joint Force doctrine. Army planners should increase their understanding of international relations theory, and apply it to the events in the region they support.

Army planners should strive to understand how domestic policy influences and affects military planning to develop the best options for their commanders. The Army cannot approach regional partnership solely with the goal of preventing China's expansion in the Indo-Pacific region because doing so will likely alienate those nations in the region that share distrust of China's expansionist aims. Recognizing the mutual benefits of partnership, expanding common values, and developing ties between both the military and civilian populations will help build and support diplomatic and informational levers of power. In doing so, the Army can fulfill its primary mission while supporting a whole-of-government approach to the political problem posed by China.

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